In Memory of Now:
A Queer History of the Present

David Patricia Abelló

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Certificate of original authorship

This thesis is the result of a research candidature conducted for a Doctoral degree. I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as part of the doctoral degree and/or fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on Sydney's inner-west and is a critical ethnography of radical, critical and dissident activism across more than four decades, from the Gay Liberation and Lesbian Feminist movements to contemporary queer and critical social and political networks. The methods use Alberto Melucci's (1995) collective identity as a 'lens' of social movement analysis in a synthesis with a resource mobilisation approach (after Joe Foweraker 1995). They include a new, full analysis of the *1978ers Social History Project* survey (Abello 1998), a reconstructed participant-observation of the *Gay Liberation Quire* (1981-7) and relational interviews with contemporary activists, with participation in their fields of action. The methodology is "post-queer", acknowledging Adam Green (2012), distinguishing, between radical/liberal homosexual normalisation and a new, neoliberal homonormativity and sexual politics (as per Lisa Duggan 2003 and Diane Richardson 2004), and between homonormativity and queer counternormativity, empirically, in the context of their respective historical elements, economic relationships and places. The methods all involve participation, an insider position and are relational (in the past and the present, including with extant *78ers* and Quire members). The ethnographic focus in each method is on a mobilisation or collective action: the motivations and predispositions of activists; the multiplicity of movement parts and historical and contemporary elements in each time (politics and sexual politics); the collective identity and normativities of the social networks in which they are embedded; the various and changing intersections with other social movements and political networks and groups; the changing (and bifurcating) spaces of movement and community; and the multiplicitous responses and reconfigurations of movement parts around emergent communities, changes in social and economic relations and relationships with the state. Conservative governments and neoliberal policies have impacted on activists' resources and figured their concerns while gay and lesbian equality politics drives a queer-gay divergence and bifurcation of spaces.
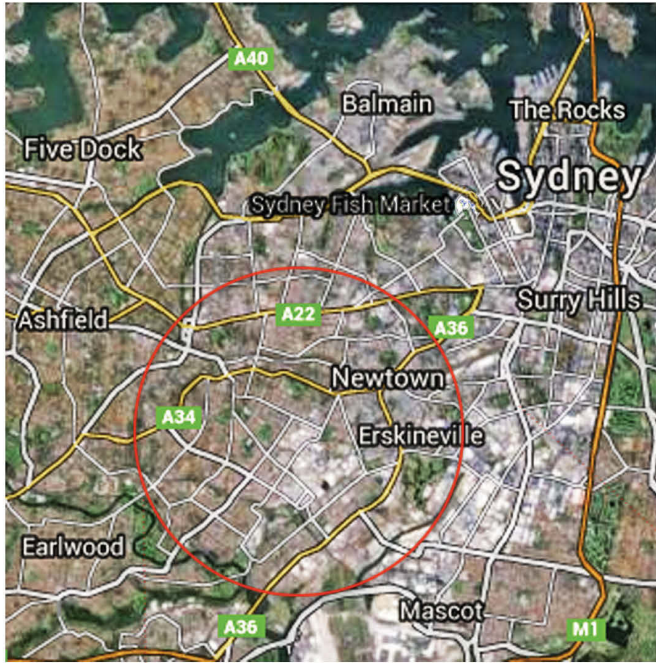
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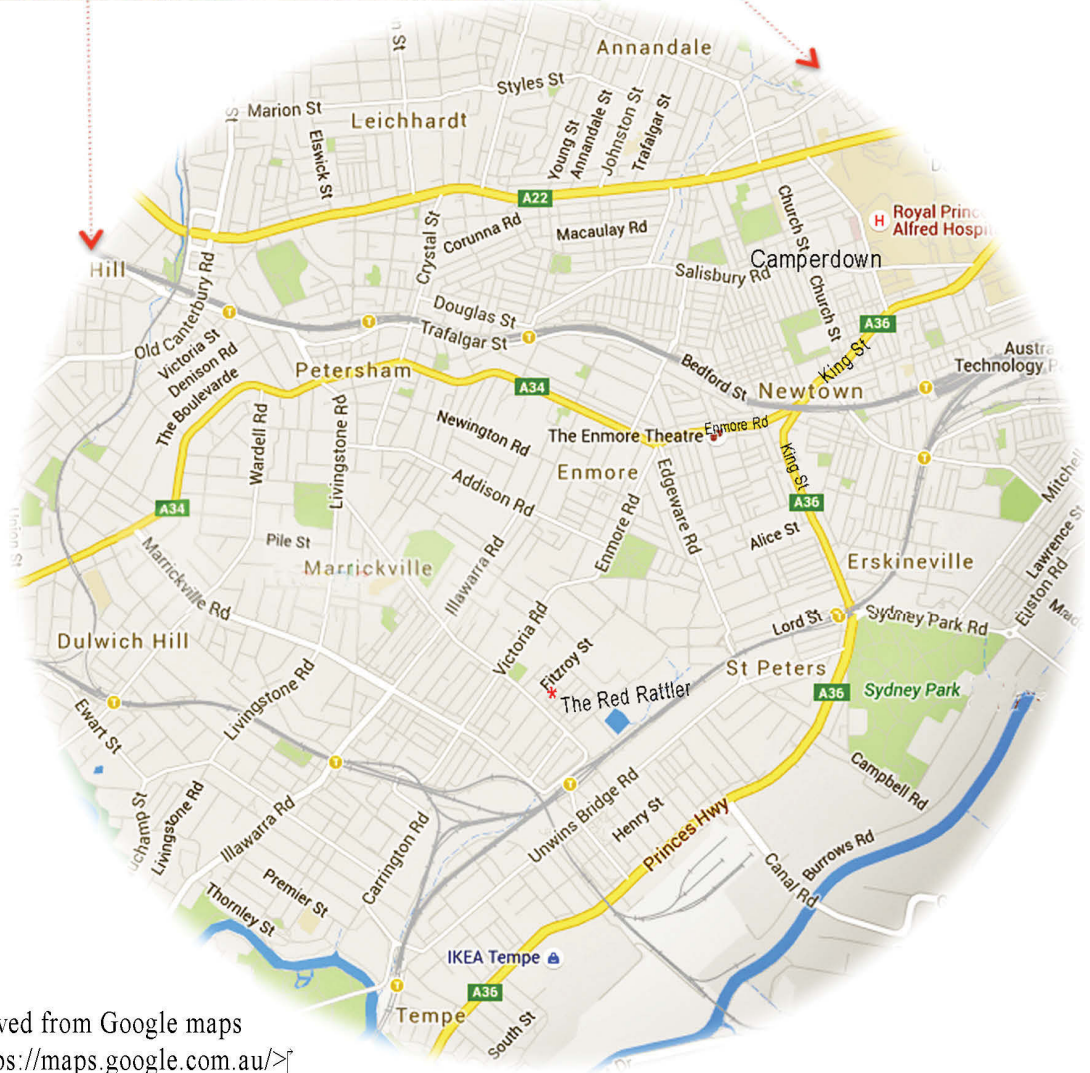
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Prologue: 'Be Good to your Neighbourhood'

It's the sixth of September 2014. Not far from where I live a crowd is gathering in the park. There are banners, flags, some seriously good dressing up and outfits, very loud music and a celebratory air. I walk through them, greeting friends and others I know. Another group of people has resurrected "Reclaim the Streets", a local event with a varied and eight year history, some earlier events involving very scary moments of police opposition and suppression. Nevertheless these organisers have police permission, to move out onto Newtown Bridge and down Enmore Rd, two and a half kilometres along a major traffic route to Cook Rd Marrickville, which is blocked off for a street party. The route connects Newtown, Enmore and Marrickville and symbolically, Newtown and the Marrickville warehouse precinct. An industrial street, Cook Road is chosen because it does not have any illegal residences. The organising group has not sought permission from Marrickville Council to gather in Camperdown Park as it would not be given. The softer batons of risk and liability also regulate the use of public space. The loose group of individuals organising the event cannot present themselves as a legal association or entity. 'The revolution won't have public liability insurance', says a sticker on one of the DJ's laptops. Nevertheless there are some councillors attending and some supportive council workers.

When the caravan of groups of people, mobile installations and sound systems gets out onto the main street everyone is surprised. There are four or five thousand people and they are all sorts. The area has one of the biggest lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer communities in the country, compared with the average one to two per cent. One indicator, from the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census of 2011, shows around one tenth of couple households in Sydney and Marrickville statistical local areas were same-sex. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in these areas are estimated at closer to one in five. It's big enough to contain, with a bifurcation of its spaces over several decades, a lesbian and gay public and a queer counter public, using Warner's (1999, p. 147) terms and they are well in attendance. Many people join in from the footpaths and cafes. It has all the appearance of a protest march, except up close. The lead banner that is held by a row of people says 'Be good to your neighbourhood.' The flags are colourful recycled fabric. They have no literal message. The placards are obscure or artistic. Someone's sign portends, 'This is a sign'. The placard of one organiser

demands serious reflection: It says, 'In Memory of Now'. From my involvement of several years with those organising the event, I recognise it is not just a witticism. It is a profound statement about knowing the things that are being lost and remembering them. Some elements in the convoy make more explicitly political statements. Some anarchists have a crucifix on wheels that they push along, taking turns on the cross. It's confronting but has no message, no text or chant. Nor does it seem to split the sympathies of those around. Iconoclasm takes its place in the range of counternormativities on parade. *Images 1* and *2* show some of the diversity of the crowd. Through the two and a half kilometre march and to the street party there are moments of a palpable and fleeting collective identity. They are mainly locals, or people who spend a lot of time here. There are gays and lesbians, queers, bisexuals and transgender people, intersex activists, countercultural types, radicals, communitarians and progressive community members here. I'm not guessing – I know many hundreds of those present, well, and many others at least by sight and enough to "place" them. They represent the diversity of the organising group and its collective social networks. For a time there is enough mutual recognition to sustain collective action and a collective identity among its participants, one that is bigger than the collective identities of its constituent groups and networks, and those of its organising group. The event has strong cultural and political dimensions, both in being about space, place, diversity and belonging and in the orientations of its activists and organisers, though their actions extend variously to other, more adversarial, political approaches including action within the political system. The gestural flags and non-placards, the special blend of politics and performance, irony and juxtaposition and the apparent diversity and 'unity' of the crowd is itself a performance. It looks like a protest or a celebration, depending from where it's viewed. It is ironic in that the Police would not have approved the use of the streets for a cultural event. They have been forced to concede because it is a 'political protest'.

Most of those watching seem supportive. Angry critics trapped in their cars do a very neoliberal misreading of the crowd – hippies and dole bludgers. Someone yells 'Get a job!' at me from a car window at close range. The liberating thing is that no one seems to care how it's read by others watching or that its only coherent messages are about love, solidarity, civility and neighbourhood, alongside very disparate personal and political messages and performances. There are two aspects to this collective action

which are consciously organised – the aforementioned political messages and external relationships and internal collective needs. The social networks in which the actors and the collective action are embedded, and all the actual and virtual spaces that its elements make and occupy, are where collective recognition is produced. It can be transported and connected to this one community moment. We are blocking a major road in our neighbourhood and we are 'walking on the road'. It provides a new perspective on familiar street fronts, from the middle of what is always a dangerous and alienated traffic corridor. It's an uplifting and emotional experience. The children also enjoy it and there are plenty there. It is a feature of events that facilitates police permission – 'a community and family event'. The crowd is mainly counter-normative and it transmits its diversity and solidity.

Collective identity, then, is this temporal and spatial moment. It is multiplicitous in its elements and groupings and these have different contemporary and historical dimensions. Any apparent unity it broadcasts is an empirical object. It does not explain the event. It is an effect of all the processes of collective identity, in the 'latent pole' of this event, referring to Melucci's (1994, p. 127) idea of collective action as 'bipolar', which is embedded in social networks in everyday life where the normativities and mutual recognition that underpin collective action and identity are produced. Collective identity is produced in social actors in all of these processes. This Reclaim the Streets event is one of many different appropriations of public space for counter normativisation, some of these more explicitly queer, and they are all linked empirically by the activists and organising groups and networks that make them possible and make them happen.

Some evidence of the strength of this collective identity is the respect with which people treat each other, even when a large amount of alcohol and or other drugs are added, and the amount of enjoyment and the reinforcement of connection that is generated (see *Images 3* and *4*). Another is the attention to and respect of place in the consultations with locals immediately affected by actions and the thorough cleaning up that follows these events. Most telling is the approach to 'security' which is framed as supporting and protecting the 'ambience' of the group, with a collective and co-ordinated watchfulness of aggressive behaviour and opportunists as well as police and council ranger movements and actions (see *Image 5*, watching the police). In the organising group this is referred to as the Department of Ambience. This particular

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Reclaim the Streets brings out some of the tribes of the queer movement and community and those of the inner west countercultural milieu reflecting, again, its organisers and queer organising in this broader milieu. Indeed they are part of the focus of this enquiry. These events have lesbian and gay and queer historical elements and are linked to historical developments and continuities and disjunctures in empirical ways for social actors. An appreciation of these contributes to an understanding of the multiplicitous dispositions and historical and contemporary elements that constitute collective identity and make for contemporary collective action. Indeed it helps one to find and locate the people who move it.

The event is not a "lesbian", "gay", or "queer" event in the traditional sense of political protest, and only looks like one up close. It is not like a queer bush music sex rave or other of the more public and explicitly queer appropriations of space in the neighbourhood. If I may employ a popular device in science fiction of time paradox, if someone was to arrive in 2010 and remove the relatively small group of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer activists involved in the organisation of this Reclaim the Streets from the time line, perhaps to some other much kinder or fairer time or place, then this event wouldn't have happened, and the streets, and everything else, could be unrecognisable.

Chapter 1: Continuities of resistance and the lens of collective identity

My thesis is concerned with aspects of continuity and points of disjuncture that connect the present and past of radical lesbian and gay, queer and transgender social movement developments. It is not in itself a genealogy of this connection in the Foucauldian sense. As an historical and critical ethnography it takes only the perspectives and voice of specific groups of social actors. It is reflexive within the limits of their reflexivity. It reveals aspects of continuity and points of disjuncture over time. At the empirical level, continuity is dynamic and multiplicitous, with the collective parts reconfiguring in their internal and external relationships. It is consistent with Foucault's argument that impressions of historical continuity may conceal the transformational and reformational processes at work (1972, p. 5). These aspects of apparent continuity are found in: collective action, identity and normativities; contested politics and their historical and contemporary elements; movement parts, groupings and social networks; and areas of action – the types of domination that action contests or resists. These can be identified empirically in the historical and contemporary accounts of activists.

My focus is on the critical, radical and dissident political elements, terms that I will use a lot and define here. Action is "critical" when its meaning is collectively considered and informed by some kind of theoretical perspective with historical and contemporary elements. "Radical" action is counter-normative, and opposes conservative, liberal and neoliberal forces. "Dissident" action implies refusal of normative cultural regimes and rejection of tendencies to "civil obedience" and self-regulation. These are not separate types of activist or styles of action. One collective action may have each of these aspects. They represent different kinds of ability in activists. They are expressed variously in the collective and contested normativities of social movement parts. This latter term 'normativity' I use, as well as counter-normativity and anti-normativity in critical and radical political settings, to refer, in the Bourdieusian sense, to the exteriorised effects of structures in the rules, conventions and protocols of particular cultural groups and over time on the habitus of their members – their predispositions, dispositions and so on – and the productive and contested relationship between these[1]. I use the plural 'normativities' acknowledging the multiplicity of the elements and parts of collective action and identity.

In this chapter I will establish three methodological frameworks, required by the research, which I introduce below. The first involves Alberto Melucci's (1995) notion of collective identity as a lens of analysis of collective action. This has influenced the methods both historical and contemporary. There is also a synthesis with resource mobilisation theory recommended by Joe Foweraker (1995) with each of the methods drawing on mobilisations. The second concerns a methodology for anticipating, appreciating and responding to the gender, sex and sexual identities and dispositions of research participants again, in the historical and contemporary methods. The third involves a framework for understanding the implications of participants' relationships with Australia's changing political and economic environment and the state.

Melucci's "collective identity as a lens of analysis"

Melucci provides an empirical perspective on social movements and how they can be understood. It can reveal a scale of involvement from periphery to core. A movement can be big and small at the same time – the core activists can be very few in number. It can reveal its empirical objects including all sorts of groupings, networks and collectivities, though these may be more or less collective in orientation. The multiplicity of movement elements provides different historical elements and multiple insides and outsides, entrances and exits. Dissident politics interact with radical and critical politics as elements of collective action. Over time these contestations influence collective groupings and normativities, the dispositions of activists and the meanings in the spaces in which they move. A focus on their larger mobilisations against local, state and national authorities, in the past and the present (as will be discussed) is revealing, then, but not of all the kinds of resistance and refusal. Embedded in activists' social networks in everyday life are the places where the recognition and shared normativity that underpins collective action is produced. The field of homosexual histories and archivism includes a focus on contests with governments, the police, the Churches (and so on), paying attention to mobilisations, the use of legal frameworks and the political system through lobbying and deal making with governments and political parties. Recent annual Australian Homosexual Histories conferences have focussed on law reform in various states and the contributions of particular mobilisations, key leaders and historians. While these "key" historical events, organisations and actors reveal social movements at work, they are an effect of social movements rather than an explanation of them, following Melucci's argument (1995, p. 54).

Central to Melucci's "collective identity as analysis" is that visible mobilisations and contests are made possible by their 'latent' pole - processes that are harder to see and by people whose voices can remain unheard. These processes involve intense collective engagement, the meshing of social networks, the making of spaces and collective (counter) normativities for mutual recognition, the redistribution of energy and resources and pleasure and pain, all the 'laborious processes' of collective identity, as Melucci refers to them (1995, p. 50), and the endless possibilities they generate for action and in everyday life. A social movement can persist over time, without constant mobilisation and visible collective political action. It may be engaged in action which has no greater exteriority, such as queer identity politics, or otherwise be absorbed in its 'latent' pole, which can also serve as an abeyance structure where it can tick over for a long time, as long as individual actors survive or reproduce and ideas and developments in collective action permit, and enduring friendship networks and political normativities support. Melucci's "collective identity" as a lens of analysis is elaborated below (section 1.1).

Research participants' ideations of gender, sex and sexual identity and disposition
My research uses ethnographic methods to juxtapose historical and contemporary collective action and activists. The gay liberationists and lesbian feminists of the late 1970s struggled variously for social change. This was partly responsible for a liberalising effect and a new kind of normalisation of homosexuality. Radical queer, transgender and gay and lesbian activists in the 2010s are confronting neoliberal flavoured, social and economic restructuring, with neoliberal sexual and spatial politics, new kinds of regulation that invade every part of their lives. There has been a divergence of "queer" and "gay" politics and a reconfiguration of queer and gay spaces. In Sydney's inner-west there is a coherent queer community with, once again, radical political elements. The activists I focus on (in the past and the present) describe or address sex, gender and sexual identity in different ways. Some describe themselves as heterosexual or bisexual. The focus is on research participants' organising and activism related not only to sex and sexuality but to a range of political concerns and pursuits and solidarities. My data reveals the apparent continuities and points of disjuncture in the relationship between, for example, this Gay Solidarity Group contingent in Sydney's May Day March in 1982 (*Image 6*), coming out of lesbian and gay solidarity with, and visibility in, the Left[2] and international solidarity movements of the time and this inner-

west queer contingent, at March-in-March, in 2014 in Sydney (*Image 7*) in opposition to a conservative federal government and its neoliberal policies, and coming out of a different politics, a queer mobilisation within a broader counter-cultural milieu. Between them are three decades of changing notions of sexual identity and more dissident, different and deconstructive understandings among activists. These are the domain of the latent pole of collective action, embedded in overlapping social networks and in everyday life. It is a "laboratory" for the fashioning of new subjectivities, of different ways of living and being. New forms of domination reach into these spaces of everyday personal and community life.

A queer scene is now relatively easy to find in many cities and some regional areas, but the people who move its social-political networks can remain invisible, particularly in small and "underground" movements countering relatively new forms of social control. In these contexts collective action is bipolar as discussed earlier, but the visible and latent dimensions may both be hard to see. For example, on 27 March 2014, at Cardinal George Pell's farewell Mass, an otherwise lifelike, three-metre long faecal stool appeared on the steps of the St Marys Cathedral, with a handful of activists. 'Pell: Your complicity smells' said a placard that one of the organisers, the turd "wrangler", was holding, referring to Pell's past actions in dealing with claims of child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church. The turd was not hard to miss, but the 'symbolists' involved, a handful of queer activist artists and deejays, and the politics from which the action was coming were visible to few. The relationship between this and their other actions (including explicit responses to conservative and neoliberal developments) was similarly opaque as was their relationship to activist social networks.

In section 1.2, I discuss methodological considerations in anticipating and responding to the subjectivities of research participants, their ideations of sex, gender and sexuality, the collective dimensions of identity and of community and the taxonomic issues in the research methods. I address Green's (2002) post-queer methodology and argument for empirical sociological distinction between "gay" and "queer".

Research participants and Australia's changing political economic environment
Activists' material conditions and their relationship with the state and their economic environments have changed considerably since the 1970s. The effects of social and economic restructuring and neoliberal developments have changed the everyday life of

activists and activism, reaching into the very spaces where they live and the public spaces of their communities. Comparisons with activists in the past are stark. While they experienced hardship in their struggle against conservatism, earlier activists enjoyed the relative benefits of a period of social, political and economic liberalisation, public sector growth and community sector funding. Older activists have watched the achievements of earlier liberal and progressive reforms falling away, slowly and then at times in great tranches, over four decades. But no matter how bleak the outlook, there is more to lose in an environment of neoliberal inspired social and economic rationalisation and developments in neoliberal sexual and spatial politics and associated privatising moral discourses in political and cultural domains. Contemporary activists confront a landscape of 'moralistic political discourse' as Mouffe describes right-wing populism, xenophobia and racism, which 'flourish … where the adversarial model of politics has lost its capacity to organise the political system' (2005, p. 59). This poses new challenges and figures new sites of resistance. Contemporary activists live in a time where upwardly redistributive economic policy is framed as "depoliticised" economic governance. Divisive and often contradictory strategies reflect the neoliberal and conservative alliances that deliver control of the political system, for example, the detention of children refugees, and the reinvention of an idealised holy heteronormative family. In section 1.3, I outline the political and economic developments of the four decades in question and address social geographers' concerns whether developments in Australia in this time are accurately described as neoliberal, given the unique characteristics and conditions that have shaped the country's response to neoliberalism. I also examine neoliberal developments in the U.S. and global north and Australia and specifically, neoliberal sexual politics and spatial politics.

1.1 Collective identity as a lens through which to view social movement action

Melucci lists some of the research questions that can be drawn from his concept of collective identity as a lens of analysis.

> How are ends and means interpreted by different parts of the movement? How are resources and constraints held together in the movement discourse? What kind of relation with the environment shapes the movement and how do the different parts interpret it? What kind of conflicts, tensions, and negotiations can be observed during the process of construction and maintenance of a movement as a unified empirical actor? These are some of the questions that can be derived from the

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concept of collective identity and that lead to a different research practice (Melucci 1995, p. 55).

Melucci's concept of collective identity is a response to developments in social movement actions not principally concerned with class conflict that 'express new systemic conflicts and challenge new forms of social domination'. He warns against reductionist arguments that 'place these phenomena on an exclusively political level' (1995, p. 54). Rather than acting only within the political system, these social actors with their embeddedness in everyday life, spaces, relations and identities deploy cultural politics that challenge 'the dominant language … the codes that organise information and shape social practices' (1995, p. 41). I have referred in the prologue to this bipolar quality of collective action, involving "visibility" and "latency". Visibility refers to mobilisations against opponents and demonstrating the viability of cultural and other differences. Latency refers to a movement's embeddedness in everyday life and social relations where actors develop and contest these alternative models (Melucci 1994, p. 127) and where their mutual recognition evolves. In this way collective action is embedded in everyday life and the collective and personal identity of social actors. They move away from "political" systems and the frames of political action to produce and inhabit life world spaces 'where individual needs and the pressures of political innovation mesh' (1994, p. 103). Melucci's contemporary social movements 'take the form of solidarity networks with potent cultural meaning' very different from 'political actors and formal organisations' (1995, p. 52). The structural and organisational dimensions of collective action, even cultural political action, remain 'meaningful levels of analysis for the reconstruction from within the system of action that constitute a collective actor', as do its relationships with forces external to the movement including the political system, the police and other agents of social control (1995, p. 52). These 'define a field of opportunities and constraints within which the collective actor takes shape, perpetuates itself, or changes' (1995, p. 52). The shift from political to cultural social action and 'symbolic production' has required changes in Melucci's theoretical approach at 'two levels', changes in the 'conceptualisation' of contemporary social movements (and their collective political and cultural action) and 'changes in our understanding of the significance of collective phenomena' in contemporary society, which he argues, 'are connected by a circular relationship. The circle is not a vicious one if its concepts help to see more of the phenomena to which they apply, to see them differently' (1995, p. 51).

1.1.1   *Personal and Collective Identity*

According to Melucci, the processes of personal and collective identity have shared characteristics in producing empirical forms that mask the processes that constitute them. Personal identity refers to 'a tendency and need' to embody, and delimit to others, a relatively stable identity captured in 'more or less permanent structures' which are in tension to, and the result of, processes 'concealed behind those forms' (1995, p. 45). Personal identity refers to this permanence of the subject, withstanding time and changes in the environment. It also refers to its mutual recognition with others. While any definition of collective movement identity that is delimited to its collectivity, or others, may appear to be 'stable and coherent', (1995, p. 46) it is an empirical form that conceals its multiplex, multi-level, chaotic and incomplete processes. Collective identity, as an analytical tool, can reveal the way personal and collective identity interact or are set in tension.

Collective identity, Melucci argues, is an 'action system' of a collective actor that is 'organised along a number of polarities in a state of mutual tension' (1995, p. 44). It is contested and normalised in the orientations of a social movement: in relation to the objectives of collective action and its meaning for participants; in the strategies for action and their potential and constraints; and in its relationship with its environment and field of action. It also requires a level of affective commitment that means that it cannot be reduced to 'rational' estimations or decisions. 'There is no recognition without feeling and no meaning without emotion' (1995, p. 45). Collective identity has epistemological dimensions. Cognitively there is a shared and contested language, 'rituals, practices' and 'cultural artefacts' which are understood in various ways by social actors, but which enable them to assess the meaning and extent of their actions, their potential and their limits, their relationships with the field of action, and the benefits of their outcomes (1995, p. 44).

Melucci stresses that collective identity is a relational process of actors both internal to the movement and in response to its environment. Internally, the process refers to interacting networks of actors as well as constitutive 'forms of organisations and models of leadership, communicative channels, and technologies of communication' (1995, p. 44). The delimiting of collective identity to its actors is embedded in these processes. In relation to its external environment 'the ability of a collective actor to distinguish itself

from others must be recognised by these others.' He argues that it is 'impossible to talk of collective identity without referring to its relational dimension' (1995, p. 47). Collective identity must be understood 'as a system of relations and representations' that take 'the form of a field containing a system of vectors in tension' (1995, pp. 48). In its 'concrete form', then, collective identity 'depends on how this set of relations is held together' – it is not an empirical object, it is a 'laborious process' (1995, p. 50). It can be imagined as a field that expands and contracts and whose borders alter with the varying intensity and direction of the forces that constitute it. Considering collective identity as an observed action, Melucci defines it as an 'ability' of actors to know and reflect on the effects of collective action as their own. It 'is not simply a reaction to social and environmental constraints, it produces symbolic orientations and meanings that actors are able to recognise.' (1995, pp. 46-7).

1.1.2 *Collective Identity as Method*

Melucci emphasises that collective identity is a tool of analysis and employs the metaphor of a lens 'through which we read reality', a tool that can function 'only if it helps to analyse phenomena, or dimensions of them, that cannot be explained through other concepts or models and if it contributes to new knowledge and understanding of these phenomena' (1995, pp. 51, 55). It offers the possibility of dereifying: the accounts of social actors, 'letting the plurality of relations and meanings appear' and the empirical appearance of structures and organisations, to attain the constructive processes at work (1995, pp. 49-50).

Melucci reviews the (usual) range of research methods that may be reductive or, with reflexive care, reveal aspects of collective action and identity. Participation as a method can provide the necessary closeness to appreciate these processes, but it must address certain concerns. One is that the researcher is not proscribing some kind of awareness to the participants, who are self-aware and able to reflect on their activism. The other is that a proper account is given of the relationship between the observer and the observed. This is particularly required of the researcher who is also a participant in a field of action who must give an account of any "artificial" effects and on strategies for maintaining closeness and critical distance. In Chapter Two, I give an account of the autoethnographic aspects of the research methods (historical and contemporary), and particularly in the participation method. The relationship between researcher and the

various fields of historical and contemporary action and methods are acknowledged, and strategies are outlined that give critical distance to their analysis.

While collective identity cannot provide a total explanation, it remains 'a permanent warning' to recognise the multiplicity of collective action, and 'the complexity, the irreducibility [and] the intricate semantics of [its] meanings' (Melucci 1995, p. 54). With an 'appropriate analytical tool' collective identity can help to deconstruct these 'systems of action, complex networks among different levels and meanings of social action … identifying specific levels that enter [its] construction' (1995, p. 53).

> Contemporary movements … bring together forms of action that involve various levels of the social structure. They comprise different orientations that entail a variety of analytical points of view. Their components belong to different historical periods. We must, therefore, seek to understand this multiplicity of synchronic and diachronic elements and explain how they are combined into the concrete unity of a collective actor (Melucci 1995, pp. 53-4).

The parts of the contemporary queer movement are more or less commensurable in their politics, sexual politics, collective normativities and dispositions. These have contemporary and historical elements, as did earlier lesbian and gay movements.

Melucci stresses the importance of acknowledging what he refers to as levels of action and their visibility and not focussing on leaders and high-profile actions. His 'lens of collective identity' also examines the 'hidden forms' and 'more silent voices' (1995, p. 52). I have referred to a dynamic of centrality-peripherality to organising in social movements and I have considered this in the construction of the research methods.

The 'lens of collective identity', provides a method for comprehending: the multiplicity of a social movement, its historical and contemporary elements and diversity of perspectives; and a movement's productivity both in mobilisations and social actions, and in collectivities and in everyday life. It allows for illumination of a movement's hidden and unrecognisable elements and resources, and the variability and dynamics of the interaction of movement elements with changing political, social and cultural environments. It can reveal the tension within which a movement's various elements are held in their apparent unity and a movement's contested epistemologies, cultural practices, self-reflections, historicisms and affective landscapes. It shows the possibilities for a reflexive practice, for a form of politics that, as Miller argues,

involves a 'need for freedom' not just from the state and capital but from the 'doxa of what it is to be a person, from a particular and limiting "type of individualisation"' (1993 pp. 216-7). Movements can hold the spaces open for unruly subjects to fashion new subjectivities, different to existing notions of individuality, despite the limits of personal reflexivity. The 'lens of collective identity' can show: the enduring (counter) normativities of collective life that allow mutual recognition of collective actors; the shifting solidarities, bifurcations and boundaries of a movement over time; and the unpredictability of social movement outcomes. This has implications for a method for recognising queer subjectivities, collectivities and collective action. The challenge requires consideration of: the degree of bifurcation between gay and queer spaces (and the relative invisibility of the latter); the queer tactic of refusal of recognition; the problems of commensurability of essentialist sexual identity with more deconstructive understandings of gender and sexuality as sites of regulation; and the challenges to solidarity posed by an increasingly irrelevant and acritical lesbian and gay equality agenda.

According to Cox, Melucci does not consider 'the possibility of a purely cultural challenge' (1996, p. 5), seeing cultural politics dissipating into personal concerns and projects and the like, despite his acknowledgement of the everyday and cultural and symbolic processes in collective action. While Melucci challenges the field of social movement theory and what Cox calls its '"last instance" priority of instrumental political rationality' he recommends his approach be radicalised in two ways.

> Firstly, an approach which does not assume the primacy of state-oriented conflict
> can start from the analysis of these "movement areas" on their own terms.
> Secondly, the modes of rationality operative in these contexts can become an open
> question for research, in the examination of the nature and direction of potential
> sources of social change (Cox 1996, p. 5).

While I do not feel that the activism under enquiry represents a "purely cultural challenge", some of it is cultural in its orientations. Empirically, the distinction between adversarial and cultural politics is hard to sustain[3]. Activists are involved across multiple fields of action, networks and milieu and use different frameworks (for example a critical queer framework in one action and a liberal rights framework in another). The contemporary activists I've met have access to enabling technologies. They have capabilities to design, produce and widely distribute text, audio, image and

video and, variously, to make newsletters, zines, music, pictures, films, dissertations and performances that would have required enormous resources, personnel and equipment in the 1980s. The latter now fits on a desk and a few hand held devices. They can deploy their energies in adversarial politics and model counternormativities or antinormativities in their processes, at the same time, and also make it look like art and cultural criticism.

There is another compelling reason to include these kinds of actions in the analysis – the aforementioned effects of neoliberal regimes in depoliticising the political system and reaching into every part of everyday life and changing the notion of what is political. One effect of this is to conceal its adversarial role (e.g. class war) and to promote it as a vehicle for a "valueless", technocratic economic management. Under these regimes "political" becomes associated with governance and its meaning for some changes such that they may not regard aspects of their activism as political. The other effect of this disjuncture, as mentioned earlier and as Mouffe argues, is a situation 'where the adversarial model of politics has lost its capacity to organise the political system' (2005, p. 59). It is a situation where the usual political 'us and them' distinction cannot be made – when the "them" cannot be envisaged as a political adversary it is constructed as "evil", as a moral enemy. This has the effect of committing activists to continual engagement in "cultural" struggles around place, identity, nation and citizenship. It also figures a large focus on making, appropriating and defending community spaces for collective action and normativisation. To this end I have included activists and actions in the analysis that act in cultural and political domains, not because "the personal" and "art" are necessarily "political", but because they are empirically connected to the other activists, particularly in the aforesaid making of spaces, and they reveal something about the whole. While they have critical, radical or dissident politics like the others, they are more likely to ignore collective orthodoxies and stretch the coherence of collective normativities. And they are capable of breathtaking symbolism. One of the themes I explore in Chapter Seven is the limits of identity politics in this regard.

Melucci argues that the notion of collective identity, as an analytical tool, can help us to better understand 'the nature and meaning' of new kinds of collective action in 'highly differentiated systems.' Its analysis 'brings a field view of collective action and a dynamic view of its definition … relevant to sociological literature' (1995, p.52). The method has proved an appropriate vehicle for conducting a critical social movement

ethnography focussing on activists and their networks in one place over several decades. It is appropriate to a dual focus: on activists' mobilisations and the social and political contexts; and on activists' everyday lives.

1.1.3 Resource mobilisation theory

Resource mobilisation theorists have argued in McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001), Tilly (2007) and Tarrow (2008) that collective contention by social movements involves the mobilisation of resources, in particular within the political system, and rational choices by participants and estimations of the benefits of action. The debate on new social movements has set a distinction between such strategy oriented processes and those oriented to collective identity. According to Foweraker, this distinction was first noted by Cohen (1985). He repeats her call for a synthesis of these approaches that 'treats social movements as both expressive and instrumental, as both resource generators and resource mobilisers' (Foweraker 1995, p. 22). He stresses the significance of the political and institutional environments to which social movements relate, in determining their 'collective identity and strategic intent' (1995, p. 19). He notes that both resource mobilisation and new social movement theories see identity as the precondition for strategic collective action. He observes, on the other hand, that identity cannot only be a product of mobilisation because 'social location and shared experience provide its raw materials' (1995, p. 23). He adds that the unpredictability (and uncontrollability) of identity formation outcomes has much to do with their contingency on dynamic relationships both internal and external to the movement. My approach responds to this synthesis of strategy and identity oriented movement processes, using collective identity as a lens of analysis and also considering the collective mobilisation of social, cultural and political opportunities and resources and relationships with the political system. Participants in the methods are drawn from mobilisations rather than movement or identity groups.

1.2 A methodology for anticipating, appreciating and responding to the gender, sex and sexual identities and dispositions of research participants

As a critical ethnography about activists, my thesis describes participants' different ideations around gender, sex and sexuality. It describes individual habitus and dispositions in this regard. It explores personal and collective identity in personal, social, political and economic contexts. It seeks to clarify rather than reframe the

participants' voice. In this thesis identifiers or dispositions of gender, sex and sexuality are used precisely, and as ascribed by participants. One focus is a queer community in Sydney's inner-west. It is one of my communities – I regard myself as queer and am recognised there as such. I like the word's other association of strangeness and oddity. It is tattooed on my body. For me queer is about sexual and gender diverse people and social spaces. It is also more about relationships and collective anti-normative practices, such as polyamory, radical sexual politics and anti-heteronormative and counter-homonormative strategies, than it is about individuated characteristics. The meaning of queer is contingent, lived and collectively contested. Queer collectivity is not a collection of "identity groups" but an alliance with a shared sociality, politics and opponents. Queer theory offers an explanation of the historical framing and proscription of homosexuality and of the possibilities for personal transformation, of making new subjectivities. I have drawn important personal, political and sociological insights. Some contemporary research participants had also read or studied queer theory. For one participant, Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity (gender as a repeated performance of gendered norms in the service of heteronormative regimes, introduced in *Gender Trouble*, 1990) had helped shape his political response to gender in his gender transgressive performance work and in everyday life. Another had studied queer theorists and discussed them in student and queer collective contexts. His queer sexuality was concerned with everyday life and practising polyamory with multiple friends and lovers. Some other participants had read queer theory, though most had not and were unaware of its concepts. Some of the things they say and do may resonate with concepts in gay and lesbian studies or queer theory or they may contradict or confound them. Threads of queer theory, anti-colonial theory, radical and Left politics, feminism and transgender critiques of cisgender run though the collective contestations and politics in the more political parts of the queer community in Sydney's inner-west. With the increasing privileging of higher education in Australia and given the inaccessibility of queer theory and theory generally, there is an associated dynamic within queer collective contestations that privileges certain notions of queer.

In a critique of queer theorists Adam Green protests what he regards as two problematic streams of thinking. One involves 'radical deconstructionism'. He refers to theorists influenced by Michel Foucault and Jacques Lacan, and specifically to Judith Butler, David Halperin and Anna-Marie Jagose. This "deconstructionism", he argues,

'superimposes a postmodern self-concept on the homosexual subject' dismantling contemporary gender and sexual categories that remain as organising principles in social organisation and social and individual life (2002, p. 523). The second stream he identifies is 'radical subversion'. Here he refers to Alexander Doty, Eve Kosofsky-Sedgewick, Michael Bronski and Michael Warner, and to arguments that separate queer subjects from the normative institutions and forces with which they have complex relationships in everyday life, and by which they may be otherwise shaped. Together, he says, these perspectives subvert the very epistemology on which gender and sexual identities are formed and create queer subjects 'outside of culture and social structure' (Green 2002, p.523). He proposes a 'post-queer' methodology that reconnects lesbian and gay subjects to "the social" and to broader structural effects, one that simultaneously employs critical queer insights while based in 'empirical sociology' (2002, p. 524). Queer critical theorists do problematise the normative distinctions and categories of sex, gender and sexuality. At the empirical level, what activists say about their sex, gender, sexuality and identity is complex, with personal and collective dimension and historical and contemporary elements. My use of terms like gay, lesbian, bisexual, heterosexual, transgender, queer, community or intersex in each context is considered and drawn from their accounts

The activists I have focused on tend to have very unusual habituses, backgrounds which are counternormative. In this sense they have never been "normal". I would observe that subjectivisation involves subjects collectively remaking themselves. Queer theory can help people make reflexive sense of gender and sexuality differences which prefigure it. Gay liberation theory and radical and socialist feminisms have done this. While I agree that activists have complex relationships with normative institutions and forces in everyday life, these relationships provide resources and the material for their deconstructions and refusals of, and their challenges to and resistance in political and cultural domains[4]. I have cited the theorists Green critiques, but in the empirical context he recommends. Green also expresses the concern that some authors use terms like "queer" and "gay" inaccurately, even conflating these and argues that the difference should be established empirically (Green 2002, p. 532), Such distinctions in this thesis have been established empirically.

As an ethnographic work, my research examines the relationship between participants' various ideations of gender, sex and sexuality, with other attributes and dispositions and

with collective identity and action and broader historical, political, social and economic contexts. There are implications in this within research methods, for anticipating and responding to the variability of ideations of self, collectivity and community.

One implication involved avoiding presuppositions and assumptions in research questions and topic guides, such as in the acritical use of contested terms like "community" or constructions like "LGBT". Contemporary research participants had different standards or expectations of a notion of community as real and redistributive. Some saw a "lesbian and gay community" only as a part of claims to constituency made by gay and lesbian community NGOs. Others moved across bifurcated queer and gay spaces and saw them as parts of a whole. Participants identified their gender, sex and sexuality in different and sometimes multiple ways and interviews were generative leading from their motivations to activism and notions of affinities with activist groups, social networks and communities towards these abstractions of identity. In the 78ers survey the 27 descriptors of gender, sex and sexuality offered were all in use in the cohort at the time (1978) and the categories came from my trialling of the survey in 1998. They included the usual descriptors as well as those relevant to particular social and political groups, fetish groups and sexual politics, and to historical periods (camp subculture[5]). Attributions such as "a 19 year old radical feminist lesbian said…" are not meant to reduce identity to stable sexual or political categories, but to locate her and her comments in a particular set of social networks and political groups of the time in which identity and action were being contested. Word use and meaning is historically specific. While some used 'queer' in 1978, for example, it was reclaiming an old curse word and not in the contemporary or theoretical sense.

Another implication is in recognising a participant's social and physical distance from particular constructions of collective identity and the bifurcation of queer and gay spaces, and how this affects attitudes to these (for example, attitudes to a notion of "lesbian and gay community" from various perspectives such as "queer and lesbian/gay", "queer heterosexual", "transgendered", "lesbian/gay but not queer", or from geographical distances, even small ones).

The method then is about appreciating the subjectivities and subjectivisations of research participants and knowing how to respond and to proceed, whether someone in 1978 is a "mavis", a "butch" or "transgendered", or someone in 2016 is a queer

heterosexual or a woman and a lesbian who enjoys fetish sex with gay men. It is about recognising what is collectively delimited and contested, the (counter- or anti-) normativities around sex, gender and sexuality and what it means personally to research participants. It is also about recognising sexual politics, and activists' broader contestations and campaigns, collectively (community and identity politics) and in cultural and political action.

1.3 Liberalism, radicalism, social movements and the conservative-neoliberal backlash – research participants' relationships with their economic and political environments

This section concerns a method for regarding research participants' relationships with their economic and political environments. The literature addressed here relates to: neoliberal and liberal economic and social restructuring; developments in neoliberal sexual politics, gay and lesbian equality politics and homonormativity; and notions of neoliberal spatial politics.

My thesis refers to and examines points and periods of time since 1972, from the tail end of the now faltering post-war boom. In Australia this is a time of enormous change. The progressive Whitlam Labor Government (1972-75), introduced downwardly redistributive polices: free higher education, aboriginal land title, direct federal funding of community services, employment creation, a universal healthcare system and a loosening of censorship laws are just some of them. Cracks appeared in the conservative moral landscape, one in which the disavowal and persecution of homosexuality was elemental. At the same time the radical Gay Liberation Front in Sydney had split in 1972 from gay and lesbian organisation CAMP NSW which had formed in 1969. The lesbian feminist movement was organising separately and active from the mid 1970s.

The Fraser Liberal government (1975-83) commenced the reversal of earlier advances, starting with regressive reforms to Whitlam's universal healthcare system, Medibank. In the context of pro-business activism locally and internationally, and the elections of Thatcher and Reagan, Manne notes, 'the struggle against inflation and the power of trade unions now began in earnest' in Australia (2010, pp. 14-5). The first Hawke Labor government floated the currency in 1983 and five Hawke-Keating Labor governments (1983-96) and four Howard Liberal-National governments (1996-2007) saw a top-down transformation of political and economic institutions. With Hawke's economic reforms,

committed to stopping 'increases in taxation, public expenditure and budget deficits', Australia, Pusey argues, 'was subjected with full force to the British and U.S. ... variant of neoliberalism'. Business activism was driven by local peak business organisations; new neoliberal economists in the Canberra policy apparatus; right-leaning economic journalists and business writers; the then big four accounting firms; business-funded hired guns and attack dogs in the new-right "think tanks"; with the chorus of populist media commentators, mostly 'opportunistic contrarians with no serious intellectual credentials, busy playing the tunes of their corporate sponsors by deflecting public resentments onto symbolic targets' (Pusey 2010, pp. 126-7).

In the inflationary economy of the late 1970s and early 1980s and confused national politics of the time, there was a renewed second wave of collective action and groups like the Gay Liberation Quire and new ways to do politics and culture. It was a time that saw the formation of a gay (at first, male) community, commercial and cultural scene and economy and its later diversification. There was a diffuse lesbian and gay equality movement and community governance organisations from the mid-1980s, a devastating pandemic and a social movement of people living with HIV/AIDS. There was a (re)formation of queer political communities and their separate spaces from the late 1980s and 1990s. The Howard Liberal government had neoliberal ideological tenets in its policy platform. It fought the earlier gains of the labour movement, Left political groups, social movements and cultural groups. Howard projected a marked disinterest in homosexuals.

There was a culture war in Australia. The Howard government[6] silenced dissidents, ignored dissent and promoted divisiveness, with refugees, intellectuals, welfare recipients and environmentalists among its targets. At the same time it maintained its alliances with conservatives of the religious Right (who ensured control of the political system)[7], the intelligentsia, academy and xenophobic populists. The Howard government attacked the national wage-fixing instrument[8], and undermined popular regard for public services and assets. Regardless of broad opposition, 'Australia became a world leader in the privatisation of publicly owned assets', (and, I would add, the marketisation of public services). Both the Hawke and Howard governments attacked government-owned and other public media. These campaigns were symptomatic, Pusey argues, of neoliberal hostility to concepts of 'active citizenship and democratic governance ... the corruption of public culture and good governance may be seen as a

practical outcome of a neoliberal ideology that is opposed, in a fundamental way, to moral actions that resist economic calculation' (2010, p. 137-8, 139). Since the 1990s, conservative state and federal governments with neoliberal ambitions have relied on conservative alliances for control of the political system.[9] These alliances have produced contradictory positions and accommodations.

Howard appealed to Labor's constituency. He strove to create a new kind of national identity, one that disavowed its racism, was held in a tension with indigenous Australians and culturally and linguistically diverse communities and over-emphasised border control. It began to challenge what social geographers might describe as fundamental Australian economic historical characteristics that resist neoliberalism, that burden the state with a persistent demand for geographical, social and cultural equity. Since then a diminished political contest of Labor and conservative governments has overseen the privatisation of assets, conflict with labour, rationalisation of public services and re-imaginings of the role of state and the meaning of entitlement. These artifices are drawn from a neoliberal pallet. They foreshadow new neoliberal subjects and neoliberal technological workforces, ones no longer having a collective and historical concern for said geographical, social and cultural equity. It didn't seem to crystallise for Howard, however, in his defeat or for his reincarnation in Tony Abbott who along with his government struggled for political capital from the outset. It doesn't mean it couldn't happen, given time, whatever the country's imperviousness to a sudden change in the role of the state. Whether these can be called neoliberal developments is contestable, as I will later elaborate.

This section involves a methodology for understanding the historical and contemporary research participants' relationships with their social, economic and political environments. The literature reviewed in this section relates to this changing climate of neoliberalisation (and its effects on political and regulatory systems and social movements). It is also concerned with neoliberalisation of other domains and the development and operations of a "neoliberal sexual politics" in the northern hemisphere and in Australia and the implications of these for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer social movements. My thesis is unusual as an empirical exploration of economic effects on activism with an Australian and very local focus. The liberalising state with which early activists came to have a developmental collaboration, is no longer recognisable. The opportunities provided by free education, funding of community

services, and public sector growth, among other things, changed the material conditions and trajectories of their lives. Some of the contemporary activists have described in their mobilisations or organising, the excisive effects (I have touched on earlier) of neoliberal sexual politics or domesticating and demobilising equality discourses in gay and lesbian community governance groups. At the same time socio-economic and urban restructuring impact more immediately on their resources, their collective spaces and their individual wellbeing and figure some of their activist concerns. Issues that impact on their everyday lives include housing unaffordability and uncertainty, underemployment and unemployment, the restructured labour force (casualised) and education systems (marketised and user-pays), privatising attacks on the public domain, public services and public space and heightened social control and policing and limitations on personal and public freedoms. The smell coming from the kitchen is neoliberal, even if the meal is a slow roasted liberal-democracy.

1.3.1   *Neoliberalism in Australia?*

Manne acknowledges the varying commitment to neoliberal economic restructuring among Western nations and the extent to which it is 'coloured or modified by national political cultures' (2010, p. 16). One of the variants, Pusey argues (citing Gascoigne 2002), is Australia's modernist and liberal origins. The state preceded 'the emergence of comparatively weak forms of civil society' with little to compare with the 'strong tradition of grassroots town-hall democracy' in the U.S. (2010, p. 142). Emerging concerns in Australian social and economic geography include the historical and contemporary specificities of place and culture and how these have underpinned economic developments and shaped responses to global capitalisation and neoliberal forces. The imperative is to understand these in their local specificity, and inform resistance to them, or promote post-neoliberal possibilities. This requires a critical perspective of theories of neoliberal developments in the global north, that may not give account to their own specificity or the cultural, social, political, economic and imperial assumptions they involve (see Wray et al. 2013, who reflect on Australian economic geography and post-colonial theory).

The experience of economic globalisation and neoliberalism in Australia is idiosyncratic and its developments have been limited and slowed by its historical economic and social characteristics. Among these specificities Gibson (2013) evokes

Australia's history as a state-developed enterprise, its compulsory voting system, its labour-employer arbitration system, its federal-state political system, unionisation of workforces, and the relative peacefulness of class antagonisms. These class and colonial legacies, he argues, have had a 'muting' effect on neoliberal developments. Acknowledging growing social and economic inequality and the power of neoliberal cultural and political institutions, successive governments have nevertheless failed to implement fundamental neoliberal reforms because of enduring popular demands for spatial and economic equality and redistribution and ongoing contestations around cultural equality.

Weller and O'Neill (2014) are concerned that a global neoliberal abstract might stand in for all the variability of local historical and economic conditions and responses. Their survey of geographers' approaches to critiquing neoliberalism discerns three types: neoliberalism as ideology, neoliberalism as extant 'policies and practices' (p. 107) and neoliberalism as a form of governmentality that implicates successive, political, economic, social and cultural domains in a constitution of 'new spaces and subjects' (p. 109).

In terms of neoliberalism as ideology they argue that while neoliberal forces have occupied the Left and Right of Australian politics, there has not yet been a neoliberal government in Australia. In terms of neoliberalism as existing policies and practices, they argue that while governments have introduced some neoliberal policies, no policy framework in Australia can be regarded as neoliberal. Australian voters have rejected more substantively neoliberal policies at the polls (such as John Howard's defeat, on the back of a successful labour revolt against his planned deregulation of the industrial relations system, *Work Choices*). Weller and O'Neill argue that much of what has been described as neoliberal refers to economic rationalisation of the public sector and government services and the imperative is "developmental" of these rather than a neoliberal abandonment of the state having such a role. They express a concern with critiques of neoliberalism as a form of governmentality, of self-regulation that anything might be called neoliberal. Sociologists like Brown argue (in Brown and Kinnucan 2015: para. 9) that neoliberalism is not simply a return to pre-liberal economic policy, or a kind of 'capitalism on steroids'. It is a 'mode of governmentality' that 'understands markets as appropriate for every domain of life, and understands every domain of life as appropriately economised.' Weller and O'Neill leave the possibility open for 'an

exposition of the spaces, connections and subjectivities that must be brought into existence for neoliberalism to do its work.' They conclude that Australia is not on a neoliberalist path. Their critical view of neoliberalism follows Sheppard and Leitner (2010) in regarding the driving force of neoliberalism as 'an overarching imaginary that promotes market oriented logics wherever possible'. It can be distinguished 'from classical liberalism by an aggressive political rationality' that is intent on the 'penetration of an ever-widening range of economic and social domains' (Weller and O'Neill 2014, p.110).

The tendency here is to economic and political over-determinism. A neoliberal regime is not a government but it may control or influence one. At the same time it may attack the legitimacy of government itself. It is a horde that moves from one domain of life to another, and within government. It is multifaceted, operating within political, social or cultural systems. All the while, the growing list of reversals of labour, Left and social movement achievements, of lost public services, assets and spaces, of privatised economic risks and of widening social inequality is evidence of neoliberalisation. According to Pusey, the notion that neoliberal economic restructuring in Australia has been somehow beneficial or benign belies the reality that it 'has downloaded corporate risks into households' and has killed off job and income security and home ownership.

> From1980 to 2007, the wages share of gross national income fell from 60 per cent to 53 per cent as the profit share rose from 17 per cent to just over 27 per cent. Real hourly labour costs have followed the same pattern, resulting in substantial upward redistribution of income that mainly favoured corporations (Pusey 2010, p.128).

He argues that labour market deregulation has provided Australians with the second most family-unfriendly working hours in the OECD[10] (2010, p. 133). With the conservative and liberal democratic sides of politics competing to offer the best policies of privatisation, attacks on workers' rights, pay and conditions and tax concessions to business, 'politicians find themselves locked into a mutually weakening electoral contest' that damages the public legitimacy of government and its capacity to challenge particular 'vested interests'. Politics becomes

> various forms of top-down pseudo-management of the larger public with spin and symbolic gestures. This rather bleak condition is made worse by the paucity of a public intellectual and political culture that is … bereft of strongly rooted ideas and moral principles (Pusey 2010, p. 143).

Since 2010 there has been no let up in this electoral non-contest.

1.3.2   *Economic liberalism, neoliberalism and social movements in the U.S.*

Political and economic developments in the U.S. are relevant, not because they explain neoliberal processes in Australia but because there are critical commentaries on new neoliberal subjects, neoliberal sexual politics and homonormativity. Neoliberalism's ideological origin is in an economic liberal intellectual reaction, in the 1940s in the U.S., against Keynesian economic theory. While the latter had 'helped civilise and stabilise capitalism' and reduced the local appeal of communism (Moore 2010, p. 13), it had resulted in a steadily falling business share of national income (until the late 1970s). According to its critics: 'the post-war boom was generating too much contestation, too many (irresponsible) demands for better wages … and living conditions ... more consumption and more publicly provided services'. The neoliberal strategy was to 'deregulate the labour market, neutralise union power, get rid of collective wage bargaining, engage state power on the side of the corporations, strike down Keynesian economics, choke off the welfare state and reduce taxes' (Pusey 2010, p. 126).

Neoliberalism, Duggan (2003) argues, renders the market economy as a technical domain, its management a matter of 'technical expertise', rather than a cultural or political authority, an "apolitical" system of market interrelationships which is not held to account to cultural and political concerns. Curthoys argues similarly, that with 'two absolutes', neoliberal freedom (the absence of coercion in a market) and an internal drive to economic growth, the conditions are established for an understanding that 'takes politics out of politics' by locating freedom not in political life and institutions but in a market 'system' (2010, p. 60). In the neoliberal ideal there are no genuine conflicts of interest, no opposite forces, no power struggles.

Neoliberalism's primary goal for the policy agenda is privatisation, involving the reduction of the role of the state and the transfer of public services and property to private interests. It extends to the privatisation of 'affective as well as economic and public life' (Duggan 2003, p. 65). Agathangelou, Bassichis and Spira argue that the move to 'privatise and contain intimacies and sexuality within the realm of the private … absolves collective accountability and public intervention' (2008, p. 132). Neoliberal strategies may express their structural contradictions. Duggan notes that the neoliberal agenda promotes the 'privatisation of civil life and reproduction' within the family,

alongside the state's extensive role in regulating sex, sexuality and reproduction, with 'favoured forms of family life' (2003, pp. 8-9). In each domain of neoliberal contestation, the principle agenda of privatisation translates into specific moral discourses and economic and cultural politics (for example, neoliberal sexual and spatial politics).

Duggan gives a queer and critical account of an emergent 'neoliberal hegemony', and its effects on U.S. social movements. In the 1960s and 1970s, neoliberals attacked the downwardly redistributive politics and culture of Left and progressive social movements. These were connected by shared epistemology and 'the pressure to level hierarchies and redistribute down – money, political power, cultural capital, pleasure and freedoms' (2003, p. xvii). In the 1980s pro-business activism 'forged languages and concepts, practices and policies and founded new institutions' that upheld or promoted inequality (Duggan 2003, pp. xvii-xviii). Neoliberal business and government activism intensified in the 1980s and 90s. The culture wars raged, with neoliberal attacks on the downwardly redistributive cultures of social movements, and democratic public institutions and spaces. These attacks were also moral and conservative reflecting the various neoliberal, conservative and religious political alliances that provided control of the political system (Duggan 2003, p. xxi). In the 1990s, U.S. neoliberals began to offload these conservative alliances, moving their focus to reforms of the welfare system to introduce 'the language and values of privatisation and personal responsibility' (Duggan 2003, p. 19).

Duggan describes an ebbing of the Left and progressive social movements in the 1990s. At the same time the institutions and organisations of their "reformist" elements remained visible and these forms began to stand in for, what was the movement as a whole. U.S. lesbian and gay non-government organisations upscaled their activities. Some organisations and groups moved to the right, abandoning redistributive objectives in favour of a stripped down equality 'paradoxically imagined as compatible with persistent overall inequality' (2003, pp. xx). They became less accountable to their constituencies, adopted corporate governance models and 'neoliberal rhetoric' (2003, p. 44). 'No longer representative of a broad-based progressive movement, many of the dominant national lesbian and gay civil rights organisations have become the lobbying, legal and increasingly narrow gay, moneyed elite' (2003, p. 45). In the contemporary space of neoliberal hegemony, an incipient 'multicultural', neoliberal equality politics

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appears, that is non-redistributive and seeks mainstream inclusion while rejecting the anti-systemic demands of radical and Left social movements (2003, p. xxi). Despite the neoliberal insistence that the free market is "apolitical" and economic and political governance is technological, there is a neoliberal politics with a neoliberal sexual politics.

1.3.3   *Neoliberal sexual politics and gay and lesbian equality politics*

As neoliberal thought and practice restructures and privatises successive life domains it builds new technologies, practices and moral discourses of control and domination and a politics in these cultural domains. A neoliberal sexual politics has arisen in the U.S. that attempts to oppose lesbian and gay social movements and their downwardly redistributive politics and to commandeer, demobilise and domesticate their constituents. Rejecting the liberal normalisation of homosexuality, this neoliberal sexual politics is correspondingly neo-homonormative. Duggan terms it 'the new homonormativity':

> a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and
> institutions, but upholds and sustains them while providing the possibility of a
> demobilised gay constituency and a privatised, depoliticised gay culture anchored
> in domesticity and consumption (Duggan 2003, p. 50).

In illustrating this politics, Duggan analyses the discourses of neoliberal sexual politics, focusing on the writers of the Independent Gay Forum (IGF). Under the banner 'Forging a Gay Mainstream', the principles of the IGF, in short, are: "equal" inclusion; accepting a neoliberal view of the U.S. government; denying that gays represent a moral threat (in respect of conservative claims) or that they should support social change or reconstruction (in respect of progressive claims); and agreeing to disagree on neoliberal politics, morality, faith and relationships. They aim:

> to contest and displace the expansively democratic vision represented by
> progressive activists … replacing it with a model of a narrowly constrained public
> life cordoned off from the "private" control and vast inequalities of economic life
> (2003, p. 48-9).

Duggan cites Warner (1999) on the IGF address to an imagined mainstream of 'conventional gays' who represent the responsible centre (2003, p. 51). They position their opponents on the Left as 'irresponsible "extremists" or as simply anachronistic'

(2003, p. 50). They oppose 'the privacy-in-public claims' and 'publicising' strategies of the movement in favour of a delimited 'domesticated, depoliticised privacy' - they reject the 'democratic diversity of proliferating forms of sexual dissidence … in favour of the naturalised variation of a fixed minority arrayed around a state-endorsed heterosexual primacy and prestige' (2003, p. 65). To both its virtual constituency and its neoliberal mainstream, these gay and lesbian neoliberals have done a 'remapping of the key terms of gay rights activism' (2003, p. 51):

> "Equality" becomes narrow, formal access to a few conservatising institutions, "freedom" becomes impunity for bigotry and vast inequalities in commercial life and civil society, the "right to privacy" becomes domestic confinement, and democratic politics itself becomes something to be escaped (Duggan 2003, pp. 65-6).

Duggan says that the term homonormativity, introduced by Michael Warner (1999), is not meant to parallel heteronormativity as 'there is no structure for gay life no matter how conservative or normalising that might compare with the institutions promoting and sustaining heterosexual coupling' (2003, p. 94). Richardson also argues that neoliberalism may 'inform new forms of sexual politics'. She agrees with Duggan that neoliberal sexual politics is not merely a direction and form within sexual politics but also a form and direction within the politics of neoliberalism, a sexual politics of neoliberalism (2005, p. 517).

Agathangelou, Bassichis and Spira (2008) in their critique of U.S. neoliberal economic, cultural and sexual politics, take Duggan's "new homonormativity" through a further critical turn. The "acceptable" forms and subjectivities of lesbian and gay gentrification and respectabilisation are submitted to the full implications of acritical social inclusion in a warring techno-military empire that marks out excess bodies for extermination. Internally, a delimited and multi-sectoral prison-industrial complex criminalises behaviours and offers security against real and imagined threats and 'promises citizens and subjects a future filled with freedom, security and safety' (2008, p. 135). In this 'imperial logic' it is not sufficient to kill and criminalise enemies. These must be dehumanised and their deaths and incarceration offered up to a war-traumatised citizenry 'as a solution for fear and insecurity'. In this imperial logic, they argue, 'the demonisation and demolition of the racially and sexually aberrant other must be performed again and again' (2008, p. 127, 123).

Prisons and their proliferation are naturalised within the promotion of the discourses of 'protection', 'safety' and 'victim's rights'. The authors argue that the normalised regime of sexualised violence acted upon people in prisons, 'particularly women, queer people and transgender people of colour, emerges not as exceptional, but rather as indicative and productive of a larger regime of gratuitous force' that criminalises, emprisons and punishes. This violence 'should thus not be understood as "cruel and unusual" spectacles aberrant to the political order, but rather as foundational to it, and as central to the production of civil society as well as its outsides' (2008, p. 135). The authors 'locate the mobilisation of highly individualised narratives of bourgeois belonging and ascension within a larger promise project that offers to some the tenuous promise of mobility, freedom, and equality' (2008, p. 124). Promises are made selectively to subjects, and 'this promise project is always reliant on a series of (non) promises to those on whom the entire production is staged'. The authors argue that 'the homonormative turn' must be resituated 'within this broader (heterogeneous) imperial logic' that following a history of state endorsed and delimited homosexual oppression comes new forms of domination and 'the creation and obliteration of new outsides become the answer for ongoing pain and devastation' (2008, p. 123).

The authors argue that the agenda of U.S. lesbian and gay NGOs, "equality" politicians and technocrats reveal how the counter-systemic and downwardly (re)distributive aspirations of liberationist social movements have been 'systematically replaced with strategies for individualised incorporation into the U.S. moral and politico-economic order' (2008, pp. 123-4). These equality agents have 'served to reroute radical political goals to desires for legitimacy, professionalisation and (relative) power' (2008, pp. 128-9). More than participating in these processes, they uphold the sexual regulatory power of the state. Their demand for marriage and a privatised, domesticated sexual "freedom" 'reconsolidates the exclusionary practices of the institution of marriage' and the policing and pathologisation of public sexual expression and dissident (working-class and culturally diverse) intimacies, sexualities and kinship forms (2008, pp. 121-2).

Richardson identifies this new formation in lesbian and gay sexual politics in advanced neoliberal capitalist states, since the 1990s, that has sought 'equal rights' with and inclusion in mainstream culture through appeals to social and sexual 'citizenship'. She examines the rise of a 'neoliberal politics of normalisation' in these new sexual politics, which are produced by, within and in response to new forms of political and cultural

domination associated with neoliberal governance. Their key feature is that they represent a break with the anti- and counter-systemic politics of contemporary radical movement elements and earlier liberation movements. The contemporary politics of normalisation, although contesting exclusion by the state involves an acritical enhancement of the 'social value' of lesbians and gay men. Equality politics is about the inclusion and (re) valorisation of lesbians and gays without any critique of the social processes and politics that produce devalued or excess subjects. The appeal to the instruments of the state, that regulate affective life and 'confer rights and responsibilities' (2005 pp. 531-2) authorises a neoliberal politics.

Central to this neoliberal politics of normalisation is the argument of "sameness with heterosexuals" though it 'differs [from earlier and radical sexual politics] in emphasising the rights of individuals rather than "gay rights" and in seeking "equality" with, rather than tolerance from, the mainstream' (Richardson 2005, p. 516). Real lesbian and gay communities, she argues, are complex and 'socially heterogeneous', so sameness conceals 'social location' and 'inequalities such as those of gender, class, race and disability' and the implications of the meanings and constructions of 'normal' in these (2005, p. 532). Richardson questions the 'equalness' of "equal recognition" in terms of which particular constructions of lesbian or gay (and heterosexual) are deployed in equality politics. She argues that the privileging of these constructions and forms has the potential for creating 'new social, economic and moral divisions between lesbians and gay men, between heterosexuals and across the heterosexual/homosexual divide' (2004, p. 405 and 2005, p. 520).

Equality politics has, according to Richardson, 'become the dominant political discourse' in lesbian and gay movements in the U.S. and 'the dominant trend in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Europe' (2005, p. 520). The field of neoliberal sexual politics is associated with 'new forms of social governance' and an equality politics 'shaped through normative constructions of responsible and respectable sexual citizenship.' Underpinning these neoliberal constructions are processes of self-regulation 'central to which is professionalisation and particular forms of knowledge construction' (2005, p. 523). She analyses these personal and collective drives to equality with heterosexuals and sexual citizenship in the context of the professionalisation of knowledge (academic, popular and commercial) and the

professionalisation of sexual politics (e.g. the "NGOisation" of movement elements and career activism).

She identifies a tension in the academic field that is 'often associated with professionalisation' in other domains. She refers to two types of methodological approach. One responds to 'the greater visibility of lesbians and gay men in mainstream culture' and promotes 'rights of cultural citizenship'. The other approach is more critical, with queer arguments as to how this visibility and new knowledges (academic and popular) 'can operate as new "spaces of control"' (2005, p. 531).

Changes in the political environment in response to equality demands are creating opportunities for career activism, 'for the construction of new lesbian and gay subjectivities, both as members of a political constituency and as professional activists' (2005, pp. 523-4). Lesbian and gay NGOs have considerable agency in the normalisation of equality politics. She argues that we should be alert to 'how construction of specific *normative* lesbian/gay citizenship may impact on the profile and staffing of NGOs, the preferred forms of governance and leadership (2005, p. 520). Richardson identifies a political discourse of assimilation and equal entitlement in various countries, including Australia, that requires a style of governance that is able to recognise, and be recognised in, the mainstream and is acceptable in the political and social policy fields and with commercial interests. It is a politics that can 'not only render intelligible and acceptable the idea of the "normal lesbian/gay", but also can "normalise" the lesbian and gay movement itself'. This mainstreaming approach has exclusionary effects, raising the question as to which individuals and groups are becoming '*acceptably* visible' and who is 'marginalised', excluded or excised (2005, p. 524). It is an issue that she suggests requires empirical investigation and one I have taken up.

The experience in Australia of neoliberal sexual politics has been different to the United States.[11] One of the reasons is that there are no large independently funded and wealthy lesbian and gay NGOs in Australia. The tactics associated with those in the U.S. are evident in some activist groups, such as, much more recently, Australians for Marriage Equality (in terms of addressing a gay mainstream). The dynamics of homonormativity, demobilisation, respectabilisation and domestication are, on the other hand, more subtle but widespread in their influence in the orientations and operations of lesbian and gay

NGOs and activist bureaucrats, as shown in Chapter Eight. Willett says that in Australia, 'equality had been the rallying principle of the gay and lesbian movement since the demise of the liberationist current in the 1980s' (2010, p. 195). He gives an account of the agency of lesbian and gay bureaucrats, in the 'institutions, structures and agencies' of the state, and the considerable influence they were able to bring to bear on policy, despite the prevailing views of government and argues that the public sector 'was an instrument for the advance of the demands and desires of the movement'. Bureaucrats were 'finding and courting and working with friends in the public service and quasi-governmental agencies', forming what Willett describes as 'a community in which people lived open, happy, and appealingly normal lives' (2010, p. 198). He refers to part of what is in some ways a professional class in lesbian and gay community governance. There are, as will be later discussed, neoliberal sexual political effects in the excision and marginalisation of radical, dissident and different queer "others".

Gavin Brown has a 'problem with homonormativity' increasingly in 'academic and activist' writing, the tendency to represent it as 'homogeneous', an empirical object, 'a global external entity', external to us, with a tendency to 'present homonormativity as all-encompassing and unassailable' (2012 p. 1066). He sees five key dangers in homonormativity as an analytical device. One relates to overlooking the historical specificity of places and discourses and practices around homosexual normalisation and homonormative developments. Another relates to a failure to acknowledge the circular relationship between communities of practice and the development of knowledges about homonormativity within them. An urban focus is another danger, overlooking the lives of others outside of the city (and particularly in generalising from urban research about the lives of these others). Another key danger is a lack of reflexivity in not seeing 'critical queer scholars and activists' as complicit in processes and 'forms of privilege' (2012, p.1067). The final danger lies in focussing on homonormativity as an external threat and not on the possibilities that lie outside or counter to it (other than 'the vanguardism of queer critique') (2012, p. 1067). In an earlier article Brown argues that lesbians and gay men have diverse relationships with the state and diverse economic relationships, some of which are non-capitalist and redistributive. These act to make spaces that are outside or different to homonormative spaces. Included in these spaces are free, do-it-yourself queer events and spaces (2009, p.1505). He rejects assumptions that the spaces of homonormative complicity are always negative, and suggests,

drawing on Smith et al., another dynamic of interdependence that involves a sense of 'relying on and being responsible for others' (2007, p. 340). Brown cites Oswin, that these spaces are 'ambivalent and porous' and can enable 'resistance and capitulation' (2005, p. 84). He calls on queer scholars to 'explore the porosity of complicit *and* interdependent gay space' (Brown 2009, p. 1500). Through this, he argues, homonormativity becomes less totalising, lesbians and gay men are less defined by commodification and stereotypes of homonormative complicity break down with the investigation of their 'interdependent compromises and complicit contradictions' and their possibilities for 'queer postcapitalisms' (p. 1508). Brown argues not against notions of neoliberal sexual politics and homonormativity but for more precise, spatially and historically located and reflexive understandings of homosexual normalisation.

1.3.4   Neoliberal spatial politics

The privatisation of public spaces involves not only their alienation or commodification. Hardt and Negri argue that design processes can also change their use through 'privatising' urban planning and architecture effects, leading to 'the decline of public space allowed for open and unprogrammed social interaction' (2000, p. 337). Contests over the use of public space are important in gay, lesbian, transgender and queer histories and contemporary cultures. Early activists worked to expand 'the notion of sexual or personal privacy to include not only sex between consenting adults at home, but freedom from surveillance and entrapment in public, collective settings … defining a kind of right-to-privacy-in-public and expanding the allowable scope of sexual expression in public culture' (Duggan 2003, p. 52).

The domestication of homosexuality and the demobilisation of lesbians and gays are consistent with a neoliberal privatisation agenda. Richardson argues (citing Warner 1999) that normalisation renders lesbians and gays as valued citizens through their being 'reconfigured as desexualised normative citizens' and through changes in the spatial structuring and organisation of sexuality that reposition 'lesbians and gay men through the norms of proper place and responsibility within domestic settings' (2005, p. 521). Social geographers have charted the development of gay neighbourhoods and the perception and delimiting of the markers of difference. They have insisted on the "inherently spatial" quality of social relations (Boone 1996, Knopp 1995). Richardson refers to the relationship between the economic structuring of urban spaces and

collective sexual identity in the gay gentrification of neighbourhoods. Identity is set in a tension with a professionalising gay and lesbian commerce that can homosexualise spaces of the neighbourhood and delimit particular constructions of 'gayness' to other people and places (2005, p.518).

Agathangelou, Bassichis and Spira (2008, p. 126) refer to a neoliberal spatial politics in the U.S. in the everyday violence visited on queers and others because of their gender, ethnicity and/or being working class, and a 'racist order … encoded in narratives of gay assimilation and ascendancy' in gentrifying, elite gay neighbourhoods. They are among recent accounts of neoliberal politics in the service of urban restructuring and few that relate to collusion between neoliberal spatial and sexual politics. Manalansan's work is one of these. It concerns New York (and global cities like it) where neoliberal governance has become the norm and (the usual) neoliberal policies rule the day, seeking to broaden state intervention, maximise privatisation and reduce social welfare to create 'a virtual free-for-all arena for economic market competition'. These policies, he argues, 'have redrawn boundaries, neighborhoods, and lives and given rise to insidious forms of surveillance of and violence in communities of color' (2005, p. 141). The effect of commerce projecting particular constructions of "lesbian and gay" effaces queer dissidence. Manalansan argues that:

> the increasing visibility of elegant condominiums, gay bars, and gay-friendly
> restaurants and other businesses go hand in hand with the other narratives of
> decreased visibility if not obliteration of queerness and race in the city's streets and
> other public venues (2005, p.152).

The 'narratives of emergence and disappearance' constitute a 'form of structural violence' – the processes of gay gentrification in New York, he argues, 'are based on the very process of eradication and disappearance of the unsightly, the vagrant, the alien, the colored, and the queer' (2005, p.152).

Among the challenges of spatial politics, for some of the contemporary activists I spoke to, are risk and liability and law enforcement regimes governing the use of public space for mobilisation, protest or celebration. For some it is the desexualisation of public spaces through environmental design, the systematic removal or redevelopment of areas used as beats. Most though are effected by urban restructuring and gentrification, and the pressure this puts on housing availability and affordability. Some live in makeshift

situations, collectively, in industrial properties. They live with local government surveillance and the threat of being shut down. They see Sydney's inner-west countercultural and counternormative character as under threat. There are parallels to found in Manalansan's 'narratives of emergence and disappearance'. There is a tendency to neoliberal sexual politics that excises dissident sexualities in pursuit of equality and a spatial politics that locates normative homosexuality in private settings. There are neoliberal influences in inner-urban development and restructuring policy. There is no desire to keep low paid workers and the poor close to the city. Affordable housing in the inner-west has all but disappeared. The urban redevelopment and gentrification of the inner-west is intense. These concerns of activists and those outlined earlier in respect of neoliberal sexual politics and lesbian and gay equality politics, are developed in Chapter Six to Eight.

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I have outlined three methodological concerns in this chapter that relate to engaging with and making sense of historical and contemporary research participants' collective identity, activism and fields of action, their broader changing political and economic contexts and relationships and developments in their sexual politics and ideations of sex, gender and sexuality. I will reflect on the implications for research methods in Chapter Two. I will reflect on the relevant concerns in the historical ethnographic data in Chapters Three to Five and contemporary data in Chapters Six to Eight, with these questions. What is revealed about collective action through the lens of collective identity (the multiplicity of activist groupings and historical and contemporary elements, collective normativities, collective action and its embeddedness in daily life and social networks) or through collective mobilisation of social, political and cultural resources and relationship with the political system? What is the relationship between personal and collective identity in participants' ideations of sex, gender and sexuality (collective dimensions of identity, community, sexual politics, gender politics, queer and gay spatial bifurcations)? What critique and/or relationship with the state is being expressed by participants (engagements, oppositions, refusals)? What are the effects, contemporary to participants, of political, social, economic and policy on them and their activism? How do, what might be regarded as, neoliberal sexual politics, lesbian and gay equality politics, homonormativity and neoliberal spatial politics impact on participants and their activism, and how are these interpreted?

Notes, chapter one

[1] I use Bourdieu's term habitus as it describes all the experiences that go to make an individual's dispositions, including those to collective action, and these are further influenced by collective action (1977, pp. 78-9). In terms of a Bourdieusian analysis, the areas of activists are small parts of larger fields of action and their heterodoxies are part of larger doxa.

[2] The Gay Solidarity Group contingents in May Day marches, had been systematically ignored, since the late seventies, in the official call and recognition of groups participating in the march as it passed the steps of Sydney Town Hall. GSG persisted until the organising group relented.

[3] While much social movement theory debate concerns the 'conceptualisation' of cultural politics, as Martin (2002) calls it or its distinctions from the political system I find these distinctions hard to sustain at the empirical level with: the multiplicity of action; the proliferation of neoliberal discourses that operate in political and cultural domains; and the depoliticisation of the political system.

[4] By way of illustration, I am queer but I am a parent which has imbricated me over several decades in *everything*, every normative institution, but it doesn't make me less queer. It does make me different because all the "natural" things of parenting become reflexive stages. In fact it makes me more queer.

[5] Wotherspoon (1989, 1991), French (1993), Carbery (1992). Lee (1992) and Pride History Group (2007) have mapped out camp subcultures in various Australian cities since the 1940s, their policing and relationship with state and their reliance on secret social networks and events and beats.

[6] Curthoys (2010 p. 54) identifies key classical neoliberal Hayekian principles underpinning but not credited in John Howard's re-election campaign in September 2004. His platform represented a defence of the market's price mechanism, involving: the privatisation of publicly owned enterprises, the removal of price controls and trade barriers, deregulation of the labour market and financial markets, the minimisation of social welfare and taxes, and the reduction of (downward) redistribution.

[7] For a detailed examination of this see Maddox (2005) *God Under Howard, the Rise of the Religious Right in Australian Politics*.

[8] The Arbitration Commission, according to Pusey, had 'enjoyed the majority popular approval' (2010 p. 137-8).

[9] As I write, the NSW Liberal government relies on the vote of Fred Nile in the Legislative Council for passage of its legislation, as have a number of governments over the last twenty years.

[10] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

[11] Obviously size makes a difference – there are probably more lesbian and gay consultants in the U.S. than there are homosexuals in Australia.

Chapter 2: Ethnographic approach: the activist voice over time

In this chapter I detail the methods in the research, how they relate to the methodology, and concerns in the literature. My enquiry is a critical ethnography. Participation is central to its ethnographic methods. The use of collective identity as a lens of analysis has produced data about historical and contemporary collective action, normativities and processes in a place that has been variously, radically queered over four decades. The methods and instruments are designed to reveal the multiplicity of social movement parts, the personal and collective identities of social actors and their predispositions and motivations to action, and their organising and activism and fields of action. Under harsh or complicated conditions, different movement elements are more or less able and free to participate in provocative and confronting collective action. This is a critical ethnography in that it defends the potential for resistance and radical social and political change in groups of critical, radical and dissident activists and the meshing of their social networks, and presents in their loud, quiet and sometimes hidden voices, their struggles against intensifying neoliberal economic restructuring and its suite of privatising, moral, cultural discourses and strategies – such as neoliberal sexual and spatial politics – that invade every aspect of their daily lives. It acknowledges the multiplicity of their collectivity and all of its parts (and how seemingly contradictory approaches and elements can contribute, in moments and on occasions, to something bigger).

A reflexive practice and understanding of their fields of action enables the voice of participants. Hearing what people say involves an awareness of the ideological currents, structures and discourses that effect what can be said and understood in the relevant fields of practice or milieu. It involves a deep and unconditional respect for participants that underpins the research design and processes which are responsive to them. It involves an anticipation of their subjectivity and a knowing and contextually normative engagement. It involves the personal identification and disclosure of the researcher. The method was not simply additive of the data, but involved a progressive and destabilising movement between the subjectivities of each participant and each period.

There have been many ethnographies of marginalised and resistant cultural identity groups, according to Foley, who '"produce" themselves through self-valorising expressive cultural forms' (2002, p. 471). As a reflexive ethnography my research is

concerned with radical, critical and dissident activists, their politics and collective action in the cultural domain and political system and in their relationship to the state and its instruments. Foley describes perspectives involving a structural reflexivity that 'generally have stronger notions of agency (praxis) and structure (history)' than in other autoethnographic approaches. 'They either focus on how classes of people negotiate, assimilate, and transform their lived, structured, historical reality or on the collective agency of groups' (2002, p. 476).

Participation is central to the methods. Uldam and McCurdy (2013) provide a survey of theoretical concerns of participant observation as a method for researching social movements. They identify two sets of what have been treated in the past as dichotomies, insider/outsider research positions and covert/overt practices. They observe that while in the sociological and social movement literature there has been a shift 'from viewing these pairings as a dichotomy to a dialectic' (2013, p. 948), that in the social movement literature these dimensions have often been treated in isolation. The interplay of these dimensions over time, they argue, is central to a research practice. The positions that researchers take have 'ethical, practical and epistemological implications, notably in terms of trust, access and subjectivity' and these are unique to each context. They stress the multiplicity of social movements (in terms of understanding what I have referred to as their various insides and outsides) and to problems associated with insider positions (such as ideological assumptions and tempered criticism of the movement under investigation). Citing Plows (2008) they argue that being close to research participants requires a 'reflexive awareness and constant questioning of one's position' (Uldam and McCurdy 2013, p. 945). Acknowledging concerns around a shift from outsider to insider positions and from overt to covert practice over the duration of research, Uldam and McCurdy link these dimensions in a continuum from pure participation to pure observation, one which is dynamic rather than static. They draw on Gold's (1958) intermediary positions of participant-as-observer and observer-as-participant and later elaborations of the personal and situational change these entail for the researcher, the research position and practice (they cite Mercer 2007 and Snow et. al. 1986). The methods, which are detailed below, can be positioned in Uldam and McCurdy's participation/observation schema as follows. They all involve insider positions, though there are qualifications in movement multiplicity and the insides and outsides of the parts, and the temporal dimension of movements and transience in their formations.

Issues of integrity and critical distance have been considered in the design of the methods. The historical enquiry and the contemporary interviews are overt and conducted with the consent of participants. The contemporary participation method is overt in the sense of being at the participation end of the continuum (not collecting information on individuals) and conducted openly as researcher and recognised as such by others.

The methods, in the past and present, involve participant observation and ethnography of collective action and its milieu and participation in the fields of action, variously as researcher, activist and movement member and where I was recognised as such. In this sense my research has autoethnographic dimensions, in that my relationship as researcher with participants, in the historical and contemporary contexts, is not as some cultural other. One of the features it shares with other autoethnographies is a relational ethic – Ellis, Adams and Bochner in their overview of autoethnographies, argue that such researchers 'often maintain and value interpersonal ties with their participants, thus making relational ethics more complicated.' Ethical issues about relationships become part of the method and outputs. Researchers 'also may have to protect the privacy and safety of others' (2000, paragraph 30). A number of relational ethical concerns such as these have been addressed in the description of each method. While the research is autoethnographic, the data it generates are not principally about my engagement or my relationships with participants as a researcher. They are about collective identity, engagement and action. As I will outline, the methods involve removing and inserting myself in different ways and taking critical distance, in sometimes novel ways. Before I detail the methods, I will summarise ethical processes affecting the research and my relationship to the fields of action, historical and contemporary.

2.1 Ethical processes in the research

The research for this thesis was approved by the UTS Human Research Ethics Committee (approval number 2202-227A) including each of the methods and research instruments, participant recruitment methods and the information and consent forms. Interviews with contemporary activists were confidential, were conducted without the knowledge of others and participants have not been identified (they have been given pseudonyms in the text). The participation-observation method was at the participation end, and data was not collected on individuals. All the methods had a participation

element, an insider research position and a relational ethic with participants, including the historical methods. Support for the use of the *78ers* survey in the thesis was given by John Witte and Sally Colechin, surviving members of the *78ers* social history project group from 1998. In conducting the survey in 1998, I undertook to keep confidential the identities of participants unless they gave further consent to being named. My relational ethic with the *78ers* began with most of them identifying themselves to me in the survey and remains in my relationship to extant networks of early gay liberation and lesbian feminist movement activists. The reconstructed *Gay Liberation Quire* participation was discussed with surviving members and some provided material.

2.2 The researcher's relationship with participants' fields of action

I first became involved in the lesbian and gay movement in Sydney in 1975. I went to meetings of the Sydney Gay Liberation Front at Sydney University, but not consistently. I was troubled, young and inexperienced with middle class people. I went to National Homosexual Conferences and I got involved in social networks of the lesbian and gay movement and the student movement. I was always willing to be mobilised, but was too inexperienced, disabled and different to become an activist. I got involved in things, like Socialist Homosexuals, through friendship networks.

In 1978 I went to a meeting of the International Gay Freedom Day organising committee (Gay Solidarity Group). A friend was invited as a representative of the Macquarie University Gay Group and he took me along. I was a part of the mobilisations and events of that year (outlined in the next section). In 1998 I joined the working group for the twentieth anniversary of Mardi Gras and its social history project. The *78ers* survey, which I conducted, was one of a number of historical projects within the group. There is a relational ethic in my being a participant and researcher, and an obligation to the cohort and the extant *78ers* groups.[1] As a *78er* I completed a survey, that now reminds me of the distance across time from those events and that self and its collective identifications and investments. Time (a long time) provides one opportunity for critical distance, and to see the whole, the multiplicitous elements and parts of the movement reflected in the survey cohort.

By the late 1970s I was becoming a credible witness of my own life and moved from the periphery of the movement. I was a part of the networks of the Gay Solidarity Group, and a Disciplette (radical confrontational public drag group). In late 1978 I also

went to Gay Men's Rap. While all male environments held little interest for me then, this group, of radical effeminists and radical faeries and others were seeking to subvert masculinity and challenge sexism. At a time when many lesbian feminists had left the lesbian and gay movement and lesbian separatism was normative, I maintained connections with lesbian feminist networks (and still do) and this had much to do with my later becoming a parent. I was a member of the Gay Waves, Gay Radio Collective from 1980 for six years. In 1981 I was a member of that year's Gay Mardi Gras Working Group. In the same year, I was a founding member of the Gay Liberation Quire and a core member, participating in all but two of its 155 manifestations until 1987.

Since the late 1990s I have maintained a queer life and an identification with my local queer community, and have been readily mobilised to its collective actions. It's my neighbourhood. I was aware of the queer social spaces that came and went. In 2009 I attended the Queer Resurgence Conference, in Newtown and environs. It was a major (national) event with a large and diverse program representing contemporary queer political concerns, and well attended by Sydney's inner-west queer community and others from around the country and the region.

My principal activism, though, over the last few decades, has been in the disability movement (its cross-disability, multicultural disability and queer disability groupings and organisations). From this distance I have viewed the persistent exclusion of people with disability in lesbian and gay community events and spaces[2] and at times their excision from notions of community[3]. My disability activism embraces the intersections of disability with class, ethnicity, gender and sexuality. In these contexts I have strong personal and collective identifications. I am from Chullora in Sydney's central west and have always maintained strong affiliations there. In the contemporary methods I have found distance in focussing on three locations for participation and interviews with activists. These are: the queer scene and movement centred on inner-western Sydney and its broader countercultural milieu; lesbian and gay activists in the lesbian and gay communities who do not share an identification with the queer scene or movement, these in overlapping and bifurcated spaces; and an older lesbian social network in central and western Sydney. I have principal identifications in these three contexts. Their very different social milieus provide for a critical distance, not by being distant in participation or insincere in relationships, but from participating in the collective

normativities and actions in each context and viewing them from the distance of the each other. It provides for perspective at the risk of a sort of continuous cultural jet lag, when moving from one to the other. It becomes clear, for example, that the queer movement in the inner-west and all the multiplicity of its "identity" politics can be invisible from what's really a short distance away, just as the unequal geographic and class distribution of lesbian and gay equality can become invisible in the opposite direction.

Critical autoethnographers have engaged in queer storytelling, such as Jones (2016), personal narratives of everyday life that relate with those of others and are inflected with queer critical insights. There is a lot of storytelling in this thesis, but it is the result of all my reflexive endeavours that they are the stories of my cohort and the participants in this research.

My commitment to this ethnography comes from my personal and collective identity. It is a personal and collective project. Critical distance was considered in the design of the methods, not just in understanding the multiplicity of collective identity, but also the relationships of all the parts to broader milieus, intersections with other social political forces and relationships with the state. My historical and contemporary relationships with the fields of action in this ethnography are addressed further in respect of the methods below

2.3 The *78ers* Social History Project survey

The survey refers to three periods of time: specifically throughout 1978 and in 1998 and generally in the two decades they span. It refers to "the events of 1978" and here is an account of these.

The story of 1978 begins with neoliberal-conservative political alliances in the U.S. and internationally and the right-wing Christian backlash against the (small) protections that had been won, then, by lesbian and gay and women's movement activists. They were fighting the Briggs Initiative that would have made it illegal for homosexuals or those who supported homosexual rights to work in Californian public schools, and they wrote to Ken Davis and Annie Talve, members of the Socialist Workers Party in Sydney, calling for our participation in an International Gay Freedom Day, to be held around the world on June twenty-fourth, the ninth anniversary of the Stonewall Riots in New York.

Ken and Annie contacted about twenty religious, social and political, lesbian and gay groups and a small organising group formed in March. Most of those attending the initial meeting were from student groups, CAMP[4] or the Left groups. There were few responses from social and religious groups. Calling itself the Gay Solidarity Group (GSG) it developed four demands: an end to police harassment of gay men and lesbians; repeal of the anti-homosexual laws and the Summary Offences Act in NSW; an end to workplace discrimination; and the protection of the rights of lesbians and gay men. They were given police permission for what turned out to be a relatively large and mainly peaceful protest march through the city in the morning, with a crowd of about five hundred. They organised a seminar in the afternoon on homosexual activism in other parts of the world at Paddington Town Hall that filled its conference centre to capacity (one hundred and eighty people attended). They were given a police permit for a street party/parade from Taylor Square, down Oxford St and into Hyde Park[5]. The cat was set among the (police) pigeons when at 10pm, by some estimates, upwards of one thousand people, more than five times the expected number, turned up. Police allowed the event to go ahead but they pushed it along quickly to Hyde Park. They attempted to arrest GSG member, Lance Gowland, the driver of the only vehicle that carried the sound system, for not following instructions. The attempt was thwarted by the crowd, which shepherded him out of sight and at this point the police committed to shutting down the entire event.

The crowd was in College St as Sydney City Council officers had revoked their permission to go into Hyde Park. There was a moment of chaos as some of the organisers and activists put their heads together. The only place where there would have been (more or less) supportive people on the street at this time of night was in Kings Cross and the call went out. The crowd took off, in rows with arms linked, up William St and into the Cross. The police moved paddy wagons into the Cross ahead of the crowd and blocked the side streets. The protestors, as they were now, were marching and chanting. They stopped in front of the El Alamein Fountain in Darlinghurst Rd. Some activists spoke and then the crowd turned to disperse. What happened next would become a defining moment for activists with a savage response from the police, who having blocked their exits began to arrest people. The melee that ensued involved a spirited defence by the protestors who fought police and resisted arrest. Fifty-four people were arrested and taken to Central and Darlinghurst police stations. The action

carried on all night out front of the police stations where people were held. Some were bashed in the cells. Doctors were refused access to those who were severely injured. Activists mobilised, bail was collected. GSG added "drop the charges" to its demands. At Central Court on the following Monday morning the police, against the magistrate's instructions, closed the courts and there were further arrests of those protesting in the street outside. A large demonstration and march was planned for July fifteenth calling for the charges to be dropped, and retracing the route of that evening parade, ending at Darlinghurst Police Station. The meeting to plan the event, which appears in Digby Duncan's film Witches, Faggots, Dykes and Poofters[6], was fiery and the argument to march with or without police permission was strongly debated. There were further arrests outside the police station. In August the National Conference of Lesbians and Homosexual Males was held at Paddington Town Hall. In response to this, Fred Nile and his Festival of Light organised an anti-abortion and anti-homosexual rally in Hyde Park. Conference goers decided to march on the rally and set off down Oxford Street. They were intercepted first by a police cordon across Taylor Square where many were arrested. Many of those who made it through to Hyde Park were arrested there in violent scenes. This event was different to the others earlier in the year. It involved people from around the country, from the national networks of the lesbian and gay movement and locally. While it was a protest against NSW Police and took up GSG's demand for the charges against activists to be dropped, it also targeted Nile and the religious right and their anti-homosexual and anti-abortionist politics. It also looked different. Marching in tight formation, chanting in unison, its intentions clear, 'Dare to struggle! Dare to fight! Smash the Festival of Light!'.[7] Support for those arrested, and the campaign to have their charges dropped continued into 1979 and this was successful for many. During this year activists redefined the relationship between gay men and lesbians and a police force that was famously remote from legitimate authority. The movements were invigorated by action. Coming out of GSG and endorsed by the Fifth National Homosexual Conference in Melbourne was a national campaign, The Gay National Summer Offensive for Rights, a series of events held over summer 1979-80 which culminated in a protest march in Sydney on 22 March 1980 attracting about one thousand participants.

2.3.1   Twentieth anniversary of the 1978 Mardi Gras and the 78ers survey and cohort

In commemoration of that defining night-time demonstration/ "first Mardi Gras", about thirty activists organising and mobilised in the events of that year got together in April 1997 to discuss using the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras twentieth anniversary as a focus for a series of commemorative and social history activities. The list of *78ers*, as they were dubbed, grew through activist networks and by putting up photos of events of the year on its website. Others who had not been mobilised to further events or become active in the movement saw their younger selves in photos of events on the website and got involved in that way. By the end of 1997 the list of *78ers* (identified by themselves or others) had grown to around 300 survivors and 50 deceased. The projects in the working group that formed were to design and build, in association with the Mardi Gras organisation, the lead float for the parade[8], and (independently of Mardi Gras) to build the contact list for *78ers*, to produce a monthly *78ers* email newsletter, to participate in a video *Riot for our Rights*[9], to run a speakers bureau for media contact, and to conduct a social history project. Aspects of the latter included producing a monthly *78ers* (email) newsletter, designing a website, an exhibition and publication *It was a Riot!* (*The 78ers* 1998)[10] and these involved the collection of photos and accounts of the events of 1978 and the *78ers* survey. The accounts of that year were collected through a focus group of eleven of those involved in the organisation of events of the year and from a further twelve interviews conducted with other activists, those mobilised by events. A shorter trial version of the survey was conducted with these activists, to test particular questions and approaches. Most of the questions were successful and these were included in the survey, and the multiple choice categories (e.g. descriptors of politics and sexuality and aspects of the mobilisations) were derived from responses. While the survey focused principally on participants' involvement in the mobilisations of that year and their personal and collective significance, it also reflected a Meluccian influence, in canvassing aspects of personal and collective identity, politics, normativities, movement participation and the multiplicity of movement elements, as well as participants' everyday lives (background, work, study and so on) in 1978, and in 1998..The survey was conducted over the four months in the lead up to and following the 1998 Sydney Lesbian and Gay Mardi Gras under the auspices of the *78ers* Social History working group[11] and was sent to those involved in the 78ers working groups or identified in their contact lists. Of the 240 questionnaires sent out, 110 were returned completed. The response rate was hard to assess given that many of the addresses were

second or third hand or old, and only 44 were returned undelivered or not known at the address. It was at least 40 per cent and possibly more than half. The questions in the survey are detailed in Appendix One.

About one third of respondents identified themselves to me in the survey, or in what they wrote. This gave me a sense of the diversity of participants, and the survey data was consistent with this. Most of the participants of the night time event were active in the lesbian and gay and lesbian feminist movements before June 1978 or were involved in Left groups and progressive social movements and were there in solidarity (84 per cent). The cohort includes all those surviving organisers of the events of the International Gay Freedom Day (Gay Solidarity Group) and some of the members who were mobilised to it by events. It includes over half of those who were arrested on the night – many of the radical and socialist feminists and the gay men who were not active in the movement and described themselves as conservative or apolitical. As will be discussed later many of these saw themselves as peripheral to events and the movement's responses to them. It is likely they are underrepresented in the survey cohort. Lesbians are well represented (for the abovementioned reason) at two-fifths of the cohort, as are the Left, anarchist and radical elements of the movements and their core activists. There are also lesbian separatists who were not participating in the lesbian and gay movement at the time. The cohort includes heterosexual and bisexual women and men who were part of the movements in 1978 (two-fifths of respondents) and two transgendered people. By late 1997, one-sixth of the *78ers* were deceased. Many of the survey respondents have died since 1998 and it is significant that their responses can be brought to this account.

Items in the *78ers* survey (conducted in 1998) compare favourably with that of a short survey of those attending the Sixth National Homosexual Conference in Sydney in 1980 (Johnston and Garde, 1981) with a larger sample of 245 participants. Of these, 66% were male (as were 58% of the *78ers* survey sample), 28% were over 30 years of age in 1980 (30% of *78ers* were over 28 years of age in 1978), 21% were students in 1980 (33% of *78ers* were studying in 1978), 58% belonged to one or more lesbian/gay organisation (as did 68% of the *78ers* survey sample), 67% had a radical politics (as did 64% of *78ers*), 95% of the women in both samples were feminist. The conference drew two-thirds of it participants from Sydney. While the 78ers survey didn't ask where participants were living at the time, just under half were born in Sydney and a quarter

elsewhere in Australia. The characteristics of those attending the Sixth National Homosexual Conference in 1980 in Sydney are the larger Johnston and Garde sample are similar to those in the *78ers* survey.

2.3.2 *Analysis of the survey*

For this enquiry, the data were transcribed from the surveys into a database[12]. These were examined by individual participants (rows) and by responses to individual items (columns). Among its 83 items the survey included some questions inviting reflection on the personal significance of the lesbian and gay movement and the events of 1978, the collective significance of "the first Mardi Gras", and feelings about the (in 1998) contemporary Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras and room for "other comments"[13]. These were well subscribed with comments totalling over 22,000 words. These were thematically analysed and from this a coding frame was developed and these were grouped in themes and subthemes, using NVIVO. The themes related to effects of the movements and events: on individual affect and disposition; on identity, sexuality and collective sexual normativities; on politics and political normativities; on the processes of collectivities and personal and collective action; and reflections on twenty years of change. The themes and subthemes are reflected in the sections of Chapters Three, Four and Five. Key characteristics of each participant were kept with each of their comments, for analysis (gender, age, sexuality and political identifiers, childhood financial circumstances and so on).

I stress here that the *78ers* survey is ethnographic, not just in the past but in the present. Extant *78ers* networks are still active. I conducted the survey in 1998. Its analysis (detailed below) has been conducted in the present. As a *78er* my research position is as insider, though there are qualifications here. The 'insides' of the *78ers* are different in 1978, 1998 and in the present. Given the lesbian and gay movement's multiplicity in the late 1970s, I was not inside all of its parts - some of the Left parties or radical feminist lesbians for example (though I did remain close to lesbian feminists at a time of separatism). My perspective of the lesbian and gay movement as researcher in 1998 is broader than my perspective as an activist in 1978. Another technique of critical distance is to use the survey data in traditional ways (e.g. in graphs) to compare movement parts in a critical way, for example, class and gender variations in material circumstances and politics in 1978, or in levels of education and labour force (segment)

participation (as in hierarchical segmentation) by 1998. The research practice was overt and participants were given an undertaking that surveys would remain confidential and they would not be individually identified.

2.4 *The Gay Liberation Quire* – **A reconstructed participant observation**

The Gay Liberation Quire appeared at a Stonewall Day event at Belmore Park in Sydney in June 1981. For six and a half years and in 155 manifestations it rode a wave of change. Thirty years later there is little evidence of the scope and intensity of the Quire's effort, its politics and performance strategies, its street theatre insurgency or its rich internal collective life and normativities. There is a Wikipedia entry, a few brief accounts on websites in the context of queer music history and the worldwide lesbian and gay choral movement. There are a number of recent local accounts that refer to the Quire in the context of the history of the gay liberation movement in Sydney and Australia. This part of the method is based on historical material.

The Quire data draws on a diary and scrapbook kept by member, Paul Van Reyk, from 1981 to 1987 (three exercise books, 300 pages). It also draws on: Quire song books and song sheets; promotional material; minutes of meetings and workshops; Quire and third-party recordings[14]; media references; personal diaries and several hundred photographs. From these were developed databases (in Excel) of performances and their context: event organisers, dates, locations, purpose or causes involved, posters or promotional material, the characteristics and responses of crowds, audiences (and the targets of direct actions), songs sung, members performing, media references and photographs.

As a core member of the Quire I was involved in all but two of its 155 manifestations. Immersion in the collected data produced a kind of reconstructed participant observation. The material was contemporary to the period and collected mostly by others and the account relies on this, rather than memory, for its detail. It has also sharpened my recall of events. I have a visceral memory, as the Quire's guitarist, of the feeling of playing and singing. I have a visual memory of the venues and streets and demonstrations and audiences and our targets. I remember the controversies around the Quire and its enemies. I hear the songs and the responses of audiences, on recordings of events. The photos of the Quire capture not just its organising, performances and direct actions, but also socialising, celebrating and working together. Analysing the

performance data I am reminded of the significance of the times of the Quire, 1981 to 1987, of how much things changed over that period in Sydney, and how the Quire responded to a changing local and international social and political environment. The data I have assembled, and Van Reyk's Quire diaries are an historical asset. Immersion in them has produced an account that I would never have been able to produce with memory alone. It is a reconstructed participant observation that is collective in so far as its sources are associated with other perspectives (the diarist, the photographer, the sound recordist) as well as my own. The Quire data serve to show the lesbian and gay movement described in the *78ers* survey, its evolving collective normativities in action and responses to changing political and social conditions. The Quire as an activist group demonstrates processes of resource creation and mobilisation and changing political opportunities. The research position is as insider, and the practice is overt (I have discussed this focus on the Quire with extant members).

2.5 The contemporary methods

Relational interviews were the central method in the contemporary research, and the participation method provided the contexts for those relationships.

2.5.1   The participation (observation) method

The contemporary research involved a participation/observation method that was, in Uldam and McCurdy's (2013) schema, very much at the participation end. The participation method allowed for ongoing contact with interview participants that made the interviews and their analysis relational (the interview method is outlined in the following sections). The method also allowed for the identification of some of participants' fields of action and the anticipation of specific discourses, interests, (counter) normativities and so on, in engagement around interviews and their conduct. This section describes the participation method and locates the author's participation in the subject of enquiry, with activists and in their fields of action, groupings and social networks. I begin with what it means to "join" a social movement, in respect of my involvement in a number of historical and contemporary movements.

I have been active in social movements that are very different from each other, that involve different collective normativities and have different insides and outsides and entrances. As mentioned earlier, the first movement I joined was the lesbian and gay movement, by turning up at a Sydney Gay Liberation meeting at Sydney University in

1974. Ten years later I got involved in the disability movement, in particular, in the cross-disability movement.[15] It was a new social movement and one that was able to attract public support and funding, and advocate for the interests of people with disability in policy and services. Through my work in the employment sector I became involved in a disability movement working group on open employment for people with disability which established the first such service in western Sydney, which was one of several governance roles over several decades. It was (and still is) a movement with a strong identity politics, driven partly by historical traumas as a result of paternalism and abilism. Movement based organisations gave full membership only to people with disability. The demand "not about us, without us" created a strong normative expectation in the movement that people with disability should speak for ourselves. I experienced some resistance to begin with about my identity as a person with disability, not having a physical, sensory or intellectual disability. This became much less the case as the notion of psychiatric disability became accepted and increasingly I was judged according to my actions, relationships and contributions, rather than my identity or "impairments". At the intersection of disability, ethnicity and sexuality, disability movement elements differentiate themselves and their constituents. So here there are further entrances and exits to negotiate and other personal and collective identities. Another movement of which I am a part is the mental health movement, and in particular its radical element, Mad Pride. It is another context in which I have done cultural political work, in this case, art, music and stand-up comedy. The authenticity and politics of identity in this very new movement relate to a lived experience of chronic mental illness, mental health services and psychiatry and extreme social disadvantage. This little movement is figured mainly in the community spaces and social networks around the mental health system, of which its elements are more or less critical, and its celebrations of madness and difference and its narratives (which are just as recognisable as a "coming out" story) are counternormative (to the mental health movement, generally).

The territory and the rules of engagement are different in each of these movements, as are the normativities and the identity politics and the systems and forms of domination that figure their resistance, yet the processes are all familiar to me. In each there is a collective identity that cannot be conflated to personal identity (disability identity, sexual identity, , class, ethnic identity and so on), and which is held in tension to it.

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Recognition of mutual members involves the performance of collective (counter) normativities which are always contested and evolving.

A social movement is a big messy affair with a sliding inside and an outside, a centre and a periphery, but it does have entrances and exits. Given the multiplicitous relationship of social movement elements, they have multiple insides and outsides, the implications of this I will further develop in Chapter Five. Joining means delimiting oneself to others, being known, being recognisable to others. This recognition involves the knowing performance of collective (counter-) (anti-) normativities specific to circumstances and spaces.

As discussed earlier, I was aware of a queer subculture and politics in the inner west of Sydney in the 1990s and 2000s. My joining and participation in queer activist networks in the inner west (and its broader countercultural milieu), for this enquiry, was in some ways old and new, as insider and outsider. As with the historical cohorts, the multiplicity of these networks made for there being multiple insides and outsides. Movement spaces and formations also came and went over time. I moved to a more insider position over several years. At the same time I was involved in a social network of older lesbians in central western Sydney, and met a key activist and performer in this network who played a role in creating safe places for a calendar of entertainment and events attracting a large number of lesbians (mainly older[16], working class women and their friends and family members). I grew up in central western Sydney and maintain a close relationship and identification with the area. I met these women while supporting an older friend and family member with dementia to maintain her social networks. I was recognised as a gay man. My role as a carer and family member was also recognised[17], as was my class and connection to place. I became familiar to many, particularly in attending several dozens of these events over the last few years. In respect of this particular research participant and field of action I was both insider and outsider, moving towards an insider position over several years. While not all of the activists in the inner west that I interviewed were "queer" identifying, the social network in the central west and its spaces and collective normativities provided a different distance from which the inner west queer or lesbian and gay scenes could be regarded (providing for a critical distance, mentioned earlier).

Participation focussed on the contexts in which interview participants organised. It was documented, and involved 133 events. Over half of these were in a queer milieu, or a mixed queer-countercultural milieu. Others involved the queer disability movement, surviving lesbian and gay movement activist networks, dissident lesbian, bisexual and gay networks, queer/lesbian and gay studies academics, inner-west community activists and the abovementioned older lesbian network. About one third of the events had an interview participant in an organising role.

Joining in meant taking an active role in organising and mobilisations, or helping out – from cooking to picking up bottles, to driving around sound systems or cartons of beer. It meant supporting interview participants' mobilisations, actions, events, shows, exhibitions and performances. I also made a contribution to cultural politics in these networks with artworks in a couple of exhibitions, and several performances of electronic music and video[18]. This was in part a strategy to delimit myself to others (the performances revealed some of the historical and contemporary experiences, constitutive of my own political normativities and predispositions to activism), to move towards a more insider position. With the social embeddedness of activism I was forming relationships across overlapping social networks around interview participants, in my own everyday life, but I did not observe them except in that sense. I collected general impressions about events and spaces and how participation affected me personally and critically.

2.5.2   *The sample and characteristics of interviews*

The historical enquiry influenced the drawing of the interview sample. I was immersed in the historical data at the same time. It was part of a conscious temporal reflexivity towards local history and the historical elements of contemporary collective action. It is about being clear as to the material, social, economic, political and global conditions and contexts of activists in any of forty years and not confusing or conflating them. Similarly it is about remembering spaces and formations of collective action and identity in different times. It is also about the visceral – how things felt. In this temporal reflexivity there is a response here to a neoliberal temporal politics involving time compression, what Pusey (2010:134) has referred to as 'shrinking time' in households into which all economic uncertainty and risk has been downloaded, trapping people in a 'perpetually urgent present' where the past is no longer a guide to the future[19], and I

would add, where the past seems much longer ago. Among the challenges then is the importance of remembering - 'In Memory of Now', as the placard said at Reclaim the Streets.

Considerations from the *78ers* and Quire data that affected the drawing of the contemporary interview sample included: the function of critical, radical and dissident politics (the forms of these change over time); the importance of friendship, kinship and social networks in collective action; the recruitment of participants in the context of collective action and mobilisations; the focus on a space (the inner-west of Sydney) including residents and those who spend a lot of time there; core activist roles and peripherality and centrality to action (including different "levels" of activism); the inclusion of queer, heterosexual, bisexual and transgender perspectives;. These considerations affected the drawing of the sample in the following ways. The interviews focus on activists whose organising is influenced by a critical, radical or dissident framework, political view or understanding (whether engaged in revolutionary or liberal pursuits, or both). I looked for those who were engaged in collective action with an external focus. Those selected for interview were people around whom many social networks overlap. Some activists were recruited from the friendship networks of others, to appreciate these effects. Most were approached within the context of mobilisations. One was a queer conference (*Camp Betty II* at the Red Rattler in Marrickville and environs, in 2011) and the other a network of activists organising a series of actions involving the reclaiming of public spaces for temporary community control and protest. The focus in the contemporary methods is on places (inner-western and central western Sydney) and the activists who participated in interviews lived there or moved through the area (living elsewhere) or had recently left (e.g. moved interstate) or had a past association. The contemporary participation method includes engagement with the political and cultural milieu in which interview participants organise – the queer movement, the counter-cultural milieu, gay and lesbian communities, the Left and autonomous political and social movements – as well as their other activist pursuits (including, as mentioned earlier, liberal ones – for example engaging in legislative and policy processes for the rights of queers with disability or people with conditions of intersex). The activists varied in being more or less central to action and some were relatively new to it. Participants included activists who identify as heterosexual, bisexual, or transgender or were involved in intersex activism, those who are gay or

lesbian but not queer. The approach has produced a diverse interview cohort, engaged in a wide range of fields of action, with a spread of gender and age characteristics. It captures some of the multiplicity of queer collective identity, its historical and contemporary elements, and importantly, its unheard voices. The limitation in the approach is that I have sampled a few slices of the fields of collective action. The participation method broadens this to some extent – they are thick slices.

I approached seventeen people to canvass their interest in doing a confidential interview. In the context of participation I continued to see them at events or out and about. In this time I got to know most of them a bit better, their activism, organising and social milieu. This helped me to (more or less) anticipate their situations, subjectivities, (counter) normativities, specific interests and discourses in interviews. I began approaching them formally, by contacting them or when next I saw them out and about. One was unable to participate for health reasons. The others agreed. One of these later withdrew because of changed family caring responsibilities.

The interviews involved considerable self-reflection for participants, indeed I underestimated its effect. Some made comments to the effect that they had never reflected, systematically and at length, on what they do and why, in confidence, with someone who was listening closely and positively oriented to their account. My approach to engaging with people was focussed on getting them at their best and at the best possible time, "my boat floating alongside theirs" and in some cases waiting some time until they were. Some were in precarious or makeshift housing[20] or moving addresses. Some were in financial distress. Some were in relationship breakups or had family issues. Most had study and/or work commitments, social commitments, and all had activist and organising commitments.

Fifteen interviews were conducted between April 2013 and July 2014. The duration of interviews ranged from two to three and a half hours (two of them were done in two parts). Participants were offered the choice of location. Some were done in public places (a shopping centre and a dog park). Most were done in private settings. In the participation context I continued to see them and when appropriate, and when initiated by them, those conversations continued or were revisited.

2.5.3   The processes of interview analysis

The areas of discussion in interviews included: participant characteristics; the types and contexts of their activism (most were involved in multiple contexts); their various ideations of and attitudes to community; their collective identity and the normativities of the groups and elements around which it extended; their predispositions and motivations to organising and activism; their relationship with and attitude to liberal and neoliberal equality politics; and how they see the present and future challenges for their activism. Considerable care was taken in drafting the questions, so that they would not presuppose categories and notions variously contested by activists. For example: "the lesbian and gay community" exists for some, not for others, though it is evoked in various constituencies as described by its governance groups. Added to this participants identified variously as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, transgender and heterosexual, with different perspectives on and distances from such a construct.

The questions were asked differently, depending on individual familiarity with concepts and distance from and perspectives on social and political formations at issue. The interviews were recorded and I took notes throughout. I did verbatim and complete transcripts of each interview recording (part of my immersion in them). All topics were covered in each of the interviews. They were analysed individually, and these analyses were then coded for themes and subthemes to allow comparison and synthesis around issues coming out of the research questions and across the cohort. The main themes are reflected in the sections of Chapters Six to Eight. The first was activists' personal situations and characteristics, their personal and political and artistic predispositions, their idea of community and their affiliations in movement elements, networks and contexts. In the second they described their areas of action and contexts. The third theme included issues of organising: mobilisation, collective action and normativities and relationships with movement elements (groupings) and spatial, social and political environments. The fourth theme concerned the effects of lesbian and gay equality politics on activists and their organising. In the final theme participants imagined the future challenges in their activism.

2.6 Value of the methods and their relationship to the methodology

In the first chapter I discussed the contributions that this thesis makes to new knowledge, in its methods and the data they have revealed. The first complete analysis

of the *78ers* survey provides new knowledge. It is an empirical study of activists, aspects of their personal and collective identity, normativities and actions, in their socioeconomic and political environment. Though it happened in a time when lesbians were mainly organising separately in the lesbian feminist movement, the survey's focus on a series of mobilisations captures the movement's elements (including radical feminists and lesbian separatists) as well as those who were mobilised, particularly gay men who identified themselves as apolitical. The survey cohort also included Left activists who were heterosexual or bisexual in 1978. It contains many (younger) second wave gay liberationists (their median age was twenty-one, in 1978, and the youngest was nine when the Gay Liberation Front in Sydney was formed in 1972). It represents those mobilised for the International Gay Freedom Day in June 1978 and the subsequent year of protest rather than what had become a largely male movement at the time. While the events of 1978 happened in Sydney, some *78ers* came from elsewhere to participate. The events of the year had broader implications in the national movement.

In transcribing the open question responses, I was struck firstly by their generosity and thoughtfulness and the diversity of their concerns and opinions. Some questions elicit personal accounts of lesbian and gay liberation activism and the significance this holds, the ways in which it affected people, relationships, changed life trajectories and so on. Others canvass issues of personal and collective identity. It provides opportunities for reflection. Eighteen years later many of their comments about Mardi Gras are prescient of its increased commodification and the privatisation and securing of its spaces and events and its increased control over participation, access and expression. They are ambivalent comments, with many also acknowledging Mardi Gras as a contestable site for the expression of queer, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender differences and solidarities. Significantly the survey collects data on socioeconomic factors (financial circumstances, labour force and labour segment participation and levels of education) in childhood, 1978 and 1998 and provides a unique insight into the everyday life of social movement activists and participants of the time. It captures the characteristics of activists in a second wave of gay liberation. As discussed earlier, it cannot represent those who died before 1998. One might expect that the mortality of *78ers* would underrepresent its older members in the survey after twenty years, but this is not the case. Many of those who had died were among its younger members.

The insider account of the *Gay Liberation Quire* and the data it produces constitutes new knowledge given there is little written about it.. The recovered sound files, complete GLQ songbook with origins and histories of its repertoire of 79 songs represent new historical resources. Given the limitations of working with old memories the reconstructed participant observation does not rely on contemporary remembering - it is drawn entirely from historical data from the period. The dataset provides a "window" on the social networks, solidarities, normativities and tempo of everyday lesbian and gay movement life in the 1980s, as well as changing political contexts and resources.

The participation method, in the contemporary research, provides for an insider account of contemporary activists and their fields of action, and forms the context of relational interviews with them and other less formal contacts. It does not exclude "cultural politics" from the analysis of activist outputs but rather seeks to understand their mobilisations and organising within cultural and political domains and in response to different strategies of social regulation or control. It also regards the latent and visible poles of collective action and periods of abeyance as equally active and productive.

The historical dimensions of contemporary social movement elements are reflected in the connection between the historical data and the rationale for drawing the contemporary interview sample, as well as the continuities and points of disjuncture that are revealed. The participants are diverse as are their fields of action. Interviews captured the multiplicity of contemporary movement elements, aspects of personal and collective identity, motivations and predispositions, collective processes, normativities and actions.

In relation to the methodological framework and Melucci's lens of collective identity, the methods investigate collective action at different times, addressing its historical and contemporary elements, the multiplicity of its parts, its embeddedness in social networks and everyday life and its contested political, social, sexual and gender normativities. The methods pay attention to activists' relationships with political and economic contexts and resources and the state and its agencies, and how these impact on their activism.

The historical and contemporary data are explored in the following chapters. Chapter Three looks at the activists of the lesbian and gay and lesbian feminist movements of the late 1970s (their characteristics and personal and collective identity). Chapter Four focuses on aspects of *78ers'* organising in 1978 and their collective effects. It moves a couple of years forward to observe the Quire as a movement strategy and a window on its fields of action. Chapter Five is a study of the *78ers* in 1998, their enduring networks and political normativities, their material trajectories over two decades, changing ideations of gender and sexuality, and early concerns with neoliberal sexual politics and gay and lesbian equality politics. Chapter Six describes contemporary interview participants, their characteristics, personal and collective identity and fields of action. Chapter Seven reveals their issues in activism and organising. Chapter Eight explores the effects of conservatism, neoliberalism, neoliberal sexual and spatial politics and lesbian and gay equality politics on activists and their activism and the challenges they see for future activism.

Notes, chapter two

[1] I sought permission from two surviving members of the 78ers social history project working group, including its then facilitator, John Witte, to use the survey in this enquiry.

[2] I was a founding member of the queer disability group Access Plus (1996-2010) which was successful in the disability movement but not in the lesbian and gay community. Despite its efforts with gay and lesbian governance groups it made little progress on access issues and inclusion. There appeared to be little capacity for learning in organisations when activists worked to enhance the accessibility of their events. Each one was like starting from scratch. The Gay Games in Sydney in 2002, for example, was made into a much more accessible event by disability activists joining its Disability and Special Needs Committee. They conducted access audits of all venues where associated sporting and social events were proposed, and coordinated assistance for athletes and visitors with disability during the Games. These standards were a requirement of the international body and part of the Sydney Gay Games organisation's commitment to them, and for the event, the access was world class. When it was over the major events in the lesbian and gay community reverted to the status quo, of unthinking exclusion of queers with disability, a source of ongoing disappointment.

[3] My most literal experiences of this were: a NSW Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby Co-convenor, who was able to outline at a public meeting (after Same Sex reforms were legislated in 2008), the benefits that would flow to some, explaining that in their support for the reforms they had 'forgotten' about how the reforms might impact negatively on older couples and people with disability in the social security system. Another, was at an ACON consultation (there was one for lesbians and one for gay men) around its re-birthing as a lesbian and gay community health service, when making comments on relevant disability issues in the community, I was told by a staff member who called out from the back of the room, 'this is not a consultation for people with disability, it's a consultation for gay men.'

[4] Campaign Against Moral Persecution (CAMP), the first homosexual activist group in Sydney was formed in 1970. It's revolutionary element, the Gay Liberation Front split from CAMP in 1972. By 1978 CAMP was a largely conservative and reformist organisation. Members of its remaining left faction became involved in the organising group.

[5] The description of 'Mardi Gras' has to some extent been retrofitted to the entire event. While it started out as a 'Mardi Gras', it was quickly thwarted, and turned into a (fairly disciplined) protest march.

[6] Witches, Faggots, Dykes and Poofters, 1980, a film by the One in Seven Collective, produced by Digby Duncan, with Jude Kuring and David Stiff. The film also contains scenes of the parade and its suppression.

[7] I hear someone remonstrate, 'It's not 'dare to fight' it's 'dare to win!''. 'Yes I know', I say, 'but it doesn't rhyme.'

[8] In Mardi Gras tradition the lead float of the Parade sets its overall theme (which in 1998 was '20 years of [R]evolution') and is always kept a surprise.

[9] 'Riot for our Rights' was produced in 1998 and directed by Robyn Kennedy.

[10] The publication had a foreword by working group member Gavin Harris.

[11] The actual occupations of the 1978 Events Working Group members, that I noted at the time were: a social scientist, a film maker, an academic, exhibition designers, a web site producer, media consultants and the co-ordinator was a Station Master.

[12] Using Microsoft Excel.

[13] The questions referred to are numbered: 36, 37, 63, 64, 65, 82 and 83. See Appendix One

[14] These include the Quire's only record, an E.P with four tracks *Hormones or Jeans? The Gay Liberation Quire Goes Down on Vinyl* and 25 recovered and digitised audio recordings of performances.

[15] The traditional organisations in the movement were specific 'impairment' based organisations. The Handicapped Persons Alliance was the first membership based activist organisation (in NSW), constituted by people with disability, with statewide membership and across all disability types. It evolved to become what is now People with Disability Australia.

[16] While there are younger people at these events, most would be in their sixties and seventies and some older.

[17] Recognition in this sense involves a shared appreciation of the narratives of family, closeness, caring and the challenges of dementia.

[18] As with the Quire in the 1980s, music is one of my things

[19] Pusey describes the greater flexibility required by the workforce in the neoliberal economic order, the further deregulation of 'normal' working hours and larger uncertainty about the future (with its risks privatised in households and families) as affecting a 'squeezing of time'. By altering temporal perceptions and experiences, neoliberalism lowers quality of life. 'As the future becomes ever more contingent on changes that cannot be anticipated, time horizons shorten. Our remembered experience of the lived past seems less relevant to the present moment. Past experience is devalued, it feels like an unreliable guide to what will happen in a future that becomes more uncertain and opaque. The relentless pressures of coping with the moment narrow consciousness, weaken intelligent reflection and leave people stranded in a perpetually urgent present' (2010:134).

[20] I refer here to those who were members of the Marrickville Warehouse Alliance, a network of people living in repurposed industrial (mainly non-residential) properties. These are routinely subject to local council surveillance and closure.

Chapter 3: Second wave lesbian feminist and gay movement activism, Sydney 1978

In this chapter I introduce the *78ers* their personal and collective identities and characteristics and material circumstances (income, work and study) in 1978. Characteristics relating to their collective identity include their gender, sexuality and politics, their predispositions to and histories of activism, their experiences of the events of 1978 and their involvement in the lesbian and gay and lesbian feminist movements. In higher education and community program funding and policy administration, many *78ers* benefited with educational qualifications and a new liberal workforce, a legacy of the Whitlam government. I also introduce collective dimensions of identity – *78ers'* descriptors of their sexuality, politics and sexual politics, and their collective affinities and participation in movement activities and collectivities, which reveal the diversity and multiplicity of the movement, from radical to conservative. I explore comments on 78ers' histories of activism, prior to 1978, and their other predispositions to collective action. *78ers* talk also about the personal costs of police violence and being outed – serious injury, personal trauma and negative consequences. Firstly, I will outline the social movement context in 1978 (and its historical elements) and *78ers* comments on the significance of that year's events.

This period of collective action and identity in the gay liberation and lesbian feminist movements has been the subject of attention from various perspectives: social history, social movement studies, lesbian and gay studies and gender studies[1]. The politics of Gay Liberation that precede 1978 were part of the historical elements of collective action that year. In 1980 Craig Johnston overviewed Gay Liberation developments in the early 1970s, from a Gay Left perspective. Gay Liberation, he said in summary, 'attracted the imagination' of young people associated with the Left and the counterculture, formed an 'enmity' with the emerging gay male community and existing gay and lesbian groups, 'grabbed media attention, and defined for most people what homosexual radicalism meant' (1980, p. 8). The politics of Gay Liberation included pride in difference, reclamations of identity and the power of language. It involved visibility (coming out) and collective contestations around the politics of personal experience and discussion of theories of sexuality and sex and gender oppression. Critiques of the role of capitalism and patriarchy in homosexual and women's

oppression were contested. Liberal strategies of inclusion were opposed in favour of a liberation politics linked to other oppressed groups and the struggle against women's oppression was principal. Johnston described a tension between a focus on liberation rather than rights, on the one hand, and collective action and a politics of personal transformation on the other, which he claims had produced, by 1974, 'a hegemony of liberalism' in the movement, with the women pursuing lesbian separatism and the men, reformism (1980, p. 9). Socialists within the movement became increasingly critical of the direction of Gay Liberation politics. He observed a movement losing momentum, with no further significant activist contact between lesbians and male homosexuals until 1978. This was the movement context in which activists mobilised support for the International Gay Freedom Day events that year.

The historical data relating to the *78ers* and *the Gay Liberation Quire* show how a small social movement, with a tiny number of core activists, could have a profound cultural and political impact on a conservative government and culture. It shows the dynamic nature of (Melucci's) bipolarity of collective action. It shows some of the collective normativities (radical politics, radical sexual politics and collectivism). One of the impacts of radical action and demands for liberation was ultimately, and ironically, a notional "normalisation" of homosexuality, with demands for equality and freedom from discrimination replacing those for liberation and freedom from oppression. This was anticipated, as discussed earlier, in the gay Left - the dangers of engaging with a contest with the state on behalf of petit bourgeois gay men had been canvassed. It appears as a movement to the right but the data gives an empirical insight. Within the multiplicity of movement elements there was a reconfiguration of solidarities regarding engagement with the (emergent) gay community and the state, and changed material conditions with the incorporation and funding of some activist groups as services, in the 1980s. These liberal workforces, like so many other liberal mechanisms, have since been affected by neoliberal objectives[2]. These historical data are important, in themselves, as new knowledge. They also indicate empirically, in juxtaposition to the contemporary data, some of the repeating patterns, forms, foundations, disjunctural points and elemental reconfigurations that represent the continuity of radical, critical and dissident activism and sexual politics over time.

Many of the *78ers* were already involved in the lesbian and gay and lesbian feminist movements before the International Gay Freedom Day events in 1978. While some of

these had experienced intense action and zealous policing before and saw this as more of the same, the younger participants were confronting an exciting time in history. 'It was the biggest thing that had ever happened to most of us,'[3] wrote one lesbian feminist, then nineteen years old[4]. For another of the same age, then a separatist radical feminist:

> 1978 was the most significant year of my life. I came out to my parents and was thrown out of home and ex-communicated from the family. I was sick at the time and was supported by my sisters and friends many of whom were in CAMP and Gay Solidarity. Three weeks later it was Mardi Gras – the timing of it all was amazing to me - a new life, new love and great demos in the midst of such personal upheaval and pain.[5]

The sense of being in a radical and redefining moment was strong for many, as another participant, then a bisexual identifying radical feminist and eighteen year old, wrote: 'I am a 1960s baby and felt that I was born at the right time to attack the church, state, etc. It was very exciting.'[6] This confluence of change in personal and collective identity and broader social and political change was a theme in many comments. As one put it (then a radical socialist feminist and twenty-five year old): 'It is hard to differentiate the impact of the particular events of 1978 from the other political activities and changes that were happening at the time.'[7] Changes in personal situation in the mix included ending of heterosexual relationships. One then bisexual gay man wrote: 'It was perhaps the most dramatic year of my life. My girlfriend became pregnant, eventually miscarrying. It was the last year of my law degree. I met John'.[8]

One more poignant account, from a, then seventeen year-old gay man who was not an activist, reflected on the survey and the social history project as a "remembering" of the times. He wrote:

> Since stumbling across my photo on the *78ers* website I have been remembering so much about my youth/adolescence. Due to a few head injuries (motorbike accident – fall – drugs) a large part of my memory only extended beyond the 80s and that was a negative period in my life. I have remembered some very happy times, some extremely sexual experiences and some very frightening and distressing events. All of which form part of my life.[9]

For many of the gay men who regarded themselves as apolitical, it was a significant time with the growth of a gay-identified neighbourhood, gay commerce and tensions

with local Police. For some though, who were mobilised early in 1978 and moved away from activism during that year it was not so defining, as for one then liberal identifying gay man, 'mostly it was a bit of excitement and a lark – I was only twenty-one.'[10] Despite limited involvement in social or political movements, their mobilisations offered the opportunity for some to redefine their sexual identity, as one gay man, then twenty-two and self-described as apolitical and not active in the lesbian and gay movement wrote: 'At last I was finding a personal identity. For ten years at boarding school I was "in the closet" after school I came out. I had always known that I was a poof.'[11]

The events of 1978 were significant for most of the survey participants and in various ways, for the young (as most were) and the older activists and for those who were mobilised by them, whether it involved a vicarious or profound interaction with the lesbian and gay movement. This theme is developed in the following chapters. The survey provides detail on the personal and collective characteristics and situations of participants in 1978, which give some insights into the movements. The next section describes these personal characteristics (age, gender, ethnicity, place of birth and childhood financial circumstances, material conditions in 1978 - financial situation, participation in work or employment) and aspects of collective identity (including gender, sexuality and politics, predispositions to and histories of activism, experiences of the events of 1978 and involvement in the lesbian and gay and lesbian feminist movements).

3.1 The *78ers* – their personal characteristics and situations

There were 110 participants in the survey, comprising in terms of their sex (in 1978) 64 males, 44 women and two transgender people. Crowd shots of events have confirmed that it was a social movement largely of young people. Over half of survey participants were, then, under 25 years of age[12]. The youngest was 15 and the oldest was 50[13]. The *78ers*' ages are presented in a different way in *Figure 8*, the year in which they turned 18. This is presented by gender and with reference to some of the events contemporary to those periods. As can be seen, most of the older survey participants were male (there are 19 participants over 30 years of age and three of these are women). These activists had lived through conservative and anti-homosexual times and regimes (one noted, 'I survived Menzies'). Some of them were in the camp culture that pre-existed gay

Figure 8: *78ers* and the year they turned 18, by gender and considering historical events

$\dot{Y}$ = male
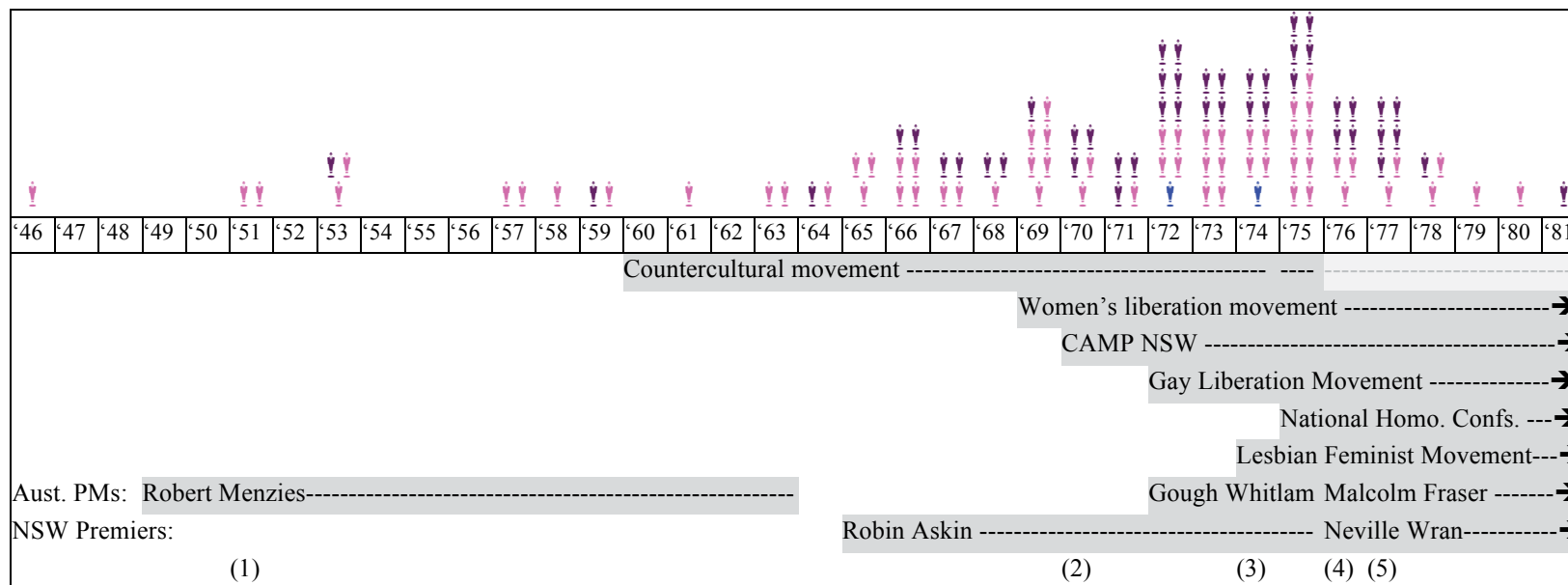
$\dot{Y}$ = female

$\dot{Y}$ = transgendered person

Notes:
1. Menzies referendum to ban the Communist Party of Australia
2. NSW Summary Offences Act
3. Whitlam govt. abolishes university fees and introduces income support for students with the Tertiary Education Assistance Scheme
4. Homosexual law reform in South Australia
5. Homosexual law reform in the Australian Capital Territory

liberation. In relation to identifiers of sexuality and gender, (as discussed later), the term "camp" was still relevant for most of the older participants, both women and men. One-fifth of the cohort was under 21 years of age. Thought about another way, the youngest person was nine when Dennis Altman published his *Homosexual Oppression and Liberation* (1972). The younger participants grew up in changing times, with a creeping liberalisation in social mores and policy, and many of them had access to the women's and gay and lesbian movements.

Almost half of the survey cohort was born in Sydney. Over a quarter were born in another Australian city or a rural or regional area. The countries of birth and ethnic background of the others, as they variously described them, are at *Table 1*.

Table 1: *78ers* not born in Australia, their country of birth and ethnic background

Country of birth	Ethnic background as *78ers* described	Number
England	British	1
England	Caucasian	1
England	English (and Dutch/Indian grandparents)	1
Germany	Russian	1
Hong Kong	Celtic	2
Italy	Mixed	1
Malta	Maltese	2
Netherlands	European	2
Netherlands	Dutch	1
Netherlands	Dutch, lapsed catholic, caucasian	1
New Zealand	British	1
New Zealand	Anglo/celtic	1
New Zealand	Anglo	1
Scotland	Middle-class	1
Scotland	Scottish/Irish	1
South Africa	Anglo/celtic	1
Trinidad and Tobago	Jewish/anglo	1
U.S.	European polyglot	1
U.S.	American	1
U.S.	Irish, Scottish, German	1
U.S.	Jewish (Ashkenazie)	1

Note: As exactly described by participant (see appendix one, survey item number 76)

There was one question relating to class of origin. Over half of participants described their childhood financial circumstances as 'comfortable', more than one-third as 'poor'

and almost one-tenth as 'well off'[14]. This suggests that most but certainly not all were from middle-class backgrounds. The men were more likely to be from 'comfortable' backgrounds than the women[15]. Rising economic insecurity adversely affected some *78ers*. Malcolm Fraser's conservative Liberal-National government had been resoundingly re-elected in December 1977, winning over two-thirds of electorates. Unemployment had risen in the previous four years from less than two to seven per cent. In the same time the ratio of unemployed job seekers to job vacancies had gone from 'one to one, to almost twenty to one' (Stokes 2014). The government was intent on winding back earlier advances of progressive and labour movements (such as universal health insurance and free higher education) and opposing upward pressure on wages from trade unions and the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission's wage increases, which the Treasurer, John Howard, argued were putting upward pressure on higher interest rates, lending reductions and higher unemployment and youth unemployment (Stokes 2014). The inflation rate across 1978 was over eight per cent[16]. In February 1978, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate had climbed to 7.4 per cent in Sydney[17]. There was also a big rise in youth unemployment nationally, to twenty per cent of those aged 15 to 19 years[18], who made up over one third of the unemployed[19]. This was significant for *78ers* being largely a young bunch.

Almost half of *78ers* surveyed described their financial circumstances in 1978 as poor and the other half as comfortable, with more of the women describing poor circumstances [20]. Some were unemployed throughout 1978, and more experienced mainly unemployment with irregular or intermittent work. This was the case for one in five survey participants and more of the women experienced this[21] (see *Table 2*).

A couple of *78ers* were (still) at school in 1978 and several were doing trade courses at TAFE, while more were studying at university (over a quarter of survey participants). Most of the university students were studying humanities subjects (four-fifths of them). Students were realising the benefits of the Whitlam Government's abolition of university fees and creation of the Tertiary Assistance Scheme in 1974 and some of the *78ers* who were at university then described their childhood financial circumstances as poor (three-tenths of them). One-third of students had ongoing employment (see *Table 3*).

Table 2: *78ers'* work, study and unemployment, by their gender, childhood financial circumstances and average age in 1978

Labour force status or experience in 1978	Gender			Childhood financial circumstance		Age
	Of males (%)	Of females (%)	Of persons (%)*	Poor (%)	Comfort-able or well off (%)	Average age (years)
Ongoing employment**	64	41	55	51	57	27
Ongoing temporary or casual employment	11	5	8	5	10	28
Intermittently employed & unemployed	8	18	12	15	10	25
Full-time education	14	27	20	22	19	21
Unemployed	3	9	5	7	4	28
Number of persons	64	44	110	41	69	

*Includes two transgender people

**Continuous or serial employment or a job mix

Table 3: *78ers* engaged in full-time education and their employment participation in 1978

Education and employment status in 1978	Gender			Childhood financial circumstance	
	Males	Females	Persons*	Poor	Comfort-able or well off
Full-time education	9	12	22	9	13
Studying and ongoing employment	9	0	9	1	8
Studying and regular or intermittent temporary or casual employment	1	1	2	0	2
Number of persons	19	13	33	10	23

*Includes one transperson

3.2 Work and employment sector

In 1978, fifty-five per cent of participants had regular work (see *Table 2*). Examining participants' labour force status and experience by their gender, age and childhood financial circumstances shows that more of the men were working and more of the

women were studying. The labour force status or experience of *78ers* did not vary with their childhood financial circumstance, comparing those from "poor" and those from "comfortable or well off" backgrounds. The average age of those in fulltime education was 21, while the average age of those in ongoing employment or temporary, casual or intermittent employment was 27 years.

The major employment providers were in the public sector (for almost two-fifths). In the health system there were nurses (a trainee, a nurses aide and registered nurses, one a psychiatric nurse) and a community health worker. In the higher education system there were teaching academics at various levels (tutors, lecturers), some who specified a discipline (sociology, philosophy, the arts, health education). One of these was a woman. Some academic workers were in precarious employment, with casual teaching and periods of unemployment. There were also two research assistants working on temporary projects. Other public sector workers were in education, communications, public administration and transport. In the school system there were teachers, an education officer and an after-school care co-ordinator. There were mail sorters, a postal clerk and a postal deliverer. There was a full-time documentary filmmaker. There was a Telecom clerk and a telephone exchange telephonist. Several worked in public transport – railway station assistants and a bus driver. There was an earlier period of expansion in health, welfare, community and education expenditure under the Whitlam government, with associated public sector growth and recruitment at the entry level of the labour force. Parts of the public sector provided greater relative protections from workplace discrimination.

The community sector was another significant provider (for one in eight) most of these in feminist-based community services for women. Radical feminists and socialist feminists worked in refuges for women and their children escaping abuse and violence, or seeking crisis accommodation. They were health workers in women's health centres, or an abortion clinic, or a counsellor for women experiencing rape or other sexual violence. Other community sector jobs included community health worker, children's activities worker, social worker and community development worker. The Whitlam government had introduced community programs that involved, for the first time, direct Federal funding of community organisations, complementing state and local government funded services. The Community Youth Support Scheme (CYSS), for instance was an important community resource, free of the inputs-outputs calculations

of contemporary neoliberal social policy. The arts, entertainment and information sectors also provided work for some. These jobs were described as film and theatre work (e.g. set making, writing, acting, one in a feminist theatre group), illustrator, silkscreen printer, leatherworker, performance artist. Some were journalists and one was a librarian.

The finance and legal sectors provided employment for a bank officer, insurance clerk, bookkeeper or auditor, as well as a legal clerk and a barrister. One *78er* was an engineer (the field wasn't specified) and there were two consultants, one in public programs and one in information. One survey participant worked in manufacturing as a factory worker and several worked in retail (sales assistants, one in menswear sales). A small number had jobs in the hospitality sector, as a bar steward, assistant bar manager, headwaiter and hotel receptionist. A couple worked in travel (a travel agent and a flight attendant). There was a veterinary technician, a taxi driver, a self-defence trainer and a masseur. Several did sex work for income. A number of people relied on labouring, general hand, cleaning, and gardening jobs. One was a live-in caretaker, one had a job erecting bunting and one did 'anything I could get my hands on'.

Considered together, the *78ers* surveyed were, then, a diverse group in terms of socioeconomic background, financial circumstance, occupation, and resources. For *78ers* who were working about two-fifths were in unskilled and semi-skilled jobs, about a half were in skilled jobs and a small number (males) were in professional employment (see *Table 4*)[22]. A similar percentage of women and men were in unskilled or semi-skilled work or skilled jobs.[23] There were gender variations in employment sectors (see *Table 5*). The public sector provided almost half of the men's jobs and almost a quarter of the women's. Among these were jobs in higher education (one-eighth of jobs) all but one held by men. While two community sector jobs were held by males, over a quarter of the women's jobs were in this sector, most of them in feminist community-based women's services. One in seven worked in the arts and media, and there was little gender variation in this and the remaining sectors that employed over a third of the survey cohort. These jobs represent more than incomes and past-times. Some related directly to social movement activism and had implications for social network connections and movement action and resources, for example, socialist and radical feminists and the aforementioned feminist community-based women's services.

Table 4: *78ers'* employment in 1978, by labour market segment and gender

Labour market segment	Gender		Persons*	
	Of females (%)	Of males (%)	Per cent	Number
Un/semi-skilled	46	40	41	34
Skilled	54	51	51	42
Professional	0	9	7	6
Total (number)	28	53	100	82

*Includes one transperson

Notes: Jobs of *78ers* were coded into labour force segments using the Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO) framework (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1997. It has nine major (hierarchical) groups that I have collapsed to four categories, for the small cohort which was concentrated in higher segments. Several jobs inadequately described have been not been categorised. The category, *unskilled and semi-skilled* relates to major groups nine to six: Labourers and Related Workers; Elementary Clerical, Sales and Service Workers; Intermediate Production and Transport Workers; and Intermediate Clerical, Sales and Service Workers – jobs that did not require post-school qualifications or significant experience. The category *skilled* related to major groups five to three: Advanced Clerical and Service Workers; Tradespersons and Related Workers; and Associate Professionals. These included jobs like welfare worker, senior project work or management and technical jobs and could require vocational or academic qualifications or experience. The category *professional* related to the major group two of the same name and occupations required a degree or higher degree or equivalent experience and could require membership of a professional body. Jobs of *78ers* in this group included psychotherapist, solicitor, social worker and engineer. The category 'Senior administrative or professional' related to the major group one, 'Managers and Administrators' work that requires higher degrees or equivalent and includes high level public administration and senior professional roles (such as barrister, medical specialist or professorial academic) or CEO of a larger organisation. Some 78ers' jobs were in this segment in 1998.

Table 5:Employment sector of *78ers*, by gender

Employment sectors	Of women (%)	Of males (%)	Of total (%)*
Public sector	24.4	48.2	37.8
Arts and Community sectors	41.5	14.3	26.5
Admin, financial, legal, technical	9.8	12.5	11.2
Retail, manufacturing, labouring and personal services	24.4	24.5	24.5
Number	41	56	98*

*Includes one transgender person

Gay liberation and feminist politics percolated through the work of artists, writers and performers, and in their individual, collective and community art practice. Academic staff and students as a group comprised over a third of *78ers* surveyed, and universities

were an important site of lesbian and gay movement radicalism at the time (for example, nine were members of Active Defence of Homosexuals on Campus (ADHOC), which was a Sydney University, Left, lesbian and gay, campus group). There were networks of activists within public sector agencies and caucuses within trade unions. Many *78ers* were 'out' in their workplaces. On the whole there were relatively few "blue collar" workers amongst the *78ers* and most of these were in the public sector. These sectors in the labour force were still highly gender-segmented and largely unfriendly towards homosexual workers. The lesbian and gay movement was often characterised as being middle class, though many *78ers* described their childhood financial circumstances as poor. The survey did not ask where they were living in 1978, though some were visiting from out of town.

Social change and new directions in social policy and public funding of community services and the arts required a new workforce and many *78ers* were a part of that. Twenty years later, while many were in the same (hierarchical) labour force segment, half had upward movement and some were in the highest segments who were in academia and senior executive or professional roles in the public and community sectors. Some of those in health and public administration were in senior executive positions, in areas such as women's and health policy. This is further discussed in chapter five.

3.3 Politics and sexual politics

The survey canvassed participants on identifiers of their politics, and offered a list for multiple choice. They were all terms in contemporary use. Some related to social and political theory (e.g. feminism, Marxism) and some to organising in specific fields of action and activist groupings (e.g. trade unionists, socialist feminist). They included politics of the left and the right, as well as 'apolitical'.[24]

The political identifications of *78ers*, for women and men are presented in *Figures 1* and *2*, respectively. In 1978, one-tenth of them identified their politics as 'liberal' and one as 'conservative' (these were all males). Almost as many identified as 'apolitical' at the time (all of these males). The same number identified a 'libertarian' politics (men and women). However four-fifths of respondents identified with Left and radical

Figure 1: Political identifications of *78ers* in 1978 (women)

78ers' political identification in 1978 (women)

Identification	Frequency
feminist	42
radical feminist	21
anarchist	12
separatist	10
socialist feminist	7
socialist	7
Marxist	6
labour/trade unionist	5
social movement activist	5
libertarian	4
communist	4
liberal	1
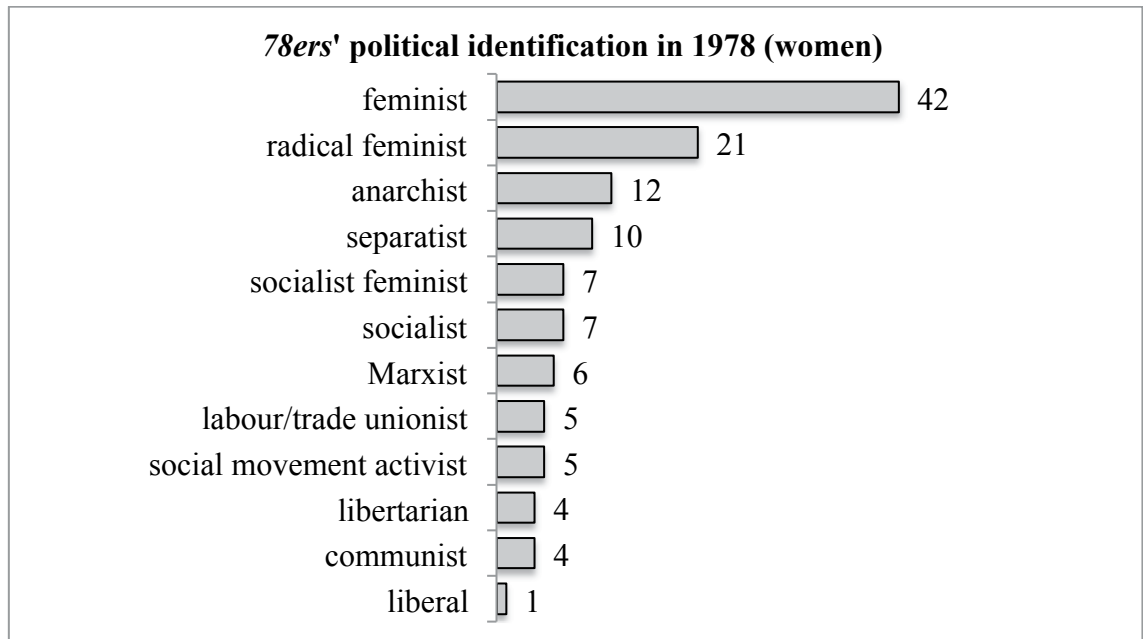
Notes: Fifteen identifiers were offered for multiple choice (see *Appendix 1*, *78ers* survey items, question 50). Frequencies are the number of women (of total 44) who selected these.

Figure 2: Political identifications of *78ers* in 1978 (men)

78ers' political identification in 1978 (males)

Identification	Frequency
socialist	24
social movement activist	19
labour/trade unionist	15
Marxist	12
communist	10
liberal	10
apolitical	10
feminist	10
anarchist	9
socialist feminist	6
libertarian	6
radical feminist	2
effeminist	2
conservative	1
separatist	1
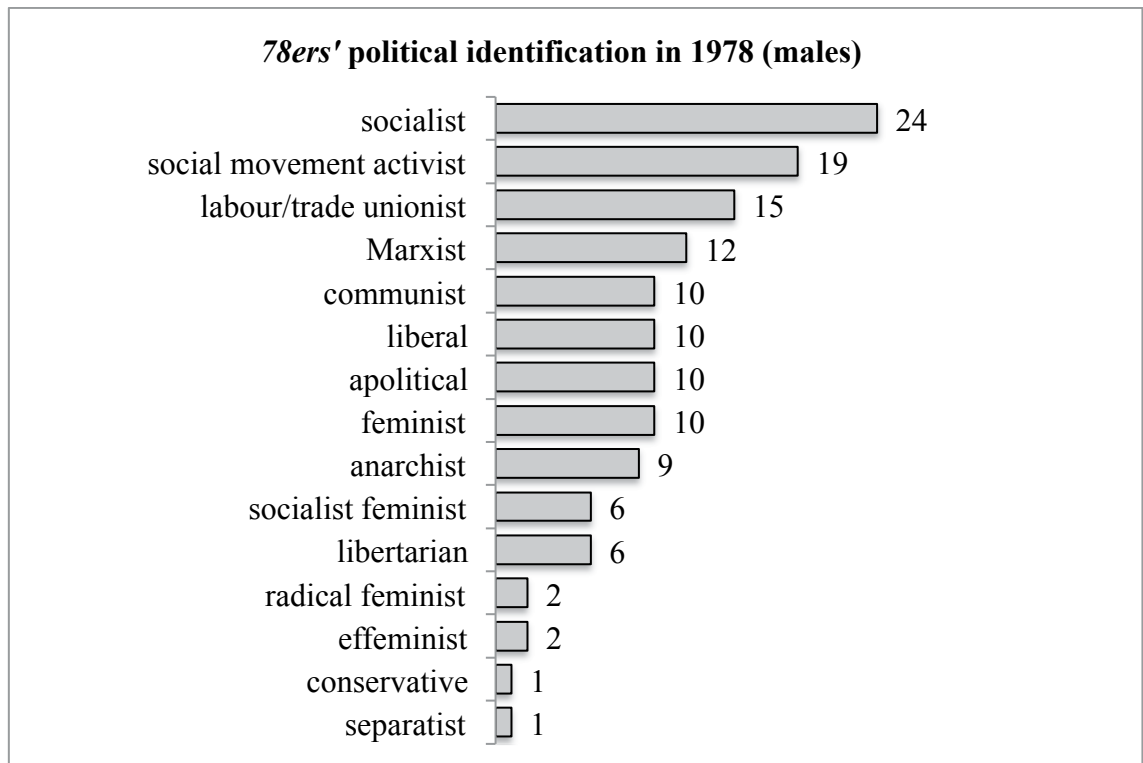
Notes: Frequencies are the number of males (of total 64) who selected these identifiers.

politics. Those who identified as 'socialist', 'communist', 'Marxist' and 'socialist feminist' comprised over half of the men and a third of the women.[25]. Alongside these were those identifying as 'anarchist'(one-fifth of the cohort) with a shared opposition to capitalist and class domination. More of the women were anarchists, and the anarchafeminist politics incorporated a critique of patriarchy and capitalism in notions of oppression and resistance. Those with Left politics made up 65 per cent of the survey cohort. Almost half of the women described themselves as 'radical feminist'. One-third of these also identified descriptors of the Left (the others didn't) and another six as 'separatist'. Radical feminists in the late 1970s were divided in their view of the operations of power and women's oppression, in terms of whether gender or class was its principal site, and on the role of non-lesbian women and men in resistance[26]. This was one of the differences between radical feminists and socialist feminists and the data reflects this distinction. Another descriptor offered was 'social movement activist' with (one or multiple) social movements, and one in five selected this (more of the men[27]). Most of these also identified with Left descriptors. Almost one-fifth of *78ers* surveyed were active in trade union and labour politics. Looking at the childhood financial circumstances in these political groupings shows some patterns. Most of those with liberal or conservative politics or who selected 'apolitical' were from 'comfortable' or 'well off' backgrounds (91 per cent). Those who identified as anarchist were a little less so (70 per cent). Half of the socialists identified 'poor' childhood circumstances, as did most of the communists (93 per cent).

Some of the political descriptors that were used by survey participants relate to certain kinds of politics and political normativities across social movement elements (such as feminism and socialism) and some related to specific social and political groups or social movement elements (the aforementioned Anarchafeminists, and Socialist Feminists, as well as groups like Socialist Homosexuals and the Gay Trade Union Group. More than half of the survey cohort were also active in other social movements, citing the student movement, the women's movement, the international solidarity movement, peace and anti-nuclear movements and, as mentioned earlier, the radical and progressive Trade Unions.

While most of the survey cohort identified with Left and radical political descriptors, less than one in six were members of a political party or grouping in 1978. Of the 21 who were, eight were members of the Communist Party of Australia. Others were

members of the Australian Labor Party, the International Socialist Organisation, the Socialist Workers Party, the Australasian Spartacists, and one belonged to the Australian Democrats. Those who were in a political party were on average three years younger than those that weren't.

While most of the *78ers* were engaged in critical, radical and dissident politics, emergent conservative and liberal gay forces were represented to some degree among those organising and mobilised by events. As is discussed in chapter five, both liberationist and assimilationist politics were significant in developments in the lesbian and gay communities after 1978. As well as being politically diverse, *78ers* were also diverse in the way they regarded their gender and sexuality.

3.4 Ideations of gender and sexuality

In asking people in 1998 to identify their gender and sexuality in 1978, a simple heterosexual/bisexual/homo scale was avoided for a number of reasons. Differences around gender and sexuality essentialism had emerged since 1978, and a linear scale would be problematic with emerging queered subjectivities (particularly that the same question was put in respect of their situation in 1998). Also such categories would not capture genre, subculture or gender play, which were historically and socially specific. Instead a list of self-descriptors common to the period and the cohort were offered as multiple choice options, in alphabetical order with an 'other please describe'[28] (these categories were drawn from trialling of the survey). There were the usual descriptors of sexuality or sexual identity and variations in the vernacular. Some descriptors related to gender (e.g. queen, butch, effeminate, transgender) and some to subculture (e.g. camp, clone, fairy, counterculture, queer). Questioning descriptors (like 'confused sexuality' or 'undecided') were included as well as 'celibate' and 'asexual'. In all there were twenty-seven of them. *Figures 3* and *4* show their relative use by women and men respectively. One-fifth of the women used descriptors 'heterosexual' or 'bisexual'. All the others used 'lesbian'. Three-quarters of these used 'dyke', two-fifths used 'homosexual' and almost as many used 'gay'. One-fifth used the descriptor 'camp'. A small number used descriptors like 'queer[29]', 'butch' or 'femme'.

Figure 3: *78ers'* **use of sexuality and gender descriptors in 1978 and 1998 (number of women)**

**78ers' use of sexuality and gender descriptors: 1978 and 1998
(number of women)**

Descriptor	In 1978	In 1998
lesbian	34	32
dyke	25	25
homosexual	14	11
gay	12	7
bisexual	7	4
camp	7	0
heterosexual	5	6
confused sexuality	3	0
counterculture	3	3
queer	3	10
asexual	2	0
butch	2	2
celibate	1	2
femme	1	3
undecided	1	2
leather dyke	0	2
transgendered	0	1
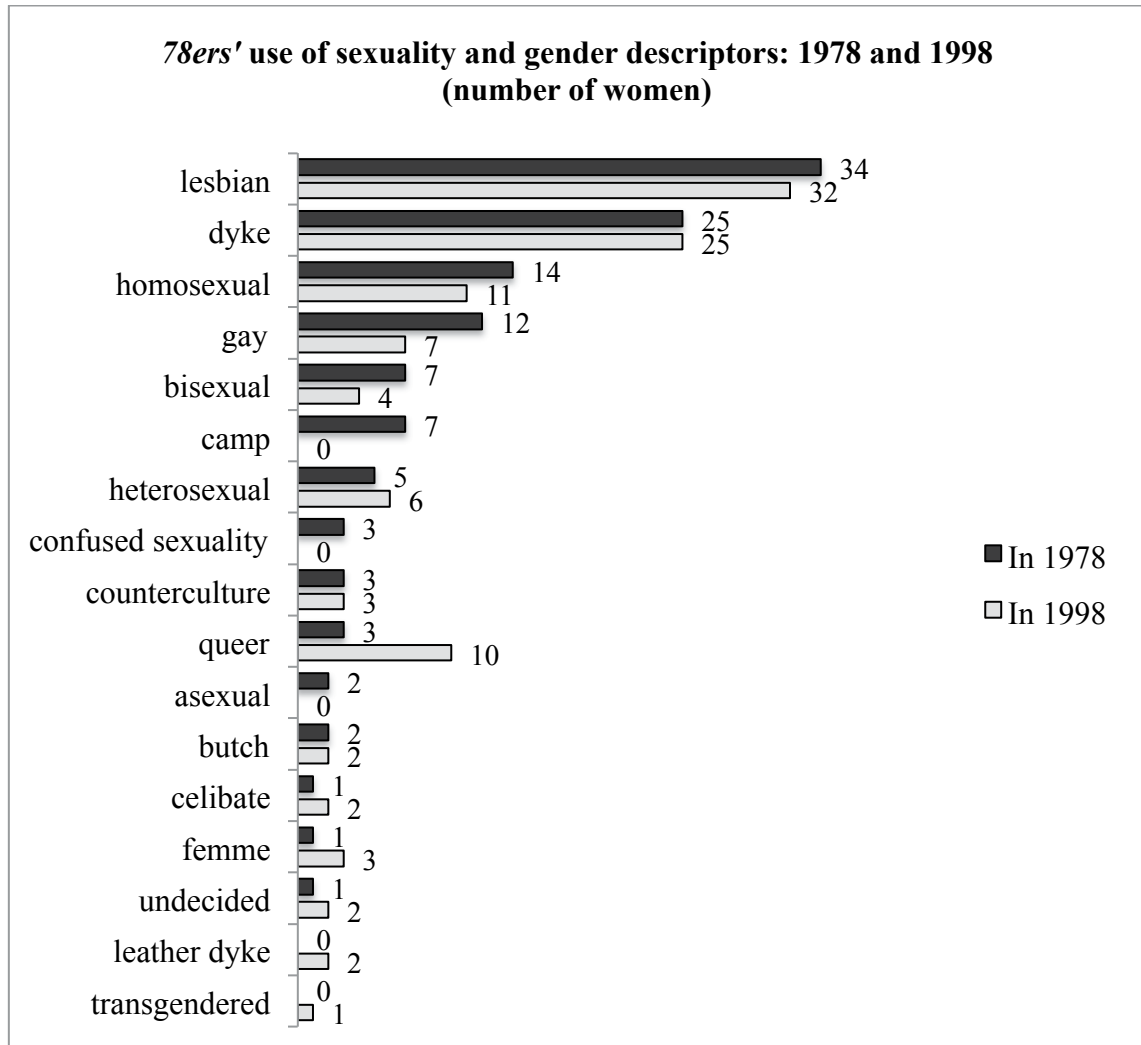
Notes: Notes: 27 identifiers were offered for multiple choice and an open option (see Appendix One, 78ers survey items, questions 41 and 75). Frequencies are the number of women (of total 44) who selected these.

One-sixth of the males used 'heterosexual' or 'bisexual' as descriptors. Of the remainder, their most common descriptors were 'gay' and 'homosexual' (for about three-quarters), 'homosexual male', 'poofter', 'camp', and 'queen'. The data show variations in the use of 'gay', 'homosexual', and 'homosexual male' that refer to differences in politics. 'Homosexual' was used freely in the early years, as an inclusive term such as in 'National Homosexual Conference' or 'Socialist Homosexuals'. Some men described themselves as 'gay' but not 'homosexual' (possibly because of its medical and stigmatic associations). Some described themselves as 'homosexual' but not 'gay', (most likely because of its associations with the U.S. and contemporary anti-U.S. sentiment). Some used the term 'homosexual male', which had come in to use as

'homosexual' was no longer used to identify both men and women, as in Socialist
Lesbians and Homosexual Males or National Conference of Lesbians and Homosexual
Males, but more used all of these terms interchangeably. There were smaller numbers
using subcultural descriptors like 'fairy', 'clone' and 'leather queen' (around one in
eight). A small number of men and women indicated a 'confused sexuality', and these
also identified 'bisexual', 'heterosexual' or 'asexual'.

Figure 4: *78ers'* **use of sexuality and gender descriptors in 1978 and 1998 (males)**
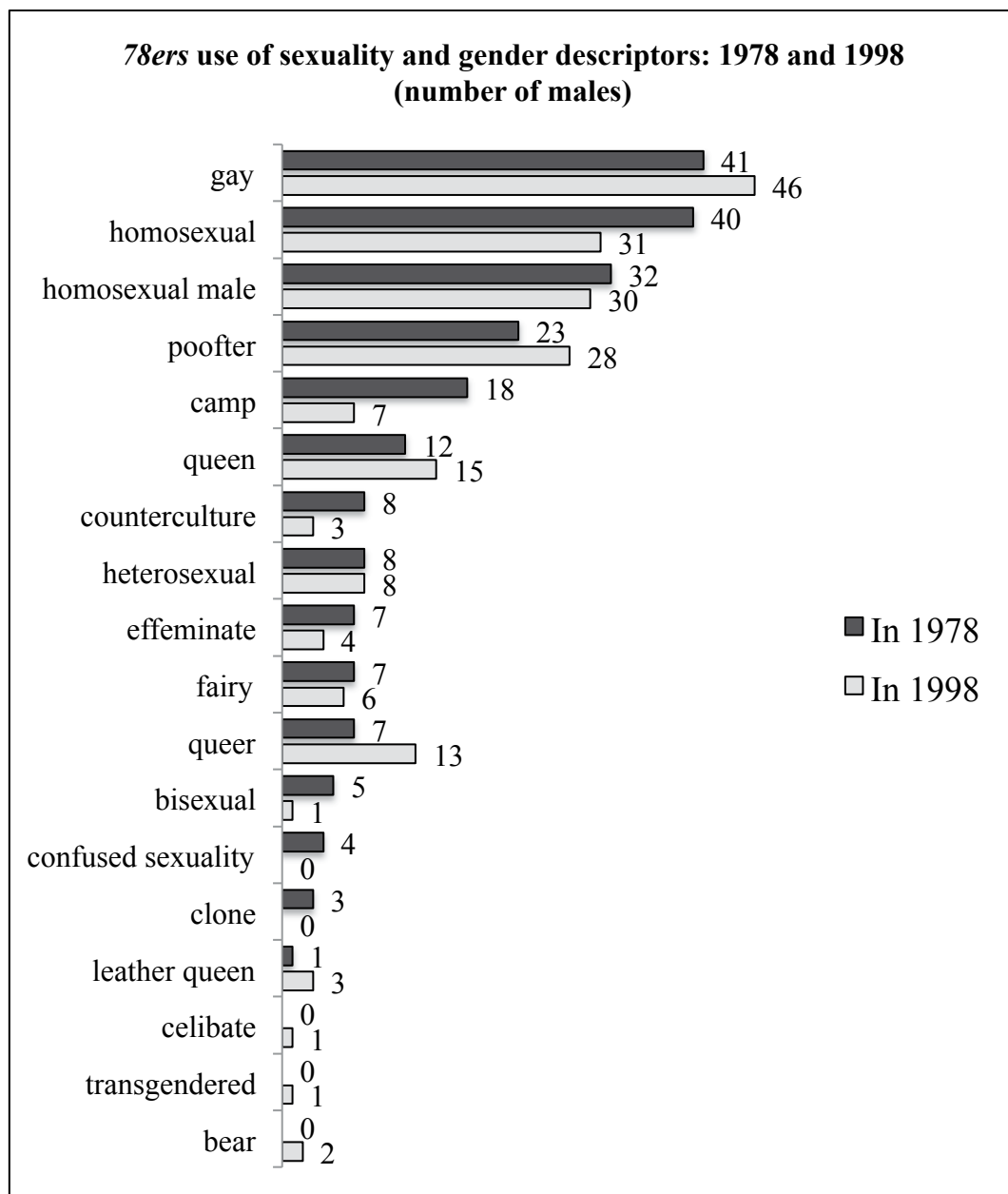
Notes: See *Figure 3*. Notes: Frequencies are the number of males (of total 64) who selected
these.

Among the *78ers* surveyed, four-fifths used descriptors of homosexualities (and a small
number of these also used 'bisexual'). The others used 'heterosexual' or 'bisexual', in

roughly equal number, but several used both of these, and two were 'undecided'[30]. The survey data reveals a sexually diverse movement and stands as a reminder of the often and easily forgotten contribution of its heterosexual, bisexual and transgender identifying members. As discussed earlier, 1978 was a time of significant personal change for many survey participants. As well, their involvement in the lesbian feminist and lesbian and gay movements provided a social and political environment in which many found confidence in themselves and in their sexuality and homosexuality. In many comments, from men and women, they 'felt more comfortable' or were 'happier' with themselves and their sexuality. For one, then, lesbian feminist the lesbian and gay movement 'reinforced [her] identity as a lesbian' giving her a 'stronger sense of self.'[31] Some (young and those starting late) became sexual within the movements. One, then, radical feminist wrote: 'I was a 'baby dyke' and so forming my identity and community within the lesbian movement.'[32] One, then, anarchist-feminist, had become 'a lesbian and a feminist at the same time', three years earlier, 'it was the best time of my life', she wrote.[33]

Long-term partnerships were formed in the movements. Events, activities, mobilisations and other collective engagements provided many opportunities for sex and relationships. For one radical feminist 'conferences were a great place to pick up intelligent sex.'[34] For one young gay activist, the evening march/parade of the International Gay Freedom Day events had a particular significance. 'I lost my virginity'[35], he wrote. Some who were heterosexual and/or bisexual-identifying ended heterosexual relationships and/or started new homosexual relationships. One 43 year old, Left activist 'came out and divorced [his] wife.'[36] Another young bisexual formed a long-term gay relationship. He wrote: 'I moved from being predominantly heterosexual in my mind to gay.'[37]

Some expressed a sense that the movements made it possible to 'become' lesbian or gay. One older (30 year old) radical feminist wrote: 'I would have found it very hard to 'come out'/act on my sexual attraction to women if it hadn't been for the movement.'[38] For another libertarian feminist the movements 'made it easier to be homosexual'[39]. Another socialist feminist fleshed this out: 'The existence of the gay movement and the women's movement made it possible for me to become a lesbian – which was a major and fabulous change to my life. The movement provided support and positive feedback for 'choosing homosexuality.'[40] For one heterosexual feminist the movements offered

homosexual experiences. She wrote: 'If there hadn't been an overt movement then it would have been more difficult for homosexuality to become part of daily discourse, and that's been important to me. Its enabled/encouraged some sexual experimentation.'[41] For one Left, heterosexual and bisexual-identifying male, the events of 1978 were enough 'for [him] to go walkabout – professionally, sexually and privately' for the next five years.[42]

One comment from an older (35 year old) Left gay activist addressed explicitly, the sense of events and lesbian and gay movement involvement committing one to a homosexual identity. He wrote.

> The publicity and arrest perhaps cemented my homosexuality. I had been hoping to explore/develop my heterosexual side but now I was spending all my time going to political meetings with gays and lesbians (Gay Solidarity) and identifying publicly as homosexual.[43]

His comment touches on the closing of heterosexual possibilities with the formation of a preoccupying homosexual identity in activism and everyday life. With the others above it addresses the relationship between personal sexual identity (however complex) and collective sexual politics. While those with a history of activism and involvement in the movements, or with other predispositions to activism had long-affirmed lesbian or homosexual sexual identities, the events of 1978 were the backdrop and impetus, and the movements provided the context and the necessary possibilities for the homosexualisation of many younger or new activists, and recognition of their sexual identity.

3.5 Participation in movement activities and collectivities

Of those who were involved in the evening parade/protest, that would become known as the first Mardi Gras, most attended (84 per cent) because they were already active in the lesbian feminist and lesbian and gay movements and/or a Left or social movement grouping. Most of the apolitical gay or bisexual men were not. They mainly came with friends or because they'd seen pamphlets or posters.

Figure 5 presents data on *78ers* participation in some movement activities (women's or lesbian/gay movement dances, parties or concerts). Given the engagement of many of the lesbians with the women's movement, the lesbian feminist movement and the

lesbian and gay movement, and the options for activity, it's not surprising that most of them attended these events and more often than others, with half attending occasionally (defined as once a month) and over a third regularly (every week) The participation of the males identifying with non-radical politics or as apolitical was low.[44].

Figure 5: *78ers*, various groupings and their attendance at social movement social events

***78ers*, and their attendance at social movement social events**

	Never	Rarely (several times a year)	Occasionally (once a month)	Regularly (every week)
Men (n=64)		41%	33%	9%
Nonradical & apolitical men		29%	33%	10%
Left & radical gay men/homosexuals		42%	39%	11%
Women (n=44)	9%	50%	36%	

□ Never   ▨ Rarely (several times a year)
▨ Occasionally (once a month)   ■ Regularly (every week)
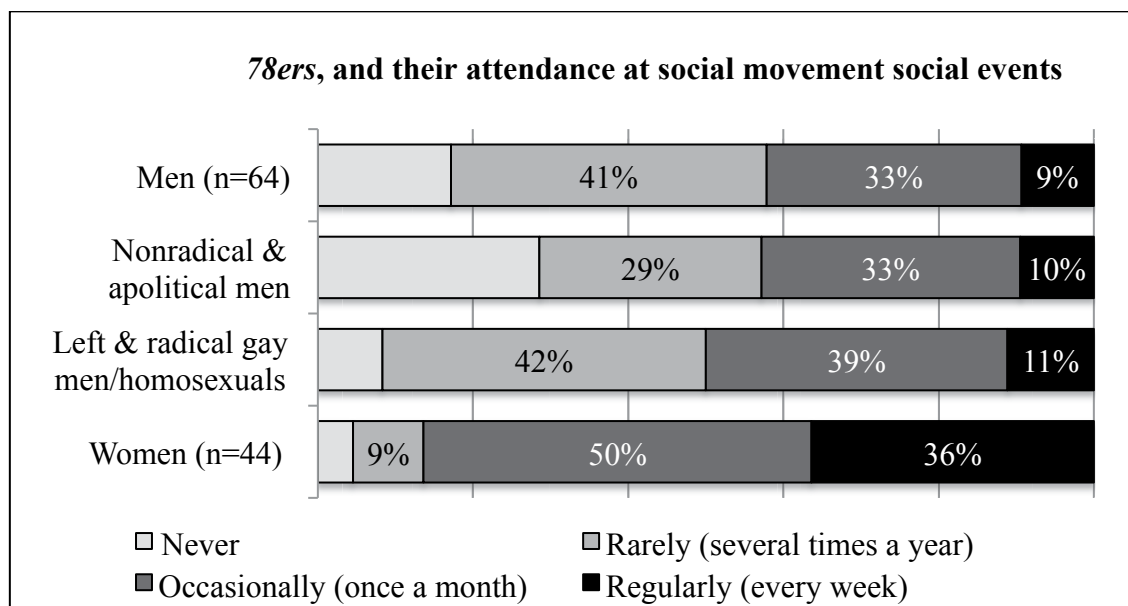
Notes: Events were "women's or lesbian and gay movement dances, parties or concerts" (Appendix One, 78ers' survey items, question 54).

In 1978 over half of the lesbians in the cohort were members of the Lesbian Feminist Collective (most of these were radical feminists). Through the mid-seventies the gay liberation movement lost many of its lesbian members who were organising separately. Nevertheless, one-third of the lesbians in the survey cohort were involved with mixed groups: CAMP, the Sydney University group ADHOC and/or the Gay Solidarity Group. Most people in the survey cohort were active in a lesbian and/or gay group (just over two-thirds) and over half of these belonged to two and up to five groups.[45]

3.6 Histories of action before 1978 and other predispositions to action

In reflecting on the significance of the lesbian and gay movement and the events of 1978, many referred to earlier histories of gay liberation, women's movement and Left activism and action. Some referred to other events that predisposed them to action (such as experiences of police brutality or bad experiences of 'coming out'), or a period characterised by big personal changes. For those who were not politically active at the

time, or described themselves as 'apolitical', the actions of police and the opportunities for demonstrations motivated some to defiance and resistance for the first time.

Most of the women participating in the survey had been involved in the lesbian and gay movement and/or the lesbian feminist movement before 1978, some over many years, and located the events of 1978 in that context[46]. Many of the women were more involved in the lesbian feminist movement than the gay and lesbian movement at the time. As one said:

> I'd say the lesbian feminist movement of the early, mid and late 70s was a most
> significant influence in my life – through it I came out and started to feel good
> about myself as a lesbian and woman. The later lesbian/gay movement of 1978 was
> less significant since I was already very active.[47]

What happened in 1978 was more of the same, for some. One, then radical feminist wrote: 'I had already come out. I was already an activist. The arrests and demonstrations just confirmed what I already felt and knew. My life did not change.'[48]

Many of the men, those with radical or Left politics had been involved in the gay liberation movement since its beginnings, as one older gay man wrote: 'I came out at CAMP Inc. in 1973/4. I was with Gay Liberation in Australia Street, Camperdown in 73/74. I learnt of the movement before the bars.'[49] Some of those who were identifying as Leftists and heterosexual in 1978 were seasoned activists. For one who was arrested at two mobilisations it was not particularly life defining, as he wrote: 'I had little to lose and had been involved in arrests and activism over many years. I was never for example in the position of having my employment threatened and my family/friends were totally aware of my activities (and supportive).'[50]

While some of the gay men described themselves as apolitical in 1978 and were not then active in the lesbian and gay movement, they nevertheless had formative experiences of police violence or arrest at beats. Twenty years later one found the events 'very painful' to remember:

> In the 70s us gay men were abused systematically and we had no way to address
> these attacks. Bumper Farrell[51] a corrupt police officer once kicked me up the arse
> and told me if he saw me again I would be locked up for the night. My partner at
> the time Maggie (drag) was picked up by police one night and forced to suck off

two detectives before she was allowed to go from Darlo Police Station. I was picked up one night, walking through Darlinghurst Rd and taken back to Darlinghurst Police Station and hosed down on the hour in the middle of winter. I can vividly remember begging them to stop because I was freezing – they just laughed and shouted 'you queer fag!' The next morning they would let you go. I was sick with bronchitis for weeks. Also on a Sunday afternoon I was bashed unconscious by a gay hater at the Cricketers Arms Hotel at Surry Hills. It was reported to Darlinghurst Police Station and I was told, and I quote – 'Fuck off – you deserve it you filthy poofta'. We were continually abused and it still hurts me today to talk about it.[52]

Another respondent, 'like many others, at the time … felt the great surge of injustice, not just at the law but community attitudes'[53]. Changing the emerging gay community's relationship with the Police would become one of the focuses of the movement over the next decade.

Most of the activists who became involved in the events of 1978 were radicals with a longer history in the lesbian and gay movement, some going back to CAMP and Gay Liberation. Some did not share these radical origins but were nevertheless ready to collectively confront the police who had made their lives so difficult. For many it was liberating. For some it was disastrous.

3.7 Injury, trauma, negative personal consequences and experiences of collective action

The trauma of experiencing extreme police violence and all that went with being arrested was common to many participants. Several survey participants were severely injured with long-term consequences. One young lesbian separatist wrote: 'The physical assault was very traumatic. I have been crowd-phobic ever since. It took me ten years to go back to the Mardi Gras (four of them living in Melbourne).'[54] One Left gay man (now heterosexual) 'was severely injured and took up to two years to recover. Legal action was not completed for three years.'[55] One bisexual/heterosexual identifying socialist feminist, who was arrested twice in 1978, wrote:

Being arrested for dancing in the street was a memorable occasion. It made me defiant that "the people" had the right to do this. It also made me scared and fearful of the power of the police once I had been arrested. I still have an immediate distrust of the police – I'm afraid I still hate them. I did not really get involved in

gay politics. If anything I moved away from active confrontationalist politics after the Mardi Gras arrests. I also moved away from lesbianism and went completely heterosexual – to this day![56]

Strong reactions were common, among them withdrawal or antipathy. One, then 29 year-old radical feminist lesbian wrote: 'I was very frightened of police violence – I saw horrific injuries that night and at the court on Monday. This terrified me – I think I withdrew a bit because I felt vulnerable.'[57] For another, then 19 years old, it took years:

> Over the years I regained my voice, my confidence and created a stronger sense of who I am and can be. Though that took many years – I did not embrace the politics of the day – emotionally I was too traumatised and felt that my emotional wellbeing was more important.[58]

Some, then apolitical gay men withdrew altogether: 'From then on I would never get involved in anything that I thought would cause conflict. I was 22 and my lover was 21 we could not believe what we saw that night.'[59] For another who was 19 years old: 'To be arrested at what was, in effect, a gay pride march the week after coming out had a huge negative psychological impact. I feared police, Sydney, and subconsciously feared other gay men for most of the next ten years.'[60] For some the psychological response was paranoia, as for this gay man and socialist:

> For a long time afterwards (several years) I felt paranoid because I thought police knew that I was involved and active in gay politics. Also too I felt disconnected at work – I'm not sure whether this was real or imagined but I just felt very insecure and suspicious around the years following '78.[61]

Not that there was any lack of reasons to be paranoid. One, then apolitical 17 year-old gay man experienced effects later on:

> I remember not long after the rally a magazine printed a photo of me. It was shown around my mother's canteen at work 'Isn't this your little Johnny' they asked. It also was repeated in November '78 when I applied for a job. One of the bosses was an ex-cop and told all the other employees about my city lifestyles.[62]

Many of those participating in events in 1978 were publicly outed either by being arrested, by the print media or by being seen there. While a few reported having no major negative consequences, for some there was discrimination at work and effects on family relationships. There were several reports of ongoing police surveillance or

harassment and for some there were other implications for their convictions. One, for example, was unable get a Class Four, bus driver licence, because of not being classed as 'a fit and proper person to hold a licence.'[63] One participant, then a 19 year-old radical feminist separatist, had a very negative experience:

> I learnt about fear and oppression – I learnt to be invisible, hidden and afraid. I lost my job, came out on TV, newspapers to friends, family and colleagues. It threw my life into chaos and I felt very displaced for a long time. It DID NOT make me feel connected to a bigger political movement. Being arrested and the consequences of that first Mardi Gras were very traumatic – I did not feel empowered by it. I lost my job and suffered terrible physical, verbal, emotional and psychological harassment at work and though always a strong unionist – my union refused to help me. I lost faith in the system, friends and family. It was a horrible way to wake up.[64]

Several, then young gay men were arrested on the night. One who was 16 years old wrote: 'As I was underage I could not be charged, however, I was questioned for nearly two hours and asked to give names of other "degenerates" to police.'[65] Another, then 15 was driven home by a police officer who outed him to his family. The same officer made further, intimidatory contact months later in an attempt to solicit sex.

All of these accounts serve as a reminder of how great the personal costs of activism or being mobilised in action can be, and how enduring the consequences. They also serve to balance other accounts of those who found support and solidarity in the movements that allowed them to survive such violence and injury and the implications of being outed (personal disasters, discrimination or rejections) and to strengthen their collective identities and refashion their lives (this is further developed in the next chapter). They also address one of the realities of mobilisations that involve violent confrontation – they can mobilise new participants and demobilise others.

3.8 Conclusion and methodological reflections

While the *78ers* survey focuses on the violent suppression of a mobilisation event and a year of action in response to it, it also takes Melucci's lens to collective identity and reveals the multiplicity of the lesbian and gay movement at the time. The focus in the survey on aspects of collective action, identity, politics, normativities and movement parts, has produced a rich account of the characteristics of the lesbian and gay

movement in Sydney in 1978. It shows the historical and contemporary elements (gay liberation, socialism and feminism) and the various radical, lesbian feminist and Left groupings. It shows the relationship between collective action and the social networks in which it was embedded in everyday life. While in 1978 it was mainly a young movement it included in its collective memory many experiences of the national movement throughout the early and mid 1970s. In their personal and shared experience is the prohibition of homosexuality and all the damage done by anti-homosexual stigma, surveillance, violence and discrimination, for some going back to extremely dark and paranoid times. At a stage when the movement was fragmenting with many women organising separately an almost unlikely group of its distinct elements were thrown together, mobilised for an event that turns into a riot that later (and perhaps ironically) becomes a defining moment for Sydney's emerging gay male community. The elements in this movement were distinct in their political (counter)normativities and their spaces (e.g. the women-only spaces of the radical feminists and the male-only spaces of the emerging gay community). The socialist, anarchist and libertarian activist elements participated in the lesbian and gay movement's mobilisations, events and celebrations throughout the year as well as in its organisations and groups. Many *78ers* were active in the lesbian feminist movement and/or other progressive social movements or Left political groups of the time. As will be discussed in Chapter Five, the social networks and politics of the times endured and were in some ways life defining for many participants.

In respect of ideations of gender and sexuality there are personal and collective dimensions. The survey captures a temporary alliance, as I have described it, of lesbian separatists, radical feminists, socialist feminists, radical effeminists, radical faeries, socialist homosexuals, Left heterosexuals, bisexual and transgendered people, and conservative and apolitical gay and bisexual men. The lesbian feminist and gay and lesbian movements had provided opportunities for sex and relationships, for being or becoming gay or lesbian. Collective identity allowed for the spaces for contestation of notions like sex and gender, liberation and resistance. The idea of being a lesbian feminist, for example, is at once personal and also collective in the relationships in which these shared epistemologies, practices and historical and contemporary elements were contested.

The relationship of the movements with the state is complex. Activists had been engaged in a struggle against a conservative state government, and then Wran's Labor government. They struggled against a police force remote from proper authority[66] and its anti-homosexual law enforcement tactics and attitudes towards and treatment of homosexuals.

Economic times were tough, especially for young people, but many were engaged in study or work, some enjoying the legacy of the political, economic and social liberalisations of the Whitlam Federal Government with free higher education and growth in public sector employment and community funding, and some working in feminist community-based women's services. As will be further discussed in Chapter Six, these political, economic and social conditions and activists' experiences of organising and making demands on the state made for a new workforce, in the aforementioned sectors, with career paths into professional, technical and senior administrative and policy roles. Professionalisation and mobility set the direction for a different relationship with the state and the ground for gay and lesbian equality politics.

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It was not all excitement, fun and loving solidarity for everyone, as we are reminded by those who were injured and traumatised by the events of 1978, by police violence, arrest, outing and subsequent discrimination and isolation.

Notes, chapter three

[1] Foss (1978), Johnston (1980, 1999), Johnston and Garde (1981), Thompson (1985, 1993), Wotherspoon (1991), Bergmann (1993), Altman (1971, 1979) have addressed aspects of gay liberation and lesbian feminist movement histories, organising, collective processes and politics and critical issues, in the early to mid 1970s.

[2] The social security system, for example, becomes a mechanism for surveillance and privatising moral discourses. A mobile phone network becomes a mechanism for the surveillance of communication and movement.

[3] All comments of 78ers Social History Project Survey participants (*78er*, for brevity) are referenced to their survey identifier. This one was *78er* 071.

[4] Many of the comments of survey participants about 1978 are referenced with their age and political or sexual descriptors. As will later be discussed, these descriptors relate not only to personal identity but specific groupings or elements in the lesbian and gay and lesbian feminist movements at the time.

[5] *78er* 021

[6] *78er* 056

[7] *78er* 022

[8] *78er* 041

[9] *78er* 096

[10] *78er* 023

[11] *78er* 105

[12] Of the survey participants, 56 per cent were under 25 years of age in 1978.

[13] The average age was 25.7 years and 21 was the most common age. The women were a little younger than the men, with an average age for women of 24 years, and for men, 27 years.

[14] Childhood financial circumstance was 'poor', 'comfortable' and 'well off' for 37, 54 and nine per cent of 78ers, respectively.

[15] The women were just as likely to be from a 'poor' or 'comfortable' background (43 and 43 per cent respectively), more of the men were from a 'comfortable' background (33 and 61 per cent, respectively).

[16] The inflation rate through 1978 was 8.1 per cent, from Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1978a.

[17] The rates for males, 6.2 per cent and females, 9.7 had risen by over a third in the previous 18 months, from Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 1978b, Table 6, Civilian labour force: Seasonally adjusted series.

[18] ABS 1978b, Table 7, Civilian labour force: Age. The rates for males and females, 15 to 19 years of age were 19.9 and 22.6 per cents respectively. The rates for those over 34, by comparison, were 4.1 and 4.5 per cents.

[19] ABS 1978b, Table 20 Unemployed persons: Age: States. Those unemployed and aged 15 to 19 years numbered about the same as those 20 to 34 years of age (37 per cent each).

[20] Financial circumstances for 78ers in 1978 were 'poor', 'comfortable' or 'well off' They were 'poor' for 48 per cent and 'comfortable' for 49 per cent. For males their situation was better (42 and 55 per cents, respectively) than women (57 and 41per cents, respectively).

[21] Unemployment and intermittent employment with periods of unemployment were experienced by 25 per cent of women and 11 per cent of males.

[22] As discussed in Chapter Two, the cohort included those who were active in the gay and lesbian and lesbian feminist movements before 1978, those who were mobilised during that year and joined movement organisations, and those who were involved but not mobilised to activism or activist groups. Activists, compared with non-activists, were about as likely to be in skilled or unskilled jobs, but comprised all those in professional employment and almost all of the tertiary students (18 of 21).

[23] See notes for Table 5 on the method of classification that involves collapsing the nine segments of the Australian Standard Classification of Occupations into four categories.

[24] The descriptors included: anarchist, feminist, separatist, apolitical, liberal, social movement activist, communist, libertarian, socialist, conservative, Marxist, socialist feminist, effeminist, radical feminist, labour/trade unionist

[25] Left politics was identified by 52 per cent of the men and 34 per cent of the women. 'Anarchist' was identified by 14 per cent of the men and 27 per cent of the women.

[26] See Denise Thompson (1993) who finds this tension developing around the role of lesbianism in feminism and the women's movement and their relationship to heterosexual feminists.

[27] The percentages of women and men who identified as 'social movement' activists were 11 and 30, respectively.

[28] It is Question 41 of the survey items, in Appendix 1.

[29] They were using it in the sense of appropriating anti-gay terminology rather than in its meaning within queer theory.

[30] Those using lesbian or gay/male homosexual descriptors were 81 per cent of the survey cohort (89 people). Those using bisexual or heterosexual descriptors numbered nine and ten respectively.

[31] *78er* 062

[32] *78er* 070

[33] *78er* 014

[34] *78er* 028

[35] *78er* 085

[36] *78er* 055

[37] *78er* 041

[38] *78er* 082

[39] *78er* 102

[40] *78er* 004

[41] *78er* 037

[42] *78er* 078

[43] *78er* 051

[44] For the males, almost three-tenths never attended, two-fifths attended rarely (several times a year), one-third attended occasionally and less than one-tenth regularly

[45] Survey participants were members of the Gay Solidarity Group (n=22), The Lesbian Feminist Collective (19), CAMP (15), ADHOC (the Sydney University Left lesbian and gay student group) (9).

[46] Though one, then radical feminist, was moved to point out that she was a lesbian before she became a feminist: 'lesbian politics came many years after lesbian practice.'

[47] *78er* 005

[48] *78er* 088

[49] *78er* 091

[50] *78er* 082

[51] Frank Farrell was a Police Inspector at Darlinghurst Police Station.

[52] *78er* 015

[53] *78er* 091

[54] *78er* 079

[55] *78er* 069

[56] *78er* 008

[57] *78er* 080

[58] *78er* 011

[59] *78er* 110

[60] *78er* 043

[61] *78er* 097

[62] *78er* 096

[63] *78er* 047

[64] *78er* 012

[65] *78er* 087

[66] See Hickie (1985) on the rumours, allegations and evidence of police and Askin state government corruption in respect of illegal gambling and organised crime. See the report of the Wood Royal Commission into the NSW Police Force Report 1997 (Vol. 1, Section 3.42) for acknowledgement of widespread police corruption in the 1970s, and the significance of Kings Cross and Darlinghurst Stations in "the recruitment of police into corrupt practices" (Section 3.65). Travis details police abuse, bashing, rape and extortion of sex workers, and particularly transgender sex workers (1986, pp. 76-7). See Murphy and Watson on police and local government corruption that allowed illegal gambling, prostitution, unlicensed bars and sex on premises venues to operate in Darlinghurst and the inner east of the city (1997, p. 73).

Chapter 4: Radical movements and emergent gay and lesbian communities under conservative rule – singing up a storm

This chapter draws on the *78ers* and *Gay Liberation Quire* data to focus on organising within the lesbian and gay movement. Comments of *78ers* provide insights into how a year of mobilisations invigorated a second wave of lesbian and gay movement activism and how it affected personal and collective identity. The first section shows processes of the events of the year politicising and radicalising movement members and the movement as an environment in which many gain more critical understandings of state control and regulation, ideological effects and homosexual and women's oppression. In the second section, the movement makes spaces and moments of action, celebration and solidarity where many members feel empowered and connected. In the third section, the (temporary) solidarity of movement elements, even despite their various incongruities, produces a period of renewed coalition politics (with women and men working together). In the fourth section, this "coalition" extends to the emerging gay (male) community and Mardi Gras but only in the next few years, while the lesbian and gay Left maintains control over its organisation. Melucci's lens of collective identity reveals the multiplicity of the movement and the varying experiences and responses of the parts within these four themes, and their different normativities and historical elements. To say that the personal and collective identities of lesbian and gay movement members were held in a tension in 1978, in the sense that Melucci uses the term tension, is an understatement in its literal sense.

A few years later we see these activists, identities, normativities and historical elements in a new kind of performance, a 'politics of play', as Harris (1998) dubs it. The account of the *Gay Liberation Quire*, covering its life, from 1981 to 1987, offers insights into the everyday life and politics, sexual politics and other (counter) normativities of the lesbian and gay movement through the lens of a sustained action. It also provides detail of the Quire's strategies of engagement and the fields of action (the movement, the gay communities, the Left and trade unions and the progressive social movements and international solidarity movements) and its direct actions against the religious Right. In particular it was engaged with its political environment: conservative political alliances at home and in solidarity against neoliberal global economic restructuring and military adventurism abroad.

4.1 The politicising and radicalising effects of activism and mobilisation

By 1978 activists in the lesbian feminist and gay and lesbian movements had developed personal and critical accounts of sexual and gender oppression, of homosexual oppression and women's oppression. These accounts addressed the historical, social, political and economic origins and operations of oppression. They located oppression in capitalist economic relations and patriarchal regimes. Their contestation was part of the currency of the movements. 'The times were full of exciting provocative engaging conversations, readings, thoughts and activities around the issues of "liberation" sexuality and the best place for dancing', wrote one, then anarchist-feminist, 'the issues matter, fascinate, are endlessly reworked, debated, pondered, etc. … argued, reacted to, influence …'[1]. Another described the movements as arenas 'to develop political sophistication'[2]. One, then Left, feminist heterosexual referred to 'the high of political gay/lesbian politics.'[3] One wrote that 'the socialist feminist movement helped [her to] think outside the paradigm of [her] upbringing to live other ways, think, be and act in other ways, etc.'[4] While there was plenty of radical political discourse around, the events had a politicising effect on many individuals. Engagement with the lesbian feminist and lesbian and gay movements had a radicalising effect, as did for many, their experiences of police violence, suppression of protest and all the consequences of being outed. Many of those involved were young, and for some it was the biggest thing that had ever happened to them. One wrote: '[The events of 1978] brought me out as a lesbian, radicalised my politics, profoundly affected my perceptions of "society"'[5]. There were many comments along these lines. 'It was during a formative period of my life,' wrote another, then radical feminist, 'I was politically active around gay/lesbian and feminist issues. I learnt a lot about the dynamics of power in society and how you can take power as well as have it taken away from you.'[6] Other comments of Left and radical feminists related to these themes, how individuals and groups can be marginalised or attacked, how power operates to exclude and include, and the necessity of feminist, radical feminist and Marxist-feminist critiques and responses. One then socialist feminist wrote:

> It made it so clear that we HAD to have a revolution, HAD to stand up for our
> rights and resist oppression suffered daily by lesbians and gay men. And suddenly,
> here we were, fighting for our lives, pitted against the power of the state (police)

who were crushing us like insects at the request of their homophobic masters…
These movements put the individual into a socio-political context.[7]

Many comments described greater motivation to resistance and political action, including some who became more involved in action on law reform and 'coalition politics' and working with gay men and the Left. The responses of Left and radical gay and bisexual men also related to themes of radicalisation, politicisation, and an increased motivation to political action.

> Gay Liberation was my politicisation. Before that I had been rather conservative in outlook e.g. I didn't protest against the Vietnam War. Gay Liberation gave me a sense of being outside the mainstream. I felt a bond with other oppressed minorities. I really think I gave up the idea of a mainstream career at this time.[8]

One, then anarchist, wrote: 'Direct experience of oppressive institutional power, organised oppression, deepened my commitment to organised libertarian politics.'[9] Many of their comments spoke of how the events of 1978 had provided them with this direct experience of oppressive ideological and state apparatuses (the Police, the NSW government, psychiatry, the Church, the capitalist press). Many comments raised the importance of challenging psychological, individualised or pathologised understandings of homosexuality with social or political models of homosexual oppression, in short, that the society and social systems must be changed. As one wrote: 'I was moving from thinking I was evil to thinking I love these people (gays and lesbians) and therefore I love myself.'[10] Other comments described how movements and their groupings provided opportunities for developing critical understandings of homosexual oppression, deepened understanding of feminism, sex roles, sexism and masculinity. A Left gay man wrote:

> During '78 a new dimension of oppression appeared for me. Working with the feminist women in CAMP made me aware of sexism and brought about many lasting changes in my life. That foundation made me able to examine in much greater detail and later in life the detrimental effects of masculinity on men and other members of the community.[11]

He also pointed out that the lesbian and gay movement 'took local gay/lesbian politics away from lobbying and law reform', as in, taking the focus from equality politics to more liberationist goals. '[It] made sexual politics relevant to more people's understanding of their place in the world. [It] helped sever popular distinctions between

sexual and gender identity and what it meant to be gay and lesbian.' These were life changing perceptions for some, as for this then gay man who had been considering the priesthood: '[The events of 1978] also demonstrated that my belief in a priestly religious vocation was a sham as was the Catholic Church. With time I came to see it as a magnet for closet homosexuals, an institution that uses and abuses homosexuals.'[12]

Other responses related to developing a sense of the connection between the oppression of homosexuals and other marginalised groups. One wrote: '[The events of 1978] confirmed the links between different forms of oppression and exploitation and the need for a complete social transformation. It brought home the nature of sexual oppression to me.'[13] Comments by radical and Left, then heterosexual, activists showed that their experiences had further politicised them, sharpening their understanding of anti-homosexual laws, police attitudes and community sentiments, though not in isolation of other kinds of repression and resistance of the times. Some of the gay men who regarded themselves as apolitical in 1978 also found a deeper understanding of homosexual oppression in their engagement with the lesbian and gay movement. For one of these the changes were enduring:

> A friend introduced me to Gay Men's Rap which some of the Mardi Grasers had
> set up after the June-July incidents. This pulled me out of a psychological/
> individualistic model of my identity into a social/philosophical/ political model. I
> began to read different sorts of books and to understand the world in different/new
> ways. I never was convinced about their Marxist explanations though. Foucault and
> others made much more sense. With new ways of understanding the world I
> returned to study and (occasional) writing and this led to new jobs.[14]

Significant for many *78ers* were the politicising and radicalising effects of police corruption, police attitudes to and brutal and arbitrary treatment of homosexuals, enforcement of anti-homosexual laws and their repression of demonstrations. Those who had been politically active before 1978 and experienced in demonstrations and police repression of resistance (e.g. anti-war and anti-racist actions) noted how particularly extreme and brutal the police were in response to homosexual activism:

> Although I was an activist – indeed, committed revolutionary – I had never
> experienced the brutality of police who thought they could get away with it. As a
> white middle-class girl I still thought the police were OK, my protectors. I hated
> the police in theory – Marxist feminist – but the first Mardi Gras exposed the

> practice of state oppression and I knew authority and power could always turn on
> me, because I am a lesbian. The scales fell from mine eyes![15]

Another, a Left and gay activist wrote: 'It was the first time I had seen such a violent reaction from police and it was terrifying to think that just under the surface this was possibly a typical reaction to a gay event.'[16]

As well as the effects of radical and critical literature around sexuality and gender, the events of 1978 and involvement in the lesbian and gay and lesbian feminist movements had a politicising and radicalising effect on most of its members. They reinforced critiques of contemporary medical, religious and legal attitudes to homosexuality and deepened understanding of the mechanisms of power and social regulation, especially the marginalisation or exclusion of particular groups. Some came to a greater understanding of radical politics, feminism and masculinities. Many gained a greater motivation to resistance and political action. The intensity of engagement within the movements was heightened by continuous action with delimiting effects for members. Political and social knowledge was a part of their everyday collective currency. The movements were downwardly redistributive of knowledge in this sense. In these spaces and contexts personal and collective identity are set in a tension, within the individual, that is productive of each. In this way, social movements can have a radicalising and moderating effect on individual members. At the personal end of this tension is the capacity of movements to provide opportunities for empowerment, the sharing of resources and a sense of pride and solidarity.

4.2 Empowerment, defiance and solidarity

Building personal and collective pride and solidarity was of course a strategy common to social movements and communities of resistance at the time. Movements countered the effects of violence, persecution, discrimination and isolation in everyday life. In comments on the significance of the lesbian feminist and gay and lesbian movements, the redistributive effects of these movements feature, in particular, mutual aid and support, group belonging, self- (and collective) esteem and pride in solidarity. For several the physical help and support they received from other movement participants was critical. I have already mentioned a nineteen year old who was thrown out of home after coming out and was supported by her friends in the gay and lesbian movement.[17] For another, anti-homosexual attitudes 'didn't matter … as long as we were together

and supportive of each other.'[18] Many referred to how the movements gave them a 'sense of belonging', and as one added, 'finally', to stress the earlier isolation that many had experienced. One radical feminist wrote of finding 'a strong and powerful group with which to identify'[19]. Another described it as 'the comfort and support in being part of a movement.'[20] The sense of belonging in the movements, one radical feminist wrote, 'decreased my sense of powerlessness and persecution and fear.'[21] For one formerly isolated gay couple being part of the Gay Liberation movement was 'liberating and affirming'.[22]

In collective settings and the social networks that underpinned them, many found a greater self-esteem or realised themselves in some ways. This was variously expressed, as in this comment, from a then, radical feminist:

> I feel EXTREMELY fortunate coming out and identifying as a lesbian in the rebellious atmosphere of gay liberation and women's liberation. It gave me impetus, strength, self-esteem, there was no question that I felt right about my sexuality, even though others like my parents took it badly.[23]

For another, the movements provided an 'affirmation of lesbian sexuality in a hostile world.'[24] Similarly a Left gay man wrote: 'I derived strength from the movement to activate my homosexual "self" in the world/reality.'[25] Both comments attest to the power of collective identity to sustain individuals in everyday life in an anti-homosexual world. Other inflections of this are comments such as, the movements 'freed me up to be myself, more'[26], about the importance of being "out and proud" or as one put it, becoming 'a strong happy woman'[27]. One gay man wrote that the lesbian and gay movement 'brought dignity to my life'[28]. 'Self-acceptance', 'being happy with [one's] sexuality', 'developing self-worth' and becoming 'confident and proud in who I am' were among these comments. The movements invited 'people to be proud of their identity not ashamed or hateful.'[29] Several referred to growing up in the movements. One, then 19 year-old radical feminist, wrote that the movements had 'helped me grow up and become more empowered and helped me lose my naivety.'[30]

Pride in solidarity had visceral, empowering dimensions, particularly the feeling of it in collective action, both individually and collectively. One then socialist feminist wrote that among their effects the movements had 'connected [her] to notions of gay pride and gay solidarity and to lots of people who were important role models.'[31] A, then, young

gay man similarly commented: 'Being around people who had a positive self-image spurred me on to come out.'[32] One then anarchist-feminist made the point, humorously, that the movements evinced various human characteristics:

> I also realised just because we were gay or queer we could still be kind, or fun, or mean, or cruel, or generous, or thieves, or good, or bad, or beautiful, or weird, or retiring, or silly, or clever, or showy, or mothers, or drunks, or junkies, or friends or all or any of the above.[33]

As well as building a sense of empowerment and pride in solidarity, the events of 1978 and the lesbian and gay movement made opportunities for coalition politics – women and men working together.

4.3 Coalitions and solidarities

The International Gay Freedom Day events in June 1978 were the first big mobilisations in Sydney for some years that involved lesbian feminists and gay men, together. Many comments in the survey related to this and almost all of them came from women. It 'showed ourselves to each other'[34], said one, then anarchist-feminist. Several, then lesbian separatists, referred to the split in the mid-seventies between lesbian and gay/homosexual male activists in the Gay Liberation movement. 'Lesbians had already left coalition politics by leaving gay liberation due to the sexism by our gay brothers'[35], one wrote, and another reflected on this. 'The divisions and political infighting between men and women were very unfortunate', she wrote, 'I wished we'd been smart enough to work together in the seventies … It was important for our fragmented communities to learn to mobilise, to start learning about working together.'[36]

The lesbian feminist movement, which was founded in September 1975, a month after the First National Homosexual Conference, was thriving and mobilising women from within and outside of the lesbian and gay movement. For one, 21 year-old socialist feminist it felt 'like the first time radical, militant lesbians got together with gay male activists. Before that they were largely invisible to each other.'[37] Another referred to 'a time of change and shifting alliances … It made the gay scene more than just a 'middle class boys club' – coalition politics became important.'[38] The events of 1978 moved many lesbian feminists to greater political involvement in coalition politics. One then radical feminist argued that the gravity of police actions provided 'a visible oppression strong enough to inspire people to action, joint gay, lesbian, transgender action.'[39] For

some it didn't. It didn't occur for one, then radical feminist separatist, 'until HIV/AIDS in the eighties.'[40] Another radical feminist was put off coalition politics through her involvement in 1978. She wrote: 'I found the gay men (in general) unsupportive of the lesbians – even though the lesbians were (in general) being supportive of the gay men.'[41]

Nevertheless many comments were supportive of this (temporary) coalition and the possibilities it created, this from a, then radical feminist separatist:

> [The events of 1978] politicised gay men and non-political lesbians. It got the debate and discussion amongst all these groups going in a real, tangible way... It united us somewhat in our stand against homophobia and gave us the public strength to fight against oppression[42].

One, then radical feminist described it more specifically: 'It brought men who were gay (but not socialists) into coalition with lesbians.'[43] This coalition, however tentative, in the words of one, then, anarchist-feminist 'galvanised lots of creativity and debate.'[44] There were other perspectives on this coalitionism, from transgender and heterosexual people.

Among the survey cohort were two transgender identifying participants who felt that this coalition politics did not extend to embrace them. One of them wrote, 'I did not feel any sense of belonging or inclusion. It was impossible to be out as a trany without being stigmatised by everyone in 1978.'[45] In respect of the lesbian and gay movement the other wrote, 'as a trany it was very easy to feel neglected, even though I've fought for your rights and identified as gay at one point in my life. It would be nice if this respect was reciprocated.'[46] For the other: 'There was no supportive environment for tranys and a sort of sexual fundamentalism made us "the bad apples"'. She felt nevertheless that the events of 1978 were 'very' significant. '[The] law reform campaign and the building of community political organisations arose from it. Tranys however, were not included due to essentialism in gay and lesbian politics.' [47]These comments reflect confrontations around ideas about gender in the political relationships between transwomen and lesbian feminists and lesbian and gay activists. Various comments have referred to an LGBT movement at the time, and perhaps as a gesture of inclusiveness, but the realities for these transgender activists in 1978 would appear to be different.

Several of the, then, radical feminists commented on how the lesbian feminist and lesbian and gay movements had 'created strong links between gay/lesbian rights and other political actions'[48] or with 'other struggles as the years went by'[49], referring to Left political groups and progressive social movements. Relevant is the perspective in comments of several of the Left heterosexual males on the significance to them of the lesbian and gay movement. 'I can't single it out as a factor', one wrote, 'though it is one part of political movements in general which entirely dominate my life.'[50] For another it was significant, 'but largely as part of a continuum of activism in which sexual politics was but part.'[51] Social movements that overlap in social and political networks, have as many different insides and outsides as individual perspectives.

4.4 The emerging gay (mostly male) community

As discussed earlier, most of the activists mobilised in 1978 had long involvement in the lesbian feminist and/or lesbian and gay movements, and the events of that year had a longer history. For the young gay men who described themselves as conservative or apolitical at the time, however, the evening event of the International Gay Freedom Day marked the beginning of a new period of visibility, a new relationship between the emergent gay male community and inner-city police and a new phase of gay economic development.[52] 'It politicised a lot of people and provided a symbolic moment which people could relate to'[53], wrote one gay man. 'A defining moment, sort of BC/AD of the gay/lesbian/trany communities'[54], wrote one, then Left gay activist. 'It led to the development of "renewed" political structures in the communities'[55], wrote another. There was 'sudden expansion of groups, venues, businesses and media publicity.'[56] Significantly it politicised the widely known relationship between police and organised crime. 'It smashed the power/nexus of organised crime and the police', explained another, 'the venues no longer had to pay kickbacks to corrupt police, and venues outside of the control of Abe Saffron/Dawn O'Donnell could operate.'[57] The movement drew attention to these relationships, 'challenging the authority of the bar owners'[58], according to another.

The events of 1978 mobilised gay men in the emerging gay male community. One of them wrote:

> I think it politicised a lot of gay and lesbian people who had not had any political
> involvement until then. It seemed to connect the radical movement with the more

commercial, "good wine" set for the first time. Previously there had been a bit of a
divide, the latter manifesting a "don't rock the boat" mentality.[59]

Many of the comments of gay male participants, many of them of the Left, referred to the interaction of the political movement and the community in this 'defining moment'. One argued that:

> In retrospect it achieved the aim of building a wider coalition of civil rights gays and political gays. At the time it sent shockwaves into the thousands of gay social circles and the gay business 'mafia' creating deep divisions between closets and activists.[60]

For one it was more than an interaction of different political perspectives. '[The first Mardi Gras] caused a merging of social, reformist and liberationist elements that had previously been quite separate', he argued. 'A common cause brought them together and the transition from movement to community began that night.'[61] This may have been true for some elements. One, then gay Leftist, called it 'a turning point for the political gay movement – linking to non-political lesbians and homosexuals [and] a turning point for non-political gays – stepping out into public space and never going back.'[62] Another felt 'it was the first real occasion on which gay and lesbian coalitionist politics began to work.'[63] Another gay man, not then active in the movement, described it as 'the beginnings of wider involvement. The "bar" crowd had started to come out to political events and the "political" began to "enjoy" the social scene more.' He had a strong attachment to the gay community. He wrote: 'Everything I've done since has been tied to my political and social contact with the gay community. It has been this foundation that has laid out all my attitudes and beliefs and behaviours.'[64]

In 1978 this geographic gay community was relatively new and at this stage mainly male and the "scene" referred to above, was male-only. This community's involvement in Mardi Gras had the same look. The incorporation and commercialisation of Mardi Gras from 1984 posed challenges to coalition politics. One, then gay activist 'identified with the radical element which very soon was eliminated by the emerging gay/lesbian business and capitalist push. It was an event which led to a split between women and men.'[65] Indeed, as is discussed in the next chapter, many of the women stayed away from Mardi Gras until the 1990s when it began to include, from their perspective, more lesbian, more political and more culturally diverse content and participation. In the next chapter I return to the *78ers*, going forward to 1998 (when the survey was conducted) to

examine their changed circumstances and their reflections on social and political developments over two decades. These include changes in the lesbian and gay communities (including in the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras) and more broadly.

4.5 The Politics of Play: *The Gay Liberation Quire*

The next section is a case study of the politics, sexual politics and other political normativities of the lesbian and gay and lesbian feminist movements in action and over time, in response to changing local and international political conditions. [Enter *the Gay Liberation Quire*, stage left.] Complementing the traditional demands of activists for sexual freedoms, in the 1980s was, what Gavin Harris (1998)[66] refers to as, a new culture and 'politics of play', reflected in more performative approaches, such as the *Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence* and the Quire. Many of the Quire's members were active in the lesbian feminist and lesbian and gay movements in the 1970s and a third of them were *78ers*.

The Quire's "politics of play" was ironic about formations of lesbian and gay "identity". It problematised the normalisation of homosexuality and promoted radical and critical politics and counternormativities. It was responding to conservative and liberal tensions in the political environment as well as neoliberal political developments internationally. In Sydney, these related to the institutionalised political influence of the mainstream (Christian) churches, the influence of ultraconservative religious politicians and the religious Right movement, a reformist NSW Labor government with a long-time corrupt police force distant from its authority, and the emergence of an apolitical gay community, and lesbian and gay commerce. The Quire appeared, as outlined in Chapter Two at a Stonewall Day event in June 1981. Initially as a male group, the Quire was a strategy to access the social spaces of the emerging gay male community and to politicise discrimination and oppression, at a time when male homosexual acts were still illegal in NSW. At the same time the Quire entertained the gay liberation movement and sang its normativities, or joined it in songs of protest and direct action. The Quire played its part in queering the Left and reviving its tradition of revolutionary song. It performed in the mobilising spaces of the radical and progressive social movements of the time. After two years women joined the Quire and it continued its campaign of song until the end of 1987.

To begin with I describe the political environment in which the Quire was founded: a recently revived gay and lesbian movement and emerging gay male communities. The organisational, network and social movement affiliations of those forming the Quire are elaborated. The collectivist processes of the Quire are outlined, as are its deployment of sexual identity and politics in performance and its strategies to address the gay and lesbian movement, the gay community, the Left, progressive social movements, as well as direct actions on the religious right. Personal and organisational networks generated connections and opportunities for performance.

4.6 Quire of the times

It was early 1981. Many lesbians had departed the movement. There had been discussion about the movement's relationship with the emergent gay male communities. Some activists argued for radicalising the gay community. Others were concerned about the gay community's 'racism, sexism and anti-communism' (Willett in Carswell et al. 1981). Hurley argued (prophetically) that this community had limited potential 'to produce a public homosexual culture that confronts both discrimination (gay rights) and oppression (gay liberation)'. The risks were the reduction of gay liberation to gay rights, a political engagement with the state in defence of petit bourgeois homosexual men and 'the capitulation of revolutionary hope to commercial dominance' (Hurley in Carswell et al. 1981). Instead, these activists called on the homosexual Left to invigorate its organisations, build its movement and solidarity with other sectors and the Left and better coordinate its efforts. In this moment *the Gay Liberation Quire* emerged to play a role.

"Quiristers-to-be" were together at various events in early 1981. The Disciplettes, a radical gender-fuck[67] drag group, had recently manifested at the Royal Easter Show and Rushcutters Bay Bowl where the politics of play were literal. I recall images of bad bowling and the Disciplettes chasing off heterosexist aggressors, wielding the lifelike dildos they kept in their handbags. This drag was not intended to mock women, it was a subversion of the "naturalness" of masculinity, and within the gay male community, of hypermasculinism. The Disciplettes had a "Gidget Goes Gay" moment on Tamarama Beach, disturbing the gay men there (see *Image 8*). There were a couple of key radical faerie and gay liberation house parties and organised singing at the May Day march and rally. In May there were meetings to found and build the Quire and its repertoire. It was

conceived not as a gay community choir (such as the San Francisco Men's Chorus with its normalising repertoire) but as a queering parody of one.

Quire referred to "the questioner", and proximity to "queer". There was no manifesto, but the Quire's initial strategies were discernible: to make a more expressive radical LGBT politics; to invigorate and entertain the movement; and radicalise the emerging gay male community. The Quire appeared at a time when lesbians were withdrawing from gay movement organisations. It was nevertheless explicit that it was not a men's group. A promotional in Gay Solidarity Newsletter (Davis 1981) posits: '[The Quire] operates within the parameters of the modern gay male subculture, though not uncritically. This is a very different milieu to the subculture of women's music that involves many lesbians. Yet it was formed as a Gay Liberation choir rather than a gay male choir.' Choristers' lesbian and gay networks and appreciation of lesbian feminist and socialist feminist politics facilitated the later transition to an inclusive Quire.

Most of the Quire's first twelve members knew each other in the gay liberation movement, in Socialist Homosexuals, the Gay Solidarity Group (GSG), the Disciplettes, the *Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence* and the networks of radical faeries. Harris says GSG's high visibility in Left and social movement activism was attracting activists to a 'new politics' (1998). The Sisters had not long been founded and socialist and faerie nuns were in their ascendancy in the Order. Also with origins in the U.S. in the late 1970s, radical faeries were established in Sydney (notably the "Wellington Boot" in Rozelle) and various rural sites. 'The Boot faeries introduced gays and lesbians to the idea of a rural queer community and the thinking of the radical faeries at the annual National Homosexual Conferences … in the 80s' (*Oz Faeries: 2011*).

Twenty-one of the Quire's ninety members were *78ers* who mainly had radical Left and feminist politics, and affiliations across movement organisations and social networks and across social movements. They accounted for much of the Quire's core group, which sustained it. *Figure 9* provides a visual representation of participation in performances, males below and women above the middle line, ranked from the middle by number of performances in which they participated. It reveals part of the reason for the Quire's longevity, particularly given that its technical dimensions, of choral singing, musicianship, choreography and performance required considerable maintenance. The core group (itself shifting over time and in its transition to a mixed gender group)

Figure 9: Gay Liberation Quire members, male and female, ranked by number of performances, 1981-7

women

men

104

Notes: Individual participation in performances, 1981-7,males below, women above, ranked from the middle by number of performances

carried the Quire's collective knowledge and craft as people came and went over the years.

As discussed in chapter one, in respect of social movements, multiple affiliations and overlapping memberships facilitate individual contact and the development of 'informal networks' that support, invite and mobilise new participants and resources. These contacts are 'instrumental' in connecting organisations, as well (Della Porta and Diani 2006, p. 129). Many of the Quire's performance opportunities and resources came through its personal and movement networks and cross-memberships (such as Gay Waves, a gay liberation radio show, which recorded many of the Quire's escapades and put them to air, and the many political and social groups the Quire entertained).

The Quire rehearsed weekly. It had collectivist processes and consensus decision-making. The meetings were open and there were no auditions for new members. Possibly unique among choirs, it never had a conductor or musical director though it did have a guitarist, a piano accordionist and later a pianist to help keep tempo and pitch. There were no sexual identity requirements for potential members and not everyone was homosexual. The Quire had many workshops, including weekends away, to focus on choral singing skills, learn new material and other skills (such as choreographed flag twirling), sort out process issues, discuss politics and performance strategies have a good time and sing a lot (see *Image 9*).

4.7 The Repertoire

The "lesbian and gay" identity which the Quire performed was shaped by radical sexual politics and the "politics of play" and was critical of "normalising" tendencies in the gay community, singing at the intersections of gender, sexuality, class, place and ethnicity in homosexual oppression and liberation, invoking the history of homosexual oppression and the role of the church, state and institutions. It identified and played with the emerging normativities of the gay community and it rendered GLBT subjects in radical, political or revolutionary song. This is clear in the Quire's repertoire, over time and the contexts of their performances, in venues or on the streets, in performance or direct action. Some songs were borrowed, many took existing tunes and queered their lyrics. Some, like *Thank You Lord for Gay Liberation*, had original tunes and lyrics. In

its time the Quire accumulated a repertoire of seventy-nine songs, in many styles. Some were sung in unison but many had two, three or four parts. Some were serious, many were humorous, ironic or satirical. Some were historical though most were contemporary. An analysis of the lyrics of the songs reveals the following themes.

The nature of homosexual oppression was a theme of many songs, with: right-wing Christian moralism and hatred; police harassment, brutality and corruption; and capitalism figuring in this. Many songs had feminist and/or socialist themes, or promoted social change and revolution. There were references to poverty and local economic conditions. Some songs were intended as a sacrilege on the religious right and its leaders (including the Quire's "blood" hymns sung with words unchanged, as a mockery of U.S. evangelism). The call for gay liberation was another theme: promoting resistance and mobilising homosexuals onto the streets to collective action. Some were about social movement opportunities for sex. One was about petition fatigue for those on the stalls at gay liberation rallies. Some songs were about particular places. Some referred to particular groups and events in the movement, such as Gay Waves or the national homosexual conferences. There were many songs about homosexual law reform, NSW politicians (on the Right and Left), tactics like the Gay Embassy outside Neville Wran's house, the issue of a higher age of consent for homosexuals after law reform and anti-gay immigration laws. A significant theme was coming out, to self and others, coming out to family or as a lesbian in a country town. Like much of the Quire's treatments, these were not without irony (e.g. 'come out, come out, and join us and love us and take us home to bed'). Coming out narratives were used to dramatise repression. The Quire countered sin and shame with invocations of pride. It had quite a few upbeat and some silly songs (e.g. with homosexual men being unable to whistle, or gay kookaburras) that affirmed lesbian and gayness and asserted that happiness was immanent. Another set of themes related to relationships, separations, love, sex and parodies of romance and monogamy. None of these mentioned gay marriage but several mentioned divorce.

One theme related to the normativities of the emergent gay male community, the gay commercial scene around Oxford St Darlinghurst and the relationship between bars, bar owners and corrupt police. There were songs about HIV/AIDS, countering HIV transmission hysteria, maintaining solidarity, keeping and eating well and having safe sex. Its first song in this theme, with a Cole Porter tune, was 'Let's all wear gloves'

('screws do it, cops do it, Rajneesh in their rainbow flocks do it, let's do it'). Christmas was a good time to come out, and a capitalist plot, and there were a lot of reworked carols. Trade unions, union solidarity and women in unions were part of another theme. In response to neoliberal international adventuring, there was an anti-U.S. theme as well as anti-nuclear and anti-war songs. International solidarity themes included: the struggle against Marcos in the Philippines; apartheid and oppression in South Africa; the U.S. intervention in El Salvador; women who had been "disappeared" (by the military junta) in Chile, and the British occupation of Northern Ireland. There were historical themes including: early aviator Amelia Earhart (feminist icon), the Italian resistance movement, homosexual victims of fascism in Nazi Germany, the Polish Revolution of 1848 and the life of Aboriginal people in Newcastle during the depression.

Some themes were not in the repertoire. There were no appeals to nation and nationalism (the word Australia only appears once in a song from Randy Newman's *Political Science*[68]); no appeals to respectability and normality; no coyness about sex; and no serious love songs. There were no expressions of equality through citizenship and the songs promote difference rather than sameness with heterosexuals.

The song most performed by the Quire was *Thank You Lord For Gay Liberation*, written for the quire by the Reverend Philip Wesley Stevenson. It reflected the fashion of the time (women country and western torch song[69] singers), used gay community narratives (coming out, 'truck driving man', working in a gay bar), and was principally intended as a sacrilege against the Quire's Christian enemies. The song had a similar fate to Tom Robinson's ironic *Sing If You're Glad to be Gay*, in becoming a popular anthem, with the irony being lost to some. The Quire was involved in many direct actions against the religious Right, opposing its politics and disrupting its events and in this context the song had a different impact, particularly with the Quire cross-dressing in the style of its opponents, with its own evangelist, the Reverend Oral Riches and gift of tongues.

Comparing the number of performances by their main audience before and after women joined (and law reform happened), reveals shifting performance opportunities and strategies: much less work in the gay community and the lesbian and gay movement, and more in the Left and radical social movements. With law reform, political action in the gay community declined. The Quire continued to perform for small mixed gay

Figure 10: Gay Liberation Quire "Time Tunnel"
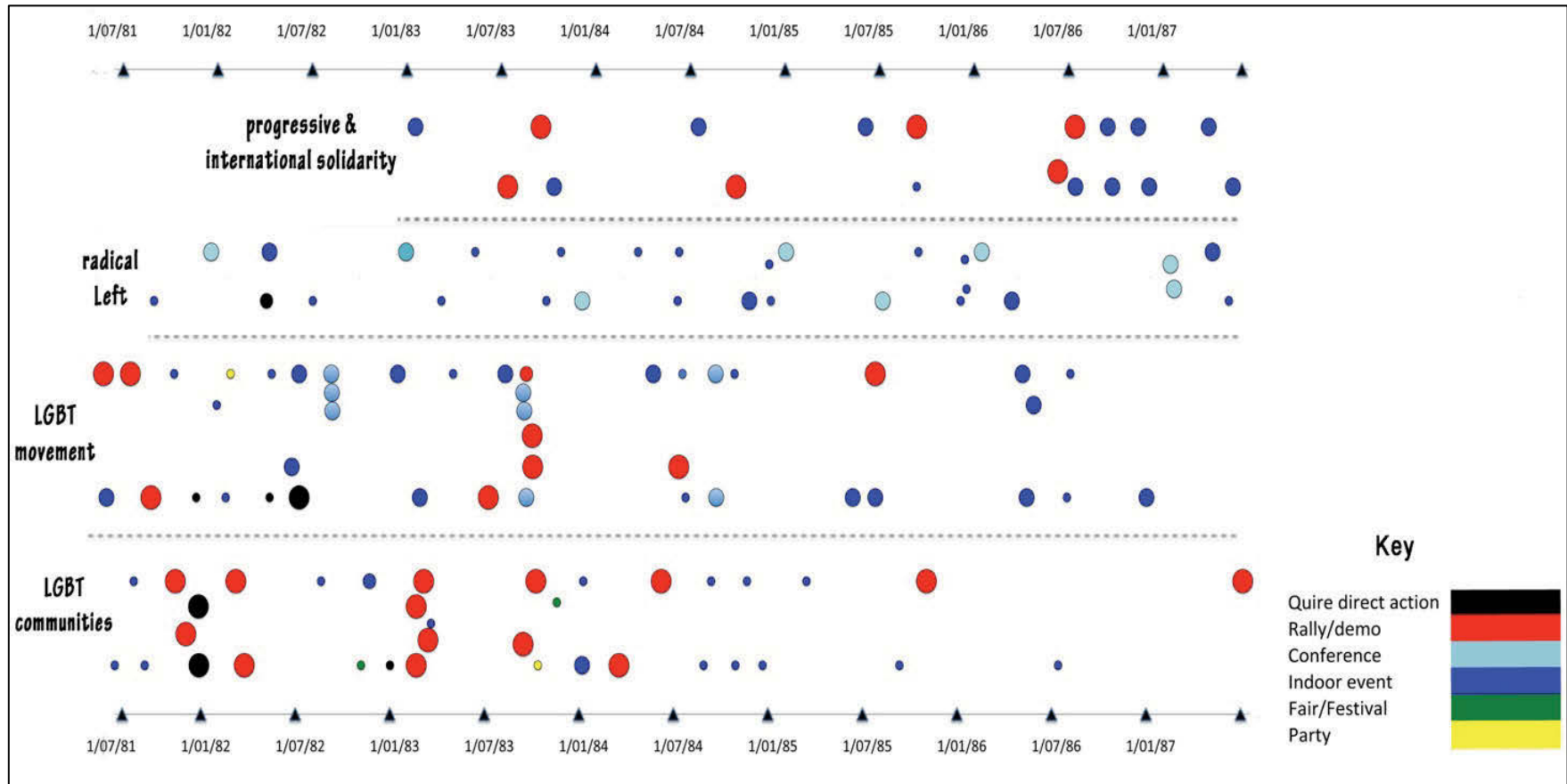
Notes: Dots represent quire performances by their size, type and field of action over time. Size of dots indicates size of event (small, medium large). Colour indicates type of event as per key. "LGBT communities include inner-city communities and suburban social groups.

community groups and events. It performed more to the Left and social movements at a time when their mobilisations provided opportunities. The Quire attracted some members from its audiences (mostly women), and its relative focus on the Left and international solidarity movements attracted new members with these particular interests and networks. While keeping up its street performances and direct actions, the Quire was singing in more institutionalised venues, reflecting the political successes of the lesbian and gay movement, the development of gay community organisations and structures and the Quire's embrace of the Left. Figure 10 provides a visual representation of the Quire's performances, by their type, size and fields of action (the lesbian and gay movement; the lesbian and gay, bisexual and transgender communities; the radical Left and progressive and international solidarity movements) and how it moved between these over time as opportunities arose (or diminished).

What follows is two extracts from a reconstructed chronology of the life of the Quire[70] which along with its level of detail gives a sense of how busy it was, the range and intensity of its interventions, its development, its politics and humour, its Left orientations, the landscape and institutions with which it interacted and its strategic solidarities and coalition politics. It also gives some sense of the everyday political life of the times.

4.8 'Smash the Church and Smash the State: Rebellion Sets Us Free'

The first stage of the Quire's life was an intense twenty-one months with eighty-eight performances.

The Quire, as mentioned earlier, premiered on Stonewall Day, 27 June 1981, at Belmore Park, before a march attracting one thousand people. *The* (Mickey Mouse Club) *Homosexuality Song*, with "glee club" styling, revolutionary exhortations and placards spelling out the H word, went down well. So did: the anti-oppression round *We Want Our Freedom* ('to fuck whom we please'); *Teddy Bears' Picnic* – homosexuals mobilising; *Happy Gays Are Here Again* – the retreat of police and the rise of gay liberation; *The Festival of Light* (Judy Small) – an energetic attack on Fred Nile and his Festival of Light; *Peat Bog Soldiers* – a song sung by inmates of Nazi concentration camps; *Bandiera Rossa* – a call to action adapted by the Quire, calling on lesbians and gay men to come out into the streets, under the red and pink flags (not, of course, the pink flags of the Italian Christian Democrats); and *God Help Ye Merry Dykes and Poofs*

– a song about family and Christmas. Reported in the Star (*Stonewall: T*he *Sydney Star* 1981b), 'the Choir presented a number of songs to an enthusiastic audience as people gathered for the start of the march. Look for more appearances of this imaginative, entertaining and thought-provoking group'. Klick (*Stonewall: Klick 1981)* reported: 'Perhaps the most entertaining innovation though was *the Gay Liberation Quire* – a group of a dozen silver-tonsilled gay men, appropriately set off by pink accessories, deftly performed everything from gay Christmas carols to an acerbic little ditty under the title Malcolm Fraser Had A Farm.'

The following week, the Quire performed at a fundraiser at Sydney Trades Hall, for Gay Waves, a gay liberation radio collective broadcasting on 2SER-FM, with Quire cross-membership. The next week it was invited to sing at a Metropolitan Community Church Anniversary Service. In mid-August, it led demonstrators in singing at a Police Harassment Rally, at Central Courthouse, protesting indecency laws and police law enforcement practices against public displays of affection. That night there was a Talent Quest at Patches Nightclub on Oxford St in Darlinghurst. The Quire sang *The Festival of Light,* coming a creditable fourth.

In September 1981 the Quire supported a Gay Rights Lobby fundraiser at Ken's Karate Klub in Anzac Parade, Kensington, one of its few poolside extravaganzas and its first sex-on-premises venue. There were new songs: coming out in *The Homosexuality Tango*; a song about saunas, *Steam Heat*; and an anti-romantic appropriation of South Pacific's, *I'm Gonna Wash that Man*. A few weeks later the Quire was well received at Darlinghurst Street Fair by its first mixed community audience. A week later it was outside the U.S. Embassy on the International Day of Protest over anti-homosexual U.S. Immigration Laws. That night at a fundraiser for small Left publications, it added the Woody Guthrie and Nancy Katz song *Union Maid* to the repertoire.

In October the Quire sang outside the Department of Social Security (DSS) headquarters in support of an Administrative and Clerical Officers Association (ACOA) industrial action in defence of lesbian workers experiencing harassment there. In early November the Quire entertained a large "repeal the laws" demonstration, part of the growing push for law reform. A few days later it kicked back at a Gay Waves Garden Party with an indulgent gay liberation crowd (see *Image 10*). In late November, it sang at a large Candle Light Rally for NSW Labor Left politician, George Peterson's Private

Member's Bill for law reform, through Hyde Park to Parliament House, attracting about eight hundred people.

To cap off the year the Quire went busking with queered Christmas carols at venues in Darlinghurst around Oxford St. The songs included: *Hark the Herald Faeries Shout* ('liberation's on its way'); *We Three Queens* ('on Oxford St are'*)*; *Deck the Halls with Law Reform*; the *Little Bummer Boy* ('Cum, they told me'*)*; sacrilege, *Thank You Lord for Gay Liberation*; and a feminist attack on the nativity, *Silent Night.* The Quire got into some venues and not others: it was 'prohibited from singing at the Exchange by the management who thought the choir was too political' (*Liberation choir barred from hotel: Campaign*, January 1982). The Quire stopped at the Cricketer's Arms, Albury, Flinders, and Beresford hotels, Yvonne's, the Green Park Diner, the corner of Oxford and Crown Streets, and popped into the Gay Counselling Service Christmas Dance. The reception was better on the streets than in the bars.

Songs recorded that night were aired on Gay Waves "Not-the-Eve-of-Xmas Program". Fred Nile MLC ran a campaign against 2SER-FM accusing it of broadcasting "homosexual blasphemies" and petitioned the Communications Minister to have the station's licence revoked. 'They blasphemed Christ and the virgin birth and cheapened the whole of Christmas. The whole thing was pretty sick', Nile said (Hancock in *The Australian*, 1981). Station manager Keith Jackson defended the Gaywaves broadcast successfully against what he called 'an old law' (Parsons in *The Oxford Weekender*, 1982).

In January 1982 the Quire performed at its first Marxist Summer School, evoking the Left's lost tradition of revolutionary song, with a queer edge, for example, *Whirlwinds of Danger*, a lively song from the 1848 Polish revolution accompanied on piano accordion with some Salvation Army tambourine styling. The audience enjoyed the "gay" material as well as songs like *Weevils in the Flour* (words Dorothy Hewitt), portraying the struggle of Aboriginal people in Newcastle during the Great Depression.

Over the next few months the Quire supported the Gay Rights Lobby's launch of its Rights On Arrest cards, entertained another Gay Waves Garden Party, sang at the Gay Book Club's First Birthday Pick-up Party and at the 1982 Sydney Gay Mardi Gras. On March 17, it egged on a vociferous and angry crowd of six hundred at a "Repeal the

Unsworth Bill" demonstration. Coming from the Catholic right of the Labor Party, this Bill attempted to shut down the reform process, retaining existing anti-homosexual laws (some with reduced sentences) and introducing the defence of consent and privacy and a higher age of consent of eighteen years (these developments are well detailed by Carbery (1993 pp. 29-30). The Quire led the crowd in a hastily penned version of *We Shall Not Be Moved.* The *Star* (*Unsworth Bill protest: The Sydney Star, 1982*) reported in its cover story:

> The atmosphere and general feeling was very different from that of most "political" rallies and the feeling as the Quire sang the final verse approached that of a revival meeting! … For far too long in this city so-called political rallies have been deadly serious affairs, where to enjoy oneself was ideologically unsound, but in the last year or so this attitude seems to have changed.

May Day 1982 the Quire joined the usual lesbian and gay contingent, singing its way through the march. It did an impromptu performance at the Fourth Biennale of Sydney, at the NSW Art Gallery, with the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, and it participated in the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), National Conference Talent Night, it was 'a triumphant, foot-stamping session which some say changed the Party overnight', writes Paul Van Reyk in the Quire diary.

The Quire performed at a public meeting of Campaign Against Repression, which was planning a response to U.S. Christian moralist, Gerry Falwell's tour. The Falwell event in Top Ryde attracted a large Left, gay liberation and feminist crowd. Falwell arrived at the venue to the Quire leading the crowd in *Thank You Lord for Gay Liberation*. The diary says, 'Crowd roars: christians nil – lions get the media.' Some Quire members cross-dressed to get inside (e.g. wearing the bland and dated attire they associated with the religious right: safari suits and wide ties, "sensible" frocks and handbags).

In June, the Quire's first concert performance, "Odds and Sods with Judy Small" (i.e. sods: sodomites) occasioned the disbelief of Janise Beaumont (1982) in the *Sun Herald*, that it would appear under this title, saying 'it's hard to feel sorry for homosexuals complaining of discrimination'. On July 3 the Quire did a set for Stonewall marchers in the morning and that night marked its first birthday with its own concert, "Axminster

and Underfelt – the Romantic Vacuum" at Leichhardt Town Hall to a packed house. There were new songs: a commentary on movement life, *Yes We Have No Petitions,* the cheeky *Sydney Homosexual*, ('I am the very model of a Sydney homosexual, my calves are well developed and my moustache is exceptional'), and *Underneath the Pink Triangle*, about love, sex, romance and demonstrations. There was a dramatic reenactment of the JFK assassination, from the Onassis perspective and performances by a number of Quire friends.

That was the Quire's first twelve months, with thirty-one manifestations. This was demanding for its members, many of whom had substantial commitments to other activist pursuits and everyday concerns. The Quire kept up this tempo for another eighteen months with a further fifty-five manifestations. Notable among these was a controversial performance in September 1982 at the Rozelle Festival (a neighbourhood fair), which occasioned the local Catholic priest to ban the congregation's attendance. The gig went well and the diary records: 'This was a great victory for the forces of good. The Catholics when hearing that their festival was to be invaded by poofs, dykes and male nuns, made it a sin for the faithful to attend and they stayed away in droves'. There was another key moment in January 1983, while delivering an admirable set at (friend of the Quire) Judy Small's record launch. The Reverend Oral Riches found voice in rapture and first delivered his four square gospel of feminism, socialism, gay liberation and ethnic pride, over the closing choruses of *Thank You Lord for Gay Liberation,* which became a permanent feature of the song's performance.

Another memorable moment later in 1983 was the escalation of the law reform campaign with the establishment, by the Gay Rights Lobby, of the Gay Rights Embassy, a decorated caravan parked outside the home of NSW Premier Wran in Wallis St. Woollahra. 'Neville Wran and Jill looked out, one September morning. "Wallis St. looks rather queer," Jill remarked while yawning. "What's that object over there, decked out in gay bunting?" Little did this pair surmise what they were confronting.' This is how The Embassy Song starts, a celebration of irony and juxtaposition and one of a number of the Quire's law reform campaign songs. Twelve days into the Embassy there was a Command Performance for activist Lex Watson (Empress of Sydney). Wallis St Woollahra and the Embassy provided a surreal backdrop. The next night the Quire launched its record there (see *Image 11*). A few days later, the Quire supported a Law reform Candlelight Rally of one thousand people,

singing in Hyde Park and then in front of Parliament House. The Quire's performance turned what was to be a quiet affair into a noisy one. Another memorable moment was Stonewall week in June 1984, which opened with a first – a march around the Parramatta CBD (in Sydney's west) and a picnic at Parramatta Park. The trip there was a lot of fun with the Quire doing its warm-up in a packed train. The Quire started its second incarnation in February 1984, as a gay and lesbian Gay Liberation Quire. I present an account, again, of the first twelve months of the newly reconfigured Quire.

4.9 A (lesbian and) Gay Liberation Quire

In February 1984 the Quire went into its second phase, as a mixed gender quire. The women and men of the remade Quire were generally known to each other, or were friends or part of social networks in the lesbian and gay movement and had informally sang together on many social occasions. There was a sense that the male Quire had outlived its usefulness as an intervention in gay male spaces. The geographic gay community and its economy had grown and become more sophisticated and there was a more visible lesbian community. A lesbian and gay Quire was more appropriate to the times, for encouraging coalition politics and promoting the fundaments, of socialism, feminism, gay liberation and ethnic pride, in its unique fashion, within the communities and for taking this four-square gospel to the anti-homosexual and anti-abortionist Christian Right.

Before the remade Quire sat down to nut out its new approach and material, its members started with a joint project – to disrupt the launch of conservative Christian, Jim Cameron's bid for the NSW Legislative Council, at Willoughby Town Hall. This was one of the Quire's street theatre masterpieces, with an Oral Riches rally – a parody of U.S. evangelist Oral Roberts – the Quire (the Richettes) appropriately clothed in safari suits and wide ties, with parodies of far-right placards (e.g. "Elvis Presley Son of Satan", and "Ban the Bum") and the lesbians presented in sensible frocks, hats and accessories, as Women Who Want To Be Ladies. All were positioned either side of the entrance, singing "blood" hymns: *Family of God*, *There is a Fountain Filled with Blood*, and the ironic *Just As I Am* ('oh, lamb of god I come, I come'). Oral Riches thundered his four square gospel, holding a spray bottle of No Frills Blood of the Lamb and a megaphone. Strangely, despite being right in the middle of things, the police never arrived and no one tried to move the group on (which numbered, with supporters,

about forty people). This kind of confrontation became a favoured tactic (see *Images 12* and *14*). A quirister's placard in the latter just out of picture, bottom left, reads 'Prawns are an abomination: Leviticus 11:9-12'.

The Quire went into recess for six weeks to consolidate its new line up. It kept much of its repertoire, rewriting some songs for a mixed choir and added some new songs such as Judy Small's *Country Town Gaytime Blues*, Holly Near's *Hay Una Mujer Desaparecida*, Yolocamba Ita's *Canto a Patria Revolucionaria* and the Irish allegorical song *Four Green Fields*. At a party at the Marrickville Legal Centre, on 6 April, the Quire was relaunched. It had twenty members, including eight women. Within three months the numbers overall had increased and women made up half, as men and women joined (see *Figure 9*).

In May 1984, the Quire sang at an Equality Rally at NSW Parliament House, marking the passage of the discriminatory decriminalisation bill, 'the Quire doing what it does best, leading a stirring demo, particularly in the singing competition with the also-present Festival of Light' (see *Image 13*). These law reform protests were the last large mobilisations in the gay community in Sydney until community responses to HIV/AIDS in 1987, though there were smaller demonstrations protesting ongoing police raids and arrests at sex-on-premises venues following law reform. The Quire continued to support these campaigns and perform for gay community groups and their events.

In June 1984 the Quire led singing in the Stonewall march and at the rally. It performed at the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) Resistance Stonewall Week Forum, after a screening of Dibgy Duncan's film "Witches and Dykes, Faggots and Poofters". It was a 'satisfyingly rousing reception with overwhelming audience response. Once again the SWP gets points for best audience.' The following week the Quire celebrated its third birthday at the Sydney Labor Club with a party for friends, with the Gone Wrong Girls and the Doctors Mary Hartman (entry was $8 and $4 concessions – a cheap night out). There were occasions when the Quire was invited into women's spaces, such as the party it held, part of Stonewall events, at the Liverpool Women's Health Centre. In July the Quire and Oral Riches conducted a Rally for Oral on the steps of the Sydney Town Hall to disrupt the Mary Whitehouse rally (see *Image 14*). The Quire was asked to support a fundraiser for the People for Nuclear Disarmament in August. It attended the Tenth National Conference of Lesbians and Homosexual Men in Brisbane, singing at

the conference Cabaret, and a lunchtime performance. Later in September it did Darlinghurst Street Fair, copping a serve in the letters column of the *Sydney Star*: 'If this mob of drongos wants to sing in the street, let them. But they should not come out as representatives of the gay community and sing blatantly political songs.' (Daley 1984)

The Quire was well received at a march and rally protesting U.S. intervention in El Salvador in October 1984. On a smaller scale the Quire sang again for Twenty-Ten (then a community-based refuge for young lesbians and gays in Glebe) in its backyard at its opening celebrations. The Quire was not always received well. At the CPA National Congress, Beggars Banquet Ball, in Newtown in November, the 'Quire sang well [to a] noisy audience, not very receptive.' On the other hand the Left lawyers, educators and associates indulged the Quire at the Marrickville Legal Centre and Inner City Education Centre Christmas parties.

In January 1985, the Quire sang at its fourth Marxist Summer School to 'cooperative audiences', at both daytime and night time cabaret events. At the Gay Film Festival at the Chauvel Cinema in February, a performance was suspended for the arrival of iconic drag queen, Doris Fish. Having supported its actions in the past, it performed at an ACOA Strike Fundraiser in March (some quiristers were members of ACOA, a public sector union). In May it sang at *The Rough End of the Pineapple*, a benefit at the Belvoir St Theatre for the SEQEB workers strike fund (South East Queensland Electricity workers were fighting privatisation) sharing the bill (and dressing room) with the Flying Pickets, Jeannie Lewis and the Castanet Club and were 'received with thunderous applause by the capacity crowd.' In May the Quire was in good form at the Gay Waves' Black and Blue Ball. In June it did a benefit for Greenpeace, and a Job Creation Rally Dance organised by the Unemployed Peoples Union. The latter was small, the crowd barely outnumbering the Quire. Nevertheless it was the Quire's first performance in Sydney Town Hall and it gave its best. In June the Quire performed at a ceremonial Wreath laying, at the Cenotaph in Martin Place, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the beginning of Nazi persecution of homosexuals. That night the Quire sang at a Gay Immigration Task Force (GITF), fundraiser, Status of Desire. The Quire performed some new songs that night: *the Safe Sex Song* with a tune borrowed from Eartha Kitt, *Something Unsound* (a women's movement classic), *Fischia Il Vento* (a song from the Italian resistance movement), and the *Gay Immigration Song*, written for

the occasion. The next day, with a different method the Quire led a session on Gay Culture at the Conference on Culture, the Arts, Media and Radical Politics, at the University of Technology, Sydney.

That was the Quire's first twelve months in its second configuration with twenty-eight manifestations. Notable in the remaining eighteen months of the Quire's life (and a further forty performances) was busking at Christmas time, again, in the city. Having acknowledged its movement to more institutional venues, the Quire pursued these confrontations. Carols would attract the crowds, the tunes, at least, were familiar but with new lyrics, such as: 'God bless ye merry dykes and poofs for much to your dismay, you have to see your family, at least on Christmas Day. Present it as a Christmas gift and hear the family shout, that you dare call this comfort and joy.' Moving about and occupying spaces from which we would be asked to move on, by po-faced security workers, and copping the odd anti-homosexual or anti-lesbian rant, the gig was intense and immediate (see *Image 16*). The Quire always enjoyed this kind of direct action. The Quire kept going for another two years. In its last year, while it continued to meet weekly, the Quire performed only nine times. Finally with declining membership (see *Figure 9*) and fewer performance opportunities, its remaining members decided to move on to other things. Many had already joined what would become the Solidarity Choir, a large mixed Left choir, which formed in 1987 to greet Oliver Tambo (President of the African National Congress) on his visit to Australia, and which carries on to this day. The lesbian and gay movement was also entering a phase of further fragmentation and abeyance. The Quire's last official performance was at the Newtown Street Fair on 14 November 1987.

4.10   The effects of *the Gay Liberation Quire*

The Quire's founding members were well known to each other in the movement. In its first incarnation it was explicitly not a men's group, but a gay liberation group. Its socialists, nuns, Disciplettes and faeries with Left and radical sexual politics had multiple affiliations across movement organisations and across movements. Its networks attracted members, resources and performance opportunities. Processes were collectivist and the Quire demanded a great deal of its members' time. The Quire's "sexual identity" was its radical sexual politics, which it transported from audience to audience. Its performance was antinormative. The themes and their juxtaposition

connected sexuality, gender, class, place and time with homosexual oppression and resistance. The Quire was able to move from a male group to an inclusive group, because its existing and new members mainly were familiar with each other in the social networks of the lesbian and gay movement. It became one more place where women and men were working together again in the movement. The focus of the Quire changed over time, the result of gay community demobilisation (post-law reform) and increasing opportunities on the Left and in radical social movements. From 1981 to 1987 the Quire maintained an exhaustive campaign of political and cultural engagements. In the gay community (including suburban and regional social groups) it promoted a more expressive politics, politicised discrimination and promoted a critical view of homosexual oppression. It entertained and influenced the lesbian and gay movement. It queered the Left's revolutionary anthems with songs of new lesbian and gay subjects, politics, shared enemies, and with its anarchic streak. The Quire worked with progressive social movements and international solidarity groups, demonstrating solidarity, connecting struggles and sites of oppression and modelling lesbian and gay acceptance in their constituencies, while protesting global social, political and economic restructuring and neoliberal military adventurism. It appropriated the hymns and dress sense, religious oratory and the gift of tongues, in its direct actions against the religious Right. The Quire inspired the formation of gay liberation choirs around the country. It revived the Left's lost singing tradition and there was a proliferation of community singing groups, Left, trade union and gay choirs in its wake.

4.11   Conclusion and methodological reflection

Looking at lesbian and gay movement organising and action in 1978 through Melucci's lens of collective identity again reveals the multiplicity of the lesbian and gay movement and how its different parts responded to the politicising and (for many) radicalising effects of activism and mobilisation and living in a social movement that was redistributive of support and critical understandings of homosexual and women's oppression and critiques of ideological apparatuses and medical, religious and legal constructions of gender and homosexuality. Repression motivated and emboldened some to greater action. As a movement of overlapping social networks, connection made space for solidarity between the parts and within them but not always or for everybody. Solidarity brought opportunities for lesbian feminists and radical gay men to work together again. The emergent gay male community and its conservative and anti-

feminist normativities posed challenges variously for elements of the lesbian and gay movement in their relationship with it. *The Gay Liberations Quire*, while a spontaneous movement development in 1981, was an expression of the movement's relationship with this community.

The capacity of the lesbian feminist and gay and lesbian movements to support members and redistribute resources and critical insights is one of the ways that personal and collective identity interact in individual social actors, described by Melucci as a tension. In critical parts of the movements, solidarity is in tension with the normativities of respective elements (such as politics and sexual politics). The collectivity may of course not be strong or relevant enough to support some individuals, just as solidarity may fail with conflicts between the parts.

The Quire provides a window into lesbian and gay political and community life over six years. Its account shows a movement group, itself multiplicitous, and its relationships with its political environment and the changing resources for its performance and direct action opportunities. The Quire had members who were long-time members of the movements, throughout the 1970s who brought their knowledge and experience of critical activism to its processes and content. The groups collective identity and core group powered its actions. Within the lesbian and gay movement it was part of a process that produced collective epistemologies, (as per Melucci, a shared and contested language 'rituals, practices' and 'cultural artefacts') that are understood variously in the movement parts, but allow members to assess the meanings, extent and benefits or limits of their actions and their relationships with the field of action (1995, p. 44).

Melucci stresses that collective identity is a relational process of actors both internal to the movement and in response to its environment (Melucci 1995, p. 47). The Quire played a role in this relational process within the lesbian and gay movement but also in its recognition within its external environment. The Quire gave voice to critical, Left and feminist politics and sexual politics, with its four square gospel of socialism, feminism, gay liberation and ethnic pride[71], taking it into places where the traditional politics of conflict and argument had little purchase. They took the struggle for gay liberation to Left groups and progressive social movements. They rendered the normativities of the lesbian and gay movement in song and choreography. They gave corporeal form to a social movement and with their material they shared a sense of gay

and lesbian defiance and collective empowerment and solidarity with others. They countered stigma, shame and invisibility in the venues and streets of the emerging gay community and sought to politicise these. They put into song their narratives of coming out, being sexual, enduring anti-homosexual sentiment and police violence. They were not, though, exclusively lesbian and gay[72]. Like other early activists the Quire defended what Duggan calls 'privacy-in-public' promoting 'freedom from surveillance and entrapment in public, collective settings … and expanding the allowable scope of sexual expression in public culture' (2003, p. 52). They were part of social movements that defended and claimed public space for mobilisations and political actions. They promoted feminism and modelled coalition politics, with homosexual men and lesbians working together. The existence of the Quire owes much to the enduring friendships, social networks and relationships that underpinned the lesbian and gay movement – that brought the Quire together. The 'politics of play' (Harris 1998) and the personal and collective political normativities through which it was expressed have endured in its surviving social networks.

Notes, chapter four

[1] *78er* 035
[2] *78er* 028
[3] *78er* 068
[4] *78er* 006
[5] *78er* 020
[6] *78er* 060
[7] *78er* 050
[8] *78er* 095
[9] *78er* 036
[10] *78er* 041
[11] *78er* 100
[12] *78er* 017
[13] *78er* 046
[14] *78er* 074
[15] *78er* 066
[16] *78er* 052
[17] *78er* 021
[18] *78er* 061
[19] *78er* 020
[20] *78er* 058
[21] *78er* 022
[22] *78er* 052
[23] *78er* 060
[24] *78er* 006
[25] *78er* 077
[26] *78er* 080
[27] *78er* 061
[28] *78er* 017
[29] *78er* 101
[30] *78er* 011
[31] *78er* 004
[32] *78er* 085
[33] *78er* 061
[34] *78er* 061
[35] *78er* 070
[36] *78er* 011
[37] *78er* 088
[38] *78er* 004
[39] *78er* 030

[40] *78er* 079

[41] *78er* 089

[42] *78er* 060

[43] *78er* 066

[44] *78er* 014

[45] *78er* 067

[46] *78er* 104

[47] *78er* 067

[48] *78er* 029

[49] *78er* 030

[50] *78er* 003

[51] *78er* 081

[52] The evening event has been refashioned as the first Sydney Gay Mardi Gras, in isolation from other events of the day and year and their historical and political context.

[53] *78er* 098

[54] *78er* 063

[55] *78er* 039

[56] *78er* 002

[57] *78er* 012

[58] *78er* 039

[59] *78er* 095

[60] *78er* 084

[61] *78er* 032

[62] *78er* 069

[63] *78er* 057

[64] *78er* 053

[65] *78er* 073

[66] Gavin Harris refers to a 'new politics of play' in the 1980s in his foreword to *It was a Riot! Sydney's First Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras* which came out of the 78ers Social History Project.

[67] 'Gender-fuck' refers to drag that is not passing drag (male passing as female) but deliberately confuses gender norms and expectations (e.g. frocks and hairy chests, make-up and moustaches) and is meant to outrage. Gender-fuck drag was pioneered in Sydney by drag queens like Sylvia and the Synthetics in the mid-1970s.

[68] 'We'll save Australia, don't want to hurt no kangaroos, we'll build an all-American amusement park there.'

[69] Torch songs are usually about unrequited love or betrayal.

[70] One of the historical resources produced within this enquiry.

[71] After Oral Riches' rant over the closing verses of Thank You Lord for Gay Liberation.

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[72] The Quire once had a discussion about the need for at least half of the women in the Quire to be lesbians, in order to attract more lesbian members – one of few conversations about requirements on the personal orientations of its membership.

Chapter 5: The *78ers* in 1998: A (counter)normal life and the emergence of gay and lesbian equality politics

As we have seen the events of 1978 and the lesbian and gay and lesbian feminist movements, before and since, have had a profound effect on the politics and sexual politics of many *78ers*. These were also, for many, life defining and enduring effects. In this chapter I examine this theme. The changes in their material conditions over twenty years are examined, including their labour force participation and mobility. Changes in the way they regard their sexuality and gender are also described. Being a focus of the survey, Mardi Gras is a cause for reflection.

Much has been written about what evolved from that first Gay Pride Mardi Gras, and the subsequent Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras organisations and events over four decades. Some come from an historical perspective of its radical origins and community developments (Carbery 1995; Harris 1998; Harris, Witte & Davis 2001) and some from a perspective of its social, political and economic developments and impact (Marsh & Galbraith 1995; Murphy & Watson 1997; Marsh & Levy 1998; Markwell 2002; Bell & Binnie 2000; Kates 2003). With an interest in the politics of festivals, social geographers have examined its performative, political, social, cultural and spatial effects: Johnston (2007) pursues a pride/shame performativity in collective expressions of contemporary lesbian and gay pride equality politics; Markwell & Waitt (2009) look at the effects of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras on the development of other gay pride events around Australia; Waitt & Stapel (2011) examine the mobility of its effects on people in Townsville a town in far-north Queensland; de Jong (2015a) explores the mobility of collective identity and the significance of the visceral in moments of belonging in Dykes on Bikes during their return trip back to Brisbane from participation in Mardi Gras[1]. This thesis brings further empirical insights into the ambivalence towards and multiplicity of Mardi Gras as an ongoing site of contestation. It looks not only at participation but also refusal - who is there but also who is not (in the historical data and later in Chapter Eight, in the contemporary data). *78ers'* views on its community governance, its commercialisation and sponsorship are detailed. Concerns about its commodification are described as are views on its depoliticisation and hence, its relevance or irrelevance. Some of these concerns, and other comments from the survey relate to a conservative resurgence in 1998 (two years into the first term of John Howard and his Liberal-National government), to conservative/neoliberal social

and economic restructuring and to early developments in lesbian and gay equality politics and neoliberal sexual politics.

5.1 Enduring personal and collective identity and (counter)normativities

The lesbian feminist and gay and lesbian movements and the events of 1978 had a fundamental and enduring impact on the political perspectives (their sexual/gender politics and embrace of radical politics) and the trajectories of *78ers*. As one, then, socialist feminist remarked.

> These events [of 1978] shaped my identity and empowered me in – ultimately – unchangeable ways. I paid a very high price for this awareness in terms of money, health and relationships. It changed, altered my worldview and understanding of "reality". [2]

The sense of events and experiences bringing a changed direction or life trajectory, of possibilities opening up while others are closed off, comes through many of the comments in this theme. Enduring political attitudes, social networks and relationships sustain a sense of collective identity. Changed directions included choices about employment or for some, having children.

One socialist feminist wrote that the lesbian feminist and lesbian and gay movements helped her 'define' herself, determined who she 'lived with, friendships, social activities and later (post-'78) even jobs.'[3] One Left gay man said: 'I really think I gave up the idea of a mainstream career at this time.'[4] A, then, older Left gay man wrote that events of 1978 confirmed a deep commitment to the gay movement since 1972 'and were the foundation of the attitudes and lifestyle' he still has today[5]. Comments related to enduring subjective change involved personal and collective dimensions. For one transgender participant the lesbian and gay movement made them 'feel more comfortable' with self and sexuality and also gave 'a social structure on which to (partly) build [a] life and interests.'[6] For some gay men, feminism and working with lesbians, brought 'lasting changes' to life, as one put it.[7] Other references to these enduring effects over the previous twenty years were framed as normalisation, as in 'part of my life, pretty much ever since'[8] and the sentiment that the movement and events 'changed the shape of my life'[9] was echoed in several comments. One, then radical feminist wrote, 'without the Feminist or Gay/Lesbian movements, I wouldn't have the political/social consciousness I have today, which is an integral part of

myself.'[10] Others described this as 'shaping my ideology'[11] or as 'a relevant paradigm to process many things.'[12] Some comments stressed how historical social movement networks had sustained themselves. About the lesbian feminist movement one, then, separatist radical feminist said 'it was a wonderful political, essential and hilarious movement that served me well then as now.'[13] The lesbian feminist and gay and lesbian movements provided what would become an extended family for many of its children (including my own), and this has also anchored these networks in everyday life and over many years. One, then, radical feminist lesbian wrote:

> I am very happy that I feel free at 38 years old, and have lived my twenties and
> thirties as an active political lesbian feminist and now am enjoying two children
> from Gay fathers – I believe we would be back in the dark ages, if we didn't get off
> our bar stools and walk that night for freedom, equality and love of our own
> gender. [14]

Many comments related to maintaining an activist role and a political vigilance. Many kept up their activism in the GLBT and queer networks. They remained 'committed … to a lifetime of activism'[15] as one, then, Left gay man noted, and some continued to be involved in 'gay rights issues' in the community. For another the involvement since 1973 in the lesbian and gay movement 'led to involvement in other social movements – trade unions, feminism and becoming a committed socialist.'[16] Another, a then radical feminist wrote: 'those years of activism sprouted friendships, ideals and a questioning intellect which are still thriving today.'[17] For many, participation in the movements was life defining in terms of shaping thinking and personal trajectories, friendships, and where and with whom they lived. It had enduring impacts on political perspective, lifestyles and motivated ongoing activism in the movements and in other fields of action. Kinship and social networks supported these enduring political normativities.

5.2 Movement and enduring social networks,

Many comments on the significance of the lesbian and gay and lesbian feminist movements for participants related to their effect in building strong and lasting relationships, friendship and social networks, and families over the two decades the survey spans. Of course many activists are no longer here, though in various ways their influences survive in collective identity and memory. Many networks have endured and remain and, as will be discussed in respect of contemporary activism, their members are still available for mobilisation almost four decades later. One, then radical feminist

wrote: '[the movements] gave me a new group, a group of friends that I still have who have shared a long journey with me.'[18] 'Those years of activism sprouted friendships'[19], wrote another. For one, then socialist feminist the movements connected her 'to lots of people who were important role models.'[20] Another described the intensity of her engagement: 'I became close friends with some of the anarchists involved in the defence program. I became close to many of the people who were arrested [at protests in 1978]. I went to many of the trials and gave evidence on behalf of many people. Great friends mostly.'[21] Other comments stressed the enduring nature of relationships. One, then radical feminist 'met a lot of women and formed friendships that are lasting.'[22] A socialist feminist wrote, 'I feel closest to those who were involved in gay politics years ago.'[23]

As discussed earlier, then, heterosexual and Left-identifying people who were active in the lesbian feminist and lesbian and gay movements located sexual politics in a continuum of their political engagements. Several wrote of strong and enduring relationships in the movements. One woman 'remained politically active and met people from that period who still are.'[24] For one male, 'lots of gay friends, contributed to [his] politicisation.' He still has 'several politically active gay friends.'[25]

Left gay men and homosexuals who were active in the lesbian and gay movement also commented on intense engagement and enduring friendships and social networks. One anarchist wrote: '[The events of 1978] provided six months [of] intense social-collective-political action (kept me busy, provided social opportunities). [It] cemented friendships. [The movements] formed many networks of friendships.'[26] Another anarchist who was then 38 years old, 'met for the first time people who shared both [his] sexuality and [his] politics.'[27] One, then socialist wrote: 'It … provided me with a wide circle of friends.'[28] Another 'developed some close friendships because of it.[29]' One activist wrote: 'Above all, I met a group of lawyer/activists who influenced me deeply or have been my friends ever since.'[30] Another remembered a particular relationship: 'I met a friend at the police station on the night of the first Mardi Gras who was also waiting to bail out a friend of his. This friendship-fascination continued and evolved over several years.'[31]

From those gay men who were not, then, active in the movement and who identified themselves as conservative or apolitical, there were only two comments relating to

relationships and social networks ongoing from their involvement in the events of 1978. One who was, then 17 years old and who has since left Sydney and looks forward to visits, wrote:

> I enjoy being "home" in Sydney at this time of year it is a chance to catch up and party with friends, see a show or exhibition, remember all my friends no longer with us and the times we all partied together and the general vibe the scene has… It is also time when overseas friends come to party and catch up.[32]

The other was in the Mardi Gras Parade with the *78ers* in 1998 with his lover from 1978 (they were together for 19 years).

Enduring social networks produced in the movements have played a role in their persistence during further mobilisations or periods of abeyance. They have also underpinned what endures of their collective identity, politics and collective normativities.

5.3 Two decades later – material trajectories

The educational achievements of survey participants in 1998 are detailed in *Table 6*.

Table 6: *78ers* and their highest level of education in 1998 and by gender

Highest level of education in 1998	Males	Females	Total *
Left school early	3	3	6
Finished high school	8	3	11
Trade	6	4	10
Undergraduate	22	14	37
Postgraduate	10	15	26
Masters	11	5	16
Doctoral degree	4	0	4
Number	64	44	110

*Includes two transgender people
Note: 34 and 32 per cent of males and females, respectively, had an undergraduate degree as their highest qualification, 39 and 45 per cent, respectively, had a higher degree.

Some had left school early, and some had no post-school education. Some completed a trade certificate. Most had completed one, or a number of university degrees. For about one-third of participants their highest educational achievement was an undergraduate

degree (men and women equally). For about one-quarter it was a postgraduate, certificate or diploma and for about one-fifth it was a masters or doctoral degree, which was high by general standards[33]. There was some variation in gender, with more of the women having a postgraduate certificate or diploma while more of the men had a masters or doctoral degree[34]. The youth of the survey cohort in 1978 is one factor in their relatively higher level of educational achievement, as well as earlier reforms to higher education access and support. The relationship between the gay and lesbian movements and the student movement and the downwardly redistributive effects of social movement participation are other factors.

While half of the *78ers* described their circumstances in 1978 as poor and employment for many was tenuous, their employment situations, as one might expect, were different twenty years later. *Table 7* shows the labour force situation of the survey cohort in 1978 and 1998, for women, men and for all persons. In 1998 fewer were unemployed and more were out of the labour force (more than one in eight). Only a small number, now, were in "unskilled or semi-skilled" employment. Over half were in "skilled jobs". One in six were in "professional" employment and a handful was in senior administrative or senior professional roles (such as a barrister, medical specialist or senior public sector executive)[35].

Table 7: *78ers'* situation, labour force participation and segment, 1978 and 1998

78ers' Labour force situations	Females		Males		Total**	
	in 1978	in 1998	in 1978	in 1998	in 1978	in 1998
Unemployed	3	2	2	0	6	2
Not in labour force	1	2	0	13	1	15
Parenting	1	1	0	0	1	1
Student	11	1	9	0	21	1
Un/semi-skilled*	13	0	21	7	34	7
Skilled*	15	29	27	28	42	59
Professional*	0	7	5	12	6	19
Senior admin/professional*	0	1	0	4	0	5
Number	44	43	64	64	110	109

* Labour force segments are described in *Table 4* notes
** Total includes two transgender people.

Table 8 looks at individual movement between labour force categories and segments in 1978 and 1998. Most of those who were students in 1978 were in "skilled",

"professional" or "senior professional" roles in 1998. Of those who were working in 1978 and 1998, about one-half of the cohort had a job that was in a 'higher' labour force segment. Over two-fifths had a job in the same labour segment movement and a small number a job in a 'lower' segment. Upward mobility did not vary with gender or childhood financial circumstances.

Table 8: Individual movement of *78ers'* between labour force segments in 1978 and 1998

Labour force participation or segment 1978	Labour force segment 1998	Number of 78ers
Unemployed (n=5)	Pension	1
	Skilled	4
Parenting (n=1)	Professional	1
Student (n=21)	Unemployed	1
	Pension	1
	Retired	1
	Skilled	11
	Professional	6
	Senior exec/professional	1
Un/semi-skilled (n=34)	Pension	5
	Retired	2
	Parenting	1
	Student	1
	Un/semi-skilled	15
	Skilled	6
	Professional	4
	Senior exec/professional	2
Skilled (n=41)	Unemployed	1
	Pension	2
	Retired	2
	Un/semi-skilled	3
	Skilled	27
	Professional	6
	Senior exec/professional	2
Professional (n=5)	Retired	1
	Skilled	2
	Professional	2
Total		109

Notes: See notes for *Table 4* regarding *78ers'* jobs and labour force segments. This table shows individual movement from *78ers'* labour force segments in 1978 to those in 1978.

Given the level of education of *78ers* one might expect to find such a group clustered in the highest labour force segments. While more than half of those in "unskilled or semi-skilled" jobs in 1978 remained in jobs in that segment, *78ers'* jobs are clustered in the middle segments. Those in the highest segments in 1998 were mainly in senior public

administration and policy roles, or professional roles in the human services. The reforms of the Whitlam Government benefited activists in their access to higher education. The funding of community-based programs created demands for a new workforce in the public and community sectors and many activists took their places in it. Reflected here are activists comments relating to events and the movements determining in some ways their trajectories and politics, including in this their career and work choices. It should also be noted that as a group of mainly "out", radical and public homosexuals, at work and elsewhere, that their education and employment outcomes appear not to have been diminished.

These data are a unique historical resource, of the economic dimensions of a lesbian and gay movement in this time. Another domain in which there has been change is in the ways that *78ers* described their gender and sexuality in 1998.

5.4 *78ers*' ideations of gender and sexuality in 1998

As outlined in chapter three, most of the *78ers* described themselves in 1978 as lesbians, gay men or homosexuals (about four-fifths) with the others describing themselves as heterosexual or bisexual in similar number. Terms in the vernacular were also popular, like dyke and queen. There were subcultural descriptors used by a small number of radical faeries, clones and leather queens and a few using gender descriptors like butch or effeminate. The historical subcultural specificity of many of the descriptors made the exercise a little different from a hetero/bi/homo identification process and the multiple choice allowed participants to select descriptors across that binary. Focussing only on the hetero/bi/homo indicators shows that these categories have endured for most. This is modelled at *Table 9*. All participants completed the item, though easier with hindsight, even reflecting whether they were confused or undecided about their sexuality at that time. The same list of descriptors was offered in the survey concerning the present (in 1998), with one further inclusion, 'bear', given the new popularity of the bear scene and subculture at this time. Asking the same question in the present revealed some changes in the use of language over time, reflecting changed conditions, within the elements and networks of a movement mainly in abeyance, and among these, the concerns and (counter/antinormativities) of the emerging queer community around gender and sexuality essentialism, fixed categories and the limitations of identity politics. The numbers using various terms are shown at *Figures 3*

and *4*, for women and men, respectively. For women, in 1998, less identified the terms homosexual, gay, bisexual and camp as applying to them and none identified "confused sexuality" or "asexual". More, though in small numbers, were using subcultural terms like butch, femme, leather dyke and one was gender questioning.

Table 9: *78ers'* homosexual, bisexual and heterosexual, by gender comparing 1978 and 1998

	1978			1998		
	Homo-sexual	Bisexual	Hetero-sexual	Homo-sexual	Bisexual	Hetero-sexual
Female	32	7	4	32	5	6
Male	52	7	4	53	2	8
Transperson	1	1	0	1	1	0
Total	85	15	8	86	8	14

Notes: Categories were durable for 100 of 110 participants between 1978 and 1998. They had changed for three of the men and seven of the women.

As discussed in chapter three, the use of the term queer in 1978 was mainly in the spirit of reclaiming curse words and it was an inclusive word, not associated with males as homosexual, gay and camp had become. More women were identifying as queer (in the contemporary sense). The descriptors identified by the males in the cohort reflected similar changes. Gay was the term most commonly used, by an increasing number. Fewer identified the terms homosexual, male homosexual, bisexual, effeminate, counterculture and camp as applying to them. There were a few extra leather queens, a couple of bears and still a handful of fairies. One selected the term transgender. As with the women, more were identifying as queer.

In 1998, across the cohort, twenty-three people identified as queer. In 1978 these were radical and socialist feminists and Left gay men as well as nonradical gay and bisexual men. The question received many comments in its "other, please specify" option, regarding the relevance of descriptors in 1998. Some of these offered other descriptors and some of these in the spirit of the politics of play. 'Nun (Sister of Perpetual Indulgence)', 'radical faerie', 'girl's girl', 'Uranian', 'congenital invert', 'fag', 'mavis', 'sharman (retired)', 're-emerging lesbian', and 'Glam-our-ous!!' were among the latter. Fetish mixed with responsibility got a run with 'rubber dyke and lesbian mother' and 'pushy bottom', and for a few, celibacy (one 'not by choice').

Relevant to the increased use of 'queer', were comments about the limits of the question, the tick box approach and the categories. Two participants offered 'heterosexual and open to other experiences' as options. 'Actually I don't use any such descriptors voluntarily', wrote another, and on this theme another was 'not one for labels'. One activist, a radical feminist and lesbian separatist in 1978, wrote: 'I also think that these days sexuality is a continuum and that its possible to experience a range of sexualities if that feels right for you. I'm not so either/or these days. I'm not a separatist at all even though most of my friends are lesbians.' These comments acknowledge, at least for some, concerns with gender or sexuality essentialism and newer notions of fluidity in gender and sexuality. They reflect some of the continuity between older radicals and later queer community politics as will be discussed in later chapters, in relation to contemporary activism. Part of this continuity also relates to the contestations around the Sydney Mardi Gras, between movement elements, over two decades raising concerns about neoliberal sexual politics in community governance.

5.5 The personal and collective importance of Mardi Gras

The survey canvassed *78ers'* participation in the Mardi Gras (from 1979 to 1998), its importance generally and personally, and their feelings about the contemporary Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. Several themes emerging from this showed some concern (in 1998) for what might be regarded as neoliberal or homonormative developments. Many comments about Mardi Gras were prescient of its increasing commodification and the privatisation and securing of its spaces and events, its complicity with "over-policing", drug and alcohol testing, drug use and public sex prohibitions and its increasing control over participation, access and political expression. Many of these comments are ambivalent in that there is also a strong acknowledgement that Mardi Gras has been, and remains, an important site for the expression of differences and solidarities (even if short-lived for some). The comments also reflect concerns in 1998 of a conservative political and social environment and of what might be regarded as developments in neoliberal sexual and spatial politics in lesbian and gay community governance.

There were some scaled questions in the survey about *78ers'* attitudes to the Sydney Lesbian and Gay Mardi Gras (in 1998). The data is presented visually in *Figure 6*. Most participated in Mardi Gras events (about one-fifth did not) with over one-quarter

participating very much so. Most found Mardi Gras enjoyable (almost half did, very much so). Almost all believed that Mardi Gras was very important (four-fifths of them, very important). Asked how important Mardi Gras was to them, most felt it was (over one-third found it very important) and one-tenth felt it was not important to them at all. Asked how much they identified with Mardi Gras, four-fifths did (three-tenths, very much so) and over one-eighth did not at all. Men participated more in Mardi Gras events than women and more of them found it enjoyable. Responses to the questions about the importance of and identification with Mardi Gras did not vary much with gender.

Figure 6: *78ers'* **attitudes to and participation in the Sydney Lesbian and Gay Mardi Gras**
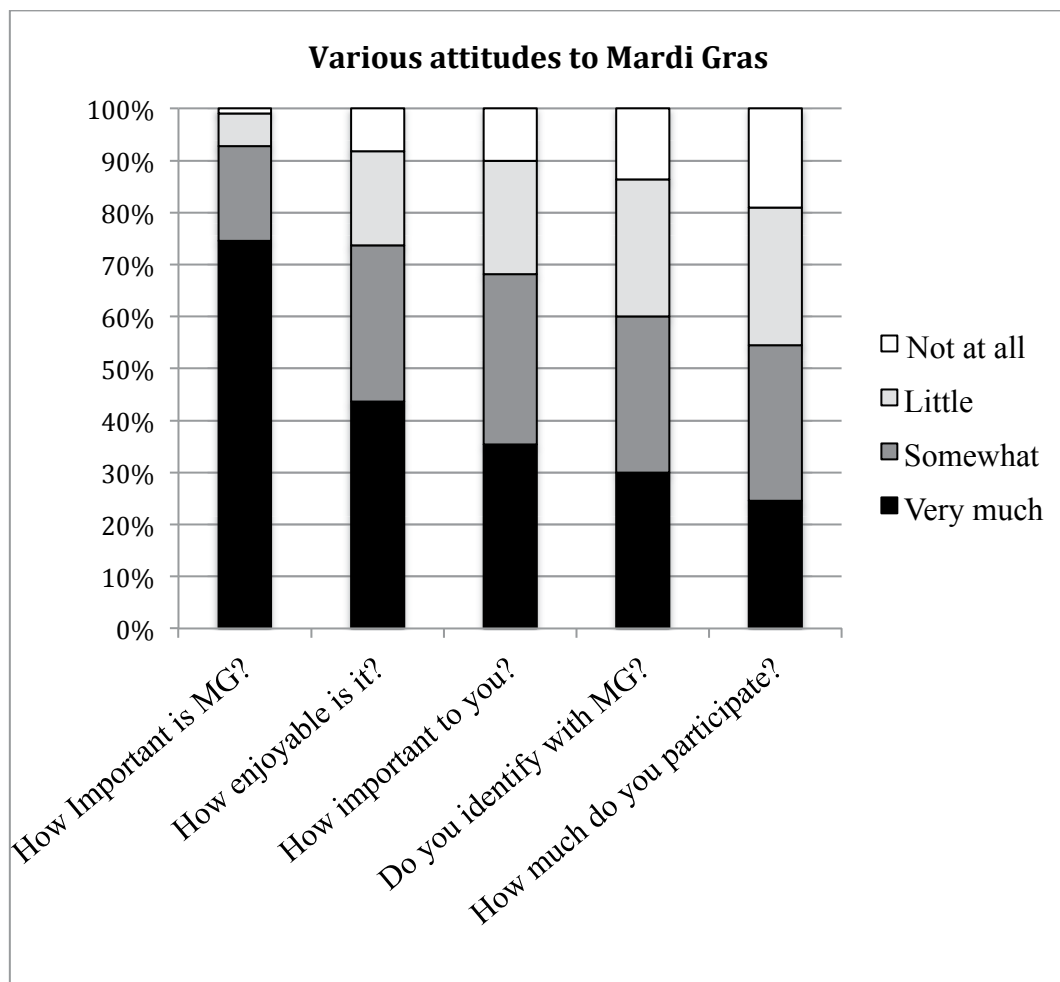
Notes: See Appendix One, 78ers survey items, Questions 77 to 81 (110 respondents).

Mardi Gras 'spawned the controversial organisation we all love to hate today'[36] wrote one, then radical feminist, capturing the sense of ambivalence in many women's comments about Mardi Gras in the late 1990s. In these comments the positives (e.g. 'its

profile and size … showcasing the fruits of my community'[37], 'it's big, glamorous, professional, has diversity, encourages the most interesting artists, is fun, full of pride, dancing dazzling etc.'[38] or 'the amount of commitment that goes into' groups' participation in the event[39]) are qualified with a big 'but'. These 'buts' relate to concerns about: the governance of Mardi Gras; developments in its commercialisation, commodification and private-sector funding; it's depoliticisation, dehistorisation and spectacularisation; it's sexism, 'body beautiful focus'[40] and male orientation; it's relationship to transgender people; it's accessibility to people with disability; and its relevance to contemporary community concerns and realities (including the affordability of its events). The ambivalence reflects some of the contradictions involved. One woman saw these tensions as productive: 'I'm interested in the constant struggle between the corporate and community aspects of the organisation. The struggle between the two makes Mardi Gras a fairly dynamic creative community phenomena!'[41]

Some comments were made about the governance of Mardi Gras and its board and directors. Some had 'nothing but admiration'[42], as one older gay man wrote, for Mardi Gras and its Board. The decision to change the organisation's name (to Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras) to include the word lesbian, a few years earlier got a tick from some and resulted in their returning to participation in Mardi Gras. The decision to disallow the membership of heterosexuals drew the ire of several people, particularly one transgender activist who wrote:

> The present Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras charter is too bipolar, too rigid, too stuck up its own arse. [It's a] really a poor imitation of a heterosexual model of operation – where's the encouragement of true diversity? It should be inclusive rather than exclusive.[43]

The policy had come about as a response to concerns around heterosexual men causing trouble at Mardi Gras parties, and would reduce their access to the party (as tickets could only be bought by members). One gay man wrote:

> During all these years – my friends – a lot of whom are "straight" but gay friendly – have not been given a voice or a choice – I miss them at the venues and the Mardi Gras parties – they not only supported me but gays in general and the Mardi Gras. I wish they were allowed to party with us again.[44]

Another gay man criticised the Board and its President. He felt that the, then, Board 'does not operate from any considered ethical stance: they don't get it'[45], he wrote.

Another concern was with Mardi Gras's community grants program and any bias in the process. One lesbian wrote:

> I also would like to see more Mardi Gras money going to rural gay and lesbian groups, marginalised groups such as gay and lesbian aboriginal and Asian groups and some women's or lesbian groups who are really struggling financially. The people doling out the dollars have to be highly aware of their own personal prejudices and judgements concerning differences across the broad spectrum of people in the lesbian/gay community (not everybody lives in inner Sydney!!)[46]

Another woman made a more general comment referring to the diminution and corporatisation of contemporary social movements. 'The same shift that's happened in lots of movements has happened with Mardi Gras.'[47]

5.6 Security, risk management and Mardi Gras's commercialisation and depoliticisation

Mardi Gras events have been fundamentally changed through compliance with police, risk and liability regimes and complicity in policing and regulation of participants. Ambivalence for one gay man relates to access to the Mardi Gras parade. He wrote: 'I look back nostalgically to when you could spontaneously join in the parade from the sidelines, and there was more of an edge – there was more of a feeling of anarchy and undergroundness about it.'[48] There were several accounts of individuals being ejected from the event. 'I am appalled by the Nazi-like qualities of the present parade organisation. Now we can't march without a "pass" because of the controlling Janie-come-latelies in control'[49], one wrote. Mardi Gras's relationship with police, and the involvement of police lesbian and gay liaison officers in the parade are traumatic for some. 'I wish the cops would fuck off', wrote one of them. 'I can forgive but I can't forget the uniformed thugs of 1978.'[50]

One concern in comments related to the commercialisation of Mardi Gras, its commodification and the effects of private sector sponsorship. Some questioned the corporations that sponsor Mardi Gras and their having floats in the parade. One woman wrote: 'I don't think businesses (like Poppy) should have floats in the procession. The Mardi Gras should not be about money.' She argued that Mardi Gras was too important to sell off:

> We should not get complacent, despite the great leaps forward over the last twenty
> years – there is still a long way to go in terms of changing societal attitudes
> towards "queer" people. Commercialising our major event is not the way to go.
> Many straight businesses want to jump onto the pink dollar bandwagon without
> changing their fundamental attitudes or policies about gays/lesbians. Let's not let
> these businesses suck off us![51]

One *78er* referred to the intervention of capitalism as 'both the mechanism for advancing particular ideas or generating income for venues etc.' and its co-optation of Mardi Gras, made it 'largely for those with money.' The expensiveness of Mardi Gras events was prohibitive for many *78ers*. One transgender activist wrote: 'I don't have the money to go to these events. How do people on low income afford party or theatre tickets?'[52] For people who lived out of town and those with children there were additional financial barriers (travel, cost of childcare), as well as logistic ones, as one out-of-towner wrote, it was 'too hard to get tickets to the Big Party.'[53] The parade's security logistics have produced a major event with an absolute distinction and spatial and enforced separation of those in the parade and those watching. One *78er* found this 'structure of parade/viewers quite alienating.' For her it seems 'like a giant, largely glossy, marketing venture rather than a grass roots event.' She challenged Mardi Gras as becoming 'self-congratulatory – "we're the biggest, we're the best"'. Having lived overseas for many years she had attended 'many U.S. and Europride events' which were 'as big and better, and in [her] experience, more participatory.'[54] Another reflected on the political focus on its commercial success and wondered 'if the level of apparent community tolerance would be so high if its commercial success was not so outstanding.'[55] One gay man was annoyed by the economic arguments for the political defence and justification of Mardi Gras, in the many millions of dollars it delivered to the economy, as 'akin to the trade argument used against racism.'[56]

Many comments concerned Mardi Gras's depoliticisation, the loss of its political history and the evolution of its events into a spectacle and commodity. In some comments participants invoked the 'original aims and ideas of the early Gay Liberation movements' and as one woman put it 'many of which are still startlingly relevant today.'[57] Another reminded that the original event 'was a march for gay liberation against oppression, discrimination and violence.'[58] Another explained: 'We were trying to redress repressive power positions and get across to people in the street and

especially closeted gays that their life choices were valid and that we were demanding space and tolerance of difference.'[59] As well as the concerns about the commercialisation of Mardi Gras (described above) was a sense that those who created it now felt it to be alien to their concerns. One who was arrested at the "first" Mardi Gras, then a separatist radical feminist, appealed, 'let Mardi Gras remain as OUR celebration for US, all gay, lesbian, queer-identified people. Let's not compromise it out of existence by selling out to conservatism, commercialism and non-gay vested interests.'[60]

Some comments related to concerns about Mardi Gras, in particular the parade, becoming a spectacle and a commodity for tourism and voyeurism and as such a poor stand-in for authentic lesbian, gay and transgender life or its history. These came from women, who were mainly in 1978, radical feminists. One wrote: 'I sometimes yearn for a parade that is not overwhelmed by hundreds of thousands of mainstreamers – a fair day which is intimate and a place I know I'll see my friends and play in my community, without dodging awestruck tourists.' In becoming 'fodder for the mainstream's entertainment' it had lost its 'queer, edgy and marginal' dimensions.[61] For another it was 'too much like a commercial freak show providing entertainment for the masses who enjoy any sort of spectacle.'[62] Some of those who had watched the parade on the street found the onlookers disturbing. It was 'horrible being in the crowd', wrote one of them, 'many in the crowd were voyeuristic rather than supportive.'[63] Another reflected: 'I also wonder if "Mr and Ms Average" on the street really understand/appreciate what they are seeing.'[64] Another referred to it as a 'sideshow … being on show for the straights who don't quite give a shit the rest of the year'. She noted that at that time there was still no legal recognition of same sex relationships, and no federal anti-discrimination legislation[65]. Making Mardi Gras into a commodity involved its commercialisation and 'taking it away from its political roots', another reflected, which would see us only 'become a feast for straight voyeurs who miss the (political) point entirely.'[66] The first Mardi Gras was a movement expression and a mobilising action targeting the lesbian and gay communities, there were few onlookers. In 1998 there were 600,000.

Other comments were concerned with a sense of fading political content and mobilisation within Mardi Gras events; a lack of political vigilance both within its organisation and to contemporary queer, lesbian and gay issues and concerns; and the

incongruity of the parade with the political and day-to-day realities for lesbians and gay men. In many comments and in various ways Mardi Gras was described as a 'commercial' event rather than a 'political' protest or event, and one that featured little 'radical politics', or was 'all party and no politics', or 'in with the glitter and out with the politics'. For some the political content was in the creativity and messages of Left and progressive groups in the parade, in slogans on placards and in collective, themed representations or choreographies of particular political issues.

Mardi Gras for its early life was, very much, a political protest march. One woman had participated in these under the Stop Police Attacks on Gays, Women and Blacks banner. More recently she had 'marched on two other Mardi Gras parades with an anti-racist banner and with a union banner.' She felt that 'more encouragement should be given to political banners.'[67] [I don't think she would have anticipated the current situation, as discussed later, where all placards, banners and slogans must be approved by Mardi Gras and compliance with this is a condition of float entries.] Some encouraged creative approaches, as one woman wrote: 'I would like to see the political content continue to be shown in the most imaginative of ways.'[68] Another said she would personally prefer 'more political floats that were creative in expression, rather than just dressing up e.g. lesbian brides group.'[69] One gay man, an anarchist in 1978, noted the newness of the parade as a type of action, which 'encouraged broad, direct, creative, popular involvement rather than merely conventional politicking.'[70] He acknowledged, though, that the outcomes depended on its governance and bureaucracy.

Some were concerned that the balance had gone towards commercial entries, for some years. Companies could 'buy floats' and pay for their production, as one argued, and further overshadow community groups[71]. One gay man wrote: 'the current regime, who I'm sure all work tirelessly, do seem to have moved away from a political/rights emphasis to one focussed on money/glamour/glitz/size etc.'[72] Another found the parade 'profoundly uncreative' at an aesthetic level and regarded the political messages as 'jokes' and their 'resolutions' as 'usually weak' and 'timid.'[73] Some comments concerned the incongruity of Mardi Gras with contemporary political realities. That the theme of the twentieth anniversary Mardi Gras in 1998 was "Celebration" was for one woman 'Weak! Weak! Weak!' She wrote, 'What about: youth suicide for dykes and poofs, health, legal crap about our deaths, same sex rights etc. Don't get me wrong the celebration is important but to ignore the conservative political climate is dumb.' [74]One

gay man also felt that Mardi Gras was 'now not stating clearly the issues affecting gays and lesbians.' He argued that it 'needs to emphasise concern for our community not just be a show for the straights.' The focus on eastern Sydney was helping Mardi Gras lose 'sight of the diversity of gay people', forgetting 'about the majority of gays living in the suburbs and the country areas', as well as 'older gays and lesbians'.[75]

Women raised concerns about sexism, over-sexualisation, 'body beautiful' ideology and the male orientation of Mardi Gras. 'It all seems very sexual and superficial', wrote one woman, 'when the political realities are quite different.'[76] Another wrote: 'I enjoy the satire of it but grieve for the apparent lack of political vigilance.' For her (and others) the parade's capacity to offend sexual politics and political sensibilities has kept her away. She wrote: 'sometimes I blame myself for being too "hurt" to celebrate.'[77] Another said that the demise of politics in Mardi Gras 'makes [her] sad'[78]. Some had not participated for many years. One became involved again after the name of Mardi Gras was changed to include the term 'lesbian'. One stayed away for twelve years because there were 'too many men and not enough women'[79]. Another didn't 'like the S&M stuff, men sending up women and phallic stuff.'[80] For another, 'the obsession with beautiful bodies [was] a bore.'[81] One didn't like 'the oversexualised emphasis of festival acts and parade entries.' She found that the themes in theatre and films and so on were limited to 'sex, AIDS and coming out' and not all of 'the complexities of homosexual life.'[82] One felt that the 'lesbian presence [in the Parade and events was] trivialised, minimised and overshadowed.'[83] Another acknowledged that while Mardi Gras had 'had a profile mainly being about gay, camp or leather men', that it has since changed and now the 'dyke content is more profound.'[84]

Transgender people also expressed mixed feelings about Mardi Gras. One wrote: 'I feel as if I don't really belong at times. Gays and lesbians express a variety of attitudes and opinions about tranys. I was invited to participate in the lead float some years ago, to represent tranys. It was an honour and great experience.'[85] The other felt 'resentful' that transgender people were still 'officially excluded' from the events name. This activist felt that there was a need for 'a whole new process of education' within the gay and lesbian community about 'recognising and not discriminating against' transgender people. 'Where's the encouragement of true diversity', they posed, 'when Mardi Gras is not inclusive?' They railed against the exclusion of heterosexuals from Mardi Gras. 'We should be excluding troublemakers – gay, lesbian, straight, bi, trany whatever – not by

sexuality but by behaviour.' She felt uncomfortable about even 'lightly kissing' her boyfriend at Mardi Gras, having been 'harangued before for being a "fuckin' straight"!!! Weird but true!'[86]

Several concerns related to the accessibility of Mardi Gras for people with disability and parents with children. Its overly bureaucratic organisation, according to one lesbian, ignores the needs of individuals and makes participation of people with disabilities, for example, difficult through the lack of additional support for their participation and the use of inaccessible premises. One bisexual male, because of disability, has 'found it difficult to become involved in many events. This has resulted in [his] becoming somewhat isolated from Mardi Gras events and activities.'[87] The size of Mardi Gras and the physical challenges of participating in or watching the Parade are a disincentive to some.

There were other comments relating to the exclusiveness of Mardi Gras, it being 'youth oriented and gay male oriented' and inner-city focussed. 'It caters for young city dykes and pooftas into the contemporary "queer" scene'[88], one woman wrote. A Westie lesbian was keen to see events in Sydney's west. 'There's a lot of us out here!!!'[89] she stressed. Another raised concerns about the ethnic and class diversity of the Mardi Gras parade and events. She wrote:

> For me the intersection of lesbian women, migrant and working class is not
> portrayed well – I think because it doesn't sit comfortably with "perceived" gay
> and lesbian culture. Mardi Gras is fun and celebration, a time for us to "speak" up
> for ourselves. In that sense it is serious and politically significant. Work on
> reaching out to the working class lesbian and gays and migrant lesbians, who also
> may be not of the anglo middle class culture, is badly needed.[90]

She believed that Mardi Gras had, more recently, gone some way towards involving a greater class and ethic diversity of lesbians and gay men. There was recognition from some others that the political content of Mardi Gras was increasing and that some of these concerns were being acknowledged and addressed. One woman wrote: 'I'm pleased that it appears to be getting more political again and that more women are participating.'[91] Another who had 'worried' that for some years Mardi Gras had 'lacked significant political content' felt that that was changing. She wrote, 'I was concerned that Mardi Gras needed to address racism in the wider community and within its own

ranks. It has gone someway to doing this and needs to do more.'[92] A gay man also commented on the issue of racism and influencing the "messages" of Mardi Gras.

> I think the incorporation of reconciliation as a major concern into both Sydney and Melbourne gay community events and political focus is an example of how the 1978 origins and subsequent events have resulted in genuine community control – i.e. it's not just a media controlled event.[93]

He refers to Mardi Gras as a resource, something that can be used by activists and community groups, 'so that our community can and does still use it as a method and process, to achieve multiple goals.' Another acknowledged that even without its political content, 'the very nature of it means it will always be a form of political action.'[94]

Further to the perceived depoliticisation of Mardi Gras was the marginalisation of its history. There was 'not enough recognition of political history and personal sacrifice'[95], one woman wrote. For another it was 'somewhat removed from its roots.'[96] The history of Mardi Gras gives meaning to it as a celebration. One woman asserted:

> The history of Mardi Gras is extremely important for everyone to know. We fought for a long time (both internally and externally) and we've still got a long way to go. It disappoints me sometimes when I see how the media has high-jacked the Mardi Gras parade and what do we see: tits, arse, sequins and glamour and Sydney love us for a night and then the parade ends and the crowd wants to bash us – GREAT – we haven't come as far as we thought we had. More politics, education and history – but done as glamorously as possible.[97]

The loss of the history occasions a loss of meaning. One woman wrote: 'Most of the floats are far too polished and the representations which used to be parodies have lost their meaning.'[98] As Mardi Gras events are commodified for a mainstream audience or consumption the politics are also lost. One woman wrote: 'It's now a wonderful arts festival/spectacle it's not political or if it tries it's a small "p" political. [It's] now so mainstream – the homophobia gets lost.'[99] For another it has 'shifted into mainstream culture … more about ostentation and celebration'.[100] In the other direction, the danger of mainstreaming is 'toning ourselves down'.[101]

Some comments about Mardi Gras related to its relevance (or irrelevance) to political realities and priorities. One liberal, gay man who, in 1978, was 16 years old, believed

that 'post-struggle, the youth of today need to affirm their sexuality and their links to their community and the general community at large.' He wrote: 'I don't need the Mardi Gras to define me or give me a focus, in the way I think it does for younger people these days.'[102] Most comments related, also, to a declining personal relevance. Some had little contact with Mardi Gras until the twentieth anniversary celebrations in 1998 and were confronted by how it had changed. One bisexual male commented:

> This year and the *78ers* programme has meant the first serious contact in any
> Mardi Gras associated activity for a decade, and, quite frankly, outside of the
> *78ers*, I feel like a child of Mary in a mining town. It is not that the Mardi Gras has
> progressed and I have become stultified – no, it's just that Mardi Gras, the gay and
> lesbian community and I have simply progressed down separate paths and now that
> I have come to join in a Mardi Gras activity I realise the gulf between myself and
> the (current) community aspirations.[103]

A sense of growing indifference to Mardi Gras was expressed in various ways. 'Increasingly I feel it has little to do with me'[104], wrote one woman. 'It's no longer my parade … I don't feel like it's my festival or my community any more'[105], wrote another. Several comments referred to Mardi Gras's 'increasing distance from our community at large'[106]. The sense of distance or personal irrelevance comes across in one gay man's description of the contemporary Mardi Gras as: 'middle class, police friendly, highly regulated, artless and exclusive.'[107] The other aspect of this distance was the affordability of Mardi Gras events, the costs restricting participation of 'those on low incomes.'[108] Other aspects of the events affected personal relevance. One woman felt that the parties didn't 'cater to anyone who doesn't like techno'[109]. Another, an artist, referring to the festival events and exhibitions found the images 'rarely seem to have much depth', describing this as an 'outward sign' of the 'political reality' of the artists.[110]

5.7 Neoliberalism, homonormativity and equality politics

One of the principal neoliberal strategies involves the privatisation of the public domain and the regulation of public spaces formerly available for spontaneous social use and the privatisation of risks associated with them. While Mardi Gras has co-operated in these regulatory regimes, many comments reinforced its role in making (public) space for lesbian and gay existence. Some comments concerned what was described in the review of the literature as tendencies to homonormativity and the rise of a neoliberal

lesbian and gay equality politics discussed in Chapter One. Its early developments are apparent in some of the things *78ers* said in 1998 about directions in lesbian and gay community governance and conservative equality activists. Eighteen years later it is a palpable and pervasive influence in the official lesbian and gay community and its governance organisations and expressed clearly in the marriage equality campaign. As I will show in Chapter Eight, neoliberal sexual politics is identified and named and its agency is clear to some contemporary activists who identified its impacts on their activism and organising.

Žižek identifies the contradiction of a neoliberal multiculturalism, that what appears as 'the hybrid coexistence of diverse cultural life-worlds' is the form of its opposite – the pervasive, homogenising and universalised 'presence of capitalism'. He argues that those who accept the supremacy of capitalism have found another outlet for their 'critical energy in fighting for cultural differences which leave the basic homogeneity of the capitalist world system intact.' He implicates cultural studies particularly in 'actively participating in the ideological effort to render its massive presence invisible' (1997, p. 46). By this logic early lesbian and gay activists in fighting for revolutionary change created the moment and possibility, and the instruments that were colonised and commodified in equality politics. While, as I will later show, this politics is very familiar to contemporary critical and radical activists, some comments from *78ers* revealed their opposition to this drive to acritical social and political inclusion.

One woman, a self-described 'old Lefty' argued that developments in Mardi Gras show 'how the gay community can be absorbed into an advanced capitalist society.'[111] A Left, gay man expressed disillusionment with 'gay men's politics' which he described as 'turning into a single-issue concern [HIV/AIDS] with no wider social analysis. 'Remember', he stressed, 'some of us wanted to change society, not simply integrate into it.'[112] Another, in 1978 a libertarian feminist, reiterated this theme: 'Mardi Gras has been largely commandeered by conservative homocrats with very little artistic vision and with minor commitment to significant social change – only wanting to assimilate into the status quo.'[113] One gay man saw Mardi Gras's role as 'supporting the heteronormative status quo'[114]. The relationship between structures that devalue and the devaluation of particular subjects was reflected in many comments, for example, one, then radical feminist wrote: 'To me being a lesbian is about sexuality … but its also

much more than that – a political choice to love women and myself in a women-hating world.'[115]

Concerns about Mardi Gras being too expensive, prohibiting participation of those living in poverty or on low incomes[116], indicate the biggest change in an event which is now less downwardly redistributive of access, sex, pleasure, celebration and opportunities for collective identification. One *78er*, in 1978 an anarchist-feminist, addressed the dynamic of movements excising dissident subjectivities in the process of pursuing respectabilisation:

> There is still bigotry and fear of difference in the world … We have to continue to challenge the status quo and extend acceptable behaviour to give people more choice and a more accepting community to enrich all our lives and encourage loving creative pursuits. One's sexual persuasion, gender and personal representation should be allowed and encouraged to be fluid and evolving, not merely regurgitating what has gone before and therefore safe.[117]

This comment identifies the importance of opposing this tendency to excise dissidents with an inclusive community that works to extend what is regarded as "normal". Gay marriage was not really on the agenda in 1998, though it did get a mention by one gay activist who opposed gay marriage because 'we can never trust the state.' [118] The inclusion of lesbian and gay police liaison officers in the parade, while supported by some, was opposed by others, for whom police remained agents of social control and regulation.

The Mardi Gras and its developments were seen as foundational to contemporary lesbian and gay equality politics by some. In regard to the significance of Mardi Gras to the lesbian and gay communities one gay man wrote: 'I feel it was the first real occasion on which gay and lesbian coalitionist politics began to work and laid the foundation for anti-discrimination legislation[119], gay law reform and the present community politics.'[120] Certainly the movement pre-existed geographic gay and lesbian communities and some elements in the movement engaged politically with emergent gay male communities. Some may see these events as unwinding in a linear way, with continuous agency, from radicalism to equality politics, however the multiplicity of movements makes this picture much more complex. The separatist radical feminist lesbians, for example, were certainly not taking on the police in 1978 to champion the interests of petty bourgeois gay men. The events of 1978 and their mobilisations, as

discussed earlier, had a politicising and radicalising effect on many activists, both new and old, and on those who were mobilised or "caught up" in events. It also politicised people with conservative politics, without radicalising them. There were a few gay men in the survey cohort who identified as having conservative or liberal politics in 1978. Some became active in the movement. One of them 'became political and grew to dislike ALP politics due to their response to the first Mardi Gras.' He later pursued an active involvement in conservative politics. He wrote: '[the events of 1978] made me political and I saw the need for gay politics to be involved in mainstream politics.' [121]

There were some comments that related to the tactic in equality politics to render and promote a constituency of the middle, between radical and revolutionary homosexuals to the Left and anti-gay moralists on the Right. One gay man (a libertarian in 1978) referred to the promotion of conservative gay figures and TV personalities:

> I find it interesting how many people are now on the bandwagon, people who wouldn't touch gay activism in the past. For example: Bernard King – on stage at last years Mardi Gras launch/Stars Night. If old closet queens like him are on the bandwagon it's time for me to get off.

He also made a cheeky comment about the past associations of one President of Mardi Gras Board 'Richard Cobden – hobnobbing with Sir John Kerr in the 1970s ... (they say late-life converts are the most vociferous!!!!!).' [sic] [122]

The survey does provide some voices from "the middle". One *78er* (a conservative in 1978) wrote: 'The gay community today also needs to step back and learn from 20 years of struggle – there is a time for "in your face" and there is a time when a little diplomacy can achieve remarkable things.' [123] One *78er* (a non-radical in 1978) was 'distressed' about reports of others saying that 'the Mardi Gras was no longer political', which he described as their 'political analysis appearing to be stuck in the seventies.' He wrote: 'Fortunately Mardi Gras leadership along with that of the HIV response (and some other lesbian and gay community activities) have been characterised by far more sophisticated analysis.' [124] Discrediting the Left by mocking its normativities and focusing on extreme individual comments is a tactic common to conservative and neoliberal sexual politics. There's something of an appeal to a mainstreaming approach here. As discussed earlier, most *78ers* were ambivalent about Mardi Gras, and held various concerns as to its commodification, depoliticisation, male-orientation and so on.

Most did not dismiss it simply as apolitical. Most felt it was important, to themselves and the community. Many had a strong attachment to it or had strong feelings about its direction. Another *78er*, then a radical feminist referred to a simpler politics in the past and felt that thinking was now more sophisticated. She wrote:

> I'm not someone who believes we live in a 'post-feminist' or 'post-gay' world, but I do like to see our understanding/discussions and thinking show more sophistication and development. I think back in 1978 a lot of our analyses were simplistic, but we had to start somewhere. I'm glad to see we've got from there to here and it has all been worthwhile.[125]

5.8 Conclusion and methodological reflections

The lens of collective identity views collective action through its embeddedness in daily life and social networks. This confounds in some ways the notion of a social movement as being in abeyance, periods without outward and visible mobilisation and contestations, where participants are demobilised and submerged in social networks. Taylor builds on Mizruchi's (1983) notion of abeyance structures that act as cites of containment and control of excess activists in demobilised times. She argues that abeyance structures can also act as sites of resistance, describing three ways they link periods of mobilisation: ensuring the 'survival of activist networks, sustaining a repertoire of goals and tactics, and promoting a collective identity.' (1989:762) From a Mellucian perspective this is the latent pole of collective action. There were lulls in the exterior action of the gay liberation and lesbian feminist movements through the 1970s and 1980s, but it maintained an interior life in its national conferences and its activist organisations and groupings and its social networks. There was always something going on in particular places and times and there were people ready to be mobilised. Abeyance is not a unitary state for a whole movement. The multiplicitous relationships of social movement elements, even their, at times, incommensurability, ensure that its elements have periods of mobilisation and abeyance at different times and in response to different moments in their political, economic, social and cultural environments while exploiting different political resources.

The size of the movement in Sydney in 1978 is open to interpretation yet it is fair to ask how many activists it took to make it. Of course social movements are not objects with an inside and an outside. Their "inside" is the extent to which movement members

recognise each other and the movement's various elements, and how these are embraced in the member's collective identity. The (in)commensurability of the movement's elements may occasion recognition and misrecognition at the same time, for example, someone sees one social movement where another sees two distinct movements – the gay and lesbian movement and the lesbian feminist movement perhaps (it would be fair to say that most of the *78ers* who were conservative or apolitical gay men in 1978 were oblivious to the existence and normativities of the lesbian feminist movement). Some *78ers* described themselves at the periphery of events and the gay and lesbian movement. The accounts of many who were activists had a sense of the movement/s being in the middle of their lives. There is a scale of participation or centrality of the movement, then, between the vicarious experience of a movement's mobilisations and being one of a small number of full-time activists who seize a moment or issue and make things happen (not to diminish the power and personal effects of those vicarious experiences). So, social movements are big, messy, partial and incomplete processes with multiple insides and outsides, and entrances and exits. They are big and small at the same time. The fourteen individuals (who were part of a gay and lesbian movement in Sydney, its core activists numbering only perhaps in the hundreds) who came together to plan and organise the events of the International Gay Freedom Day in 1978, brought five hundred people on to the street in the morning and two thousand in the evening, and several hundred of these latter were willing to refuse police directions and resist arrest. The newly named Gay Solidarity Group grew in number and organised the movement's responses to developments through 1978. It was a significant organising group in the 1980s also mobilising lesbian and gay solidarity with Left and progressive movement struggles. One might say that it was a very small social movement that *looked* bigger from the outside, notwithstanding that the challenge it presented had a wide resonance.

Whatever the size of the movements then, and the number of people who 'moved' them, they were not static populations. People came and went but these movements were able to continue to grow and mobilise new members in their actions, events and processes, and in the social networks in which they were embedded. One of the younger people in *the Gay Liberation Quire* in the 1980s who comes to mind was seven years old when the Gay Liberation Front first formed in 1972. There were always new young people, new community members and new stages in the struggle.

The lens of collective identity reveals the persistence of collective normativities embedded in enduring friendship, kinship and social networks among radical and socialist feminists and Left gay, bisexual and heterosexual activists. For many of the *78ers* surveyed, participation in the movements was life defining in terms of shaping their thinking and personal trajectories, friendships, and where and with whom they lived. It had enduring impacts on political perspective, lifestyles and motivated ongoing activism in the movements and in other fields of action. Kinship, friendship and social networks have supported enduring political normativities. These are not fixed ideas. Social movements in abeyance can retain in some of their elements and in everyday life, ongoing contestation of collective political normativities and critical thinking in changing political, social and cultural environments.

Earlier I have addressed the role of collective identity in making the spaces where sexual confusion or uncertainty, for some, was resolved and sexual politics was contested. Sexuality identity was largely unchanged in twenty years for almost all *78ers*. In 1998, though, some were now using the descriptor "queer" in its then contemporary and critical sense. There were changes in some of the terms they used to identify their sexuality and gender, reflecting changes in the movements, the shifting relationship of the elements of the gay and lesbian and lesbian feminist movements to gay and lesbian communities and concerns of the emerging queer community with gender and sexuality essentialism and demobilisation in the gay and lesbian communities.

The material trajectories of *78ers* were affected by the Whitlam reforms to higher education allowing access to working class and poor young people. Some had benefitted from public sector growth and a new liberal workforce in the administration of community funded programs and associated policy areas. Many moved into "higher" occupational segments, some into the "highest". This mobility did not vary with gender or childhood financial circumstance. By 1998 they were largely a highly educated group (in 2017, I can report anecdotally quite a few professors in its number).

The lens of collective identity focuses on Mardi Gras and reveals that different movement parts have their respective attachments, investments to and concerns with it. In 1998 activists expressed ambivalence about Mardi Gras and their concerns related to its accommodation of the state and conservative social, economic and spatial

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restructuring and neoliberal sexual politics in its governance and operations. They raised concerns about its commodification and commercialisation, about its depoliticisation and disconnection from its actual origins, about how it has been secured and its acritical support of the regulatory power of the state, about how it has become a spectacle for tourists, and about its sexism and racism, poor access to people with disability and its increasing political irrelevance.

Some saw the lesbian and gay movement as foundational to lesbian and gay equality politics. The evidence suggests a much more complex process, given the multiplicity of the movement and that most *78ers* maintained a critical view of these developments – of the incorporation and normalisation of gay and lesbian subjectivities within conservative and neoliberal regimes. The shift then is not in individual actors but in a contest of movement elements that have responded differently to aspects of their political and social environment. Conservative gay men were mobilised by the movement and politicised by the events of 1978, but they were not radicalised by them. Equality politics has found its supporters both in this quarter and among former radicals. As I will show in Chapter Eight, there have been considerable developments in equality politics and neoliberal sexual politics since 1998 that impact on contemporary radical, critical and dissident activists, collective action and organising.

Notes, chapter five

[1] Dykes on Bikes have a traditional role in leading out ahead of the floats and entries in the parade, since 1988 (de Jong 2015b).

[2] *78er* 027

[3] *78er* 088

[4] *78er* 095

[5] *78er* 057

[6] *78er* 104

[7] *78er* 100

[8] *78er* 032

[9] *78er* 025

[10] *78er* 050

[11] *78er* 030

[12] *78er* 075

[13] *78er* 070

[14] *78er* 056

[15] *78er* 039

[16] *78er* 084

[17] *78er* 066

[18] *78er* 080

[19] *78er* 066

[20] *78er* 004

[21] *78er* 071

[22] *78er* 056

[23] *78er* 049

[24] *78er* 068

[25] *78er* 041

[26] *78er* 039

[27] *78er* 045

[28] *78er* 057

[29] *78er* 084

[30] *78er* 025

[31] *78er* 038

[32] *78er* 096

[33] According to the ABS Census of Population and Housing in 2001, in its Inner-west statistical subdivision, 16.1 per cent had an undergraduate degree, 1.7 per cent had a postgraduate certificate or diploma and 4.2 per cent had a higher degree — the national percentages were 9.7, 1.4 and 1.8 respectively.

[34] This was consistent with national figures where, in 2001, women made up 56 per cent of those whose highest level of education was an undergraduate degree, 62 per cent of those with a postgraduate diploma or certificate and 38 per cent of those with a higher degree.

[35] The labour force categories used here relate to the (hierarchical) labour force segments of the Australian Standard Classification of Occupations as detailed in Table 4 notes.

[36] *78er* 029

[37] *78er* 066

[38] *78er* 060

[39] *78er* 074

[40] *78er* 082

[41] *78er* 029

[42] *78er* 077

[43] *78er* 104

[44] *78er* 105

[45] *78er* 074

[46] *78er* 050

[47] *78er* 037

[48] *78er* 023

[49] *78er* 102

[50] *78er* 003

[51] *78er* 050

[52] *78er* 067

[53] *78er* 056

[54] *78er* 088

[55] *78er* 060

[56] *78er* 086

[57] *78er* 050

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[59] *78er* 026

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[70] *78er* 036

[71] *78er* 018

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[73] *78er* 074

[74] *78er* 011

[75] *78er* 108

[76] *78er* 014

[77] *78er* 027

[78] *78er* 020

[79] *78er* 020

[80] *78er* 089

[81] *78er* 004

[82] *78er* 022

[83] *78er* 027

[84] *78er* 006

[85] *78er* 067

[86] *78er* 104

[87] *78er* 078

[88] *78er* 070

[89] *78er* 020

[90] *78er* 006

[91] *78er* 005

[92] *78er* 006

[93] *78er* 043

[94] *78er* 011

[95] *78er* 027

[96] *78er* 059

[97] *78er* 011

[98] *78er* 026

[99] *78er* 075

[100] *78er* 037

[101] *78er* 005

[102] *78er* 087

[103] *78er* 078

[104] *78er* 004

[105] *78er* 080

[106] *78er* 090

[107] *78er* 093

[108] *78er* 106

[109] *78er* 070

[110] *78er* 014

[111] *78er* 062

[112] *78er* 073

[113] *78er* 102

[114] *78er* 074

[115] *78er* 089

[116] Tickets to the party in 1998 were $70 (no concessions). The price of an ecstasy tablet was around $40. The maximum unemployment or sickness benefit for a single adult by comparison was $160 a week.

[117] *78er* 026

[118] *78er* 016

[119] Discrimination on the grounds of homosexuality was actually included in the NSW Anti-discrimination Act the year before, in 1977.

[120] *78er* 057

[121] *78er* 108

[122] *78er* 098

[123] *78er* 087

[124] *78er* 042

[125] *78er* 060

Chapter 6: A queered place: contemporary collective action and its activists

The following three chapters are based on the data from the contemporary research methods outlined in Chapter Two, interviews with activists and participation in their areas of action and milieus.

The fifteen contemporary activists that I focussed on in interviews, and their areas of action are introduced in this chapter. Their communities and the milieus in which they moved and organised are outlined as well. Their personal characteristics and situations are outlined (age, living situation, employment, education). Their diversity in age ensured the expression of historical elements. Their work and educational resources vary sharply between older and younger cohorts, and effect of conservative and neoliberal social and economic restructuring. They think about gender and sexuality in varying and quite different ways and these are described. Their relationship with communities, social networks and their affinities with other collective actors are outlined. There is a connection between the two, their ideations of gender and sexuality and of their collective affinities, particularly in regard to queer sexuality, collectivities and spaces. The habitus of each activist was very different in respect of their historical and political predispositions and motivations to activism, and most of their backgrounds were counternormative in some respect.

The contemporary data contributes to a view of the "apparent" continuity of radical, critical and dissident activism and sexual politics and the disjunctural and reformational moments that constitute it. Contemporary activists' accounts reveal the relationship between collective action and its social embeddedness. Mobilisations may have as much an external focus as an internal one – providing opportunities for movement building and reinforcement of collective identity.

I have observed an increasing awareness, among activists, of neoliberal concepts, sexual politics and strategies that seek to depoliticise the processes of social exclusion, to demobilise resistance, to privatise and domesticate affective and social life, and to normalise and make respectable favoured sexual forms and to excise dissident others (as per Duggan 2003 and Richardson 2004). They are also aware of how these drive the bifurcation of gay and queer spaces. They are also increasingly aware of a neoliberal

spatial politics. There is an account to be made, in the inner-west, similar to Manalansan's observations of the development of elite gay neighbourhoods in New York and other global cities, where neoliberal policies proliferate state intervention, enhance privatisation, limit welfare and alter or create the conditions and physical spaces for unfettered commerce and market forces. The displacement of dissident communities, queers of colour and the poor is (using his terms) a *structural violence* with narratives of *emergence* and *disappearance*. He invokes Duggan's "homonormativity" as a 'chameleon-like ideology' that is also at work in these narratives, with 'freedom and liberation' reimagined as 'privacy, domesticity, and consumption' (Manalansan 2005, p. 142) and a spatial and violent reorganisation that renders homosexuality in its "proper" place. Activists referred to various aspects of these processes.

I begin the introduction of interview participants, with a description of each in terms of their characteristics, material and physical circumstances, and their various ideations of gender, sexuality and community.

6.1 Activists' characteristics, circumstances and ideations of gender, sexuality and community

A spread of age was one of the criteria in drawing the interview sample and participants were aged, in 2011, from 24 to 72 years. Age related information (which is referred to later) is presented in *Figure 7*: their age in 2011, the year they turned sixteen and when they became politically active, in an organising role. Many participants identified their families or communities of origin as significant in their developing predispositions to activism. This is explored later in section 6.2. Some retained close and supportive relationships with family members within their community and milieu and in their everyday lives. The material circumstances of participants varied sharply by age. The younger ones had grown up with the effects of neoliberal social and economic restructuring and reduced opportunities. The older ones had enjoyed the benefits of earlier downwardly redistributive social policy and community and public sector employment. Each characterised their gender and sexuality differently, reflecting their diverse habitus, predispositions and politics. They also had different perspectives and ideations of community and collective affinities. Their social milieus are introduced later in section 6.3.

Figure 7: Interview participants and their ages in 2011 and graphic representation of the year they turned sixteen and periods of their life before and after they became politically active
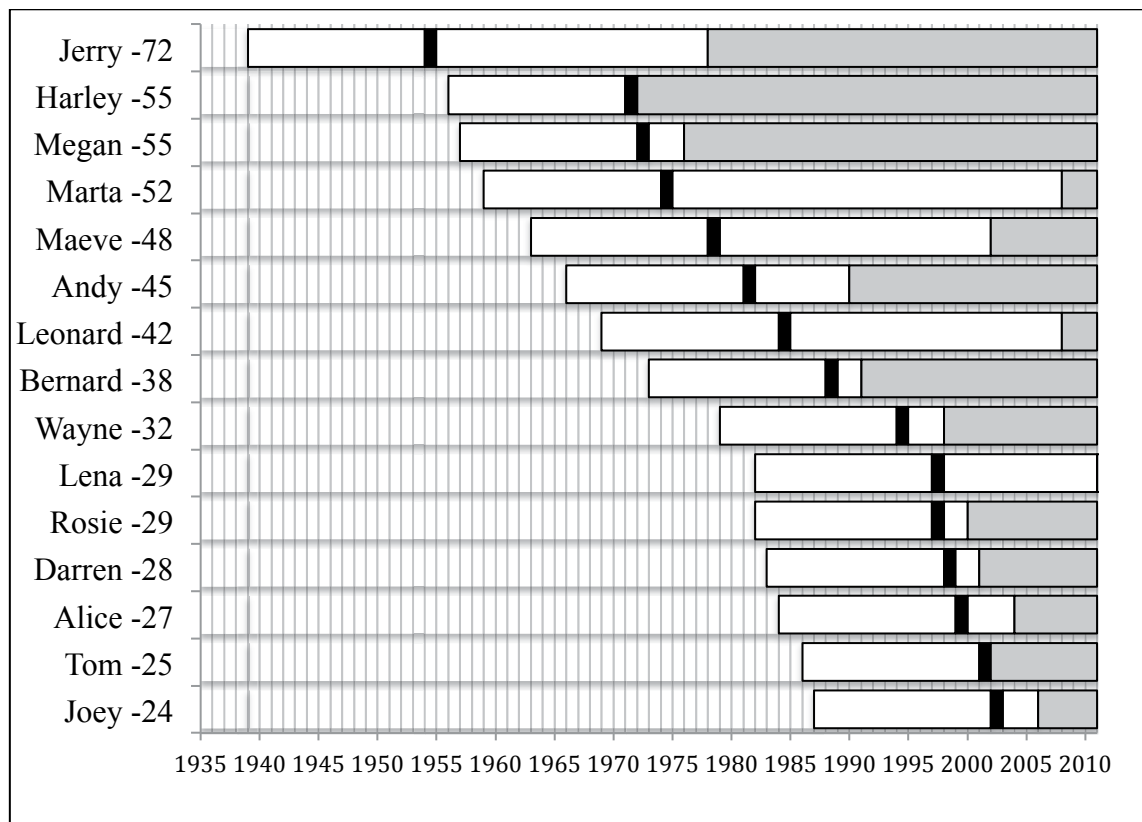
Key:

☐   Before activism

■   Year turned sixteen years

▨   Politically active (in an organising role)

Notes: "Politically active" refers to being in an organising role. When this happened was established in interviews.

I will begin with Marta. In her mid-fifties she has a lifetime career as a nurse and more recently worked as a university-based research assistant in indigenous child health. She also makes a small income from performance work in clubs in western Sydney. She lived with her partner and cared for her mother. She is a lesbian but her lesbianism doesn't define her or say who she is, she asserted, 'it just says who I prefer to sleep with.' She came out in her early thirties, having denied the reality 'there was no support.' She didn't know anyone in the gay scene except for a few co-workers. Her occasional experiences of other women at Ruby's[1] in the 1980s were negative. She 'didn't feel safe'. She experienced bullying, 'cattiness' and being put down. 'I probably wasn't as confident about my sexuality then, as I am now' she said. She is "out" at work

now but that has not gone without difficulties. She had no contact with the inner-city lesbian and gay scene. She was fairly unaware of the queer scene and imagined her performance work would be of little interest there. She is active in overlapping social networks of older lesbians in western Sydney. They participate in each other's events and keep in touch through Facebook and email. She organises regular performances at clubs for her networks.

Megan was also in her mid-fifties and has a degree in adult education and worked in a public sector vocational training organisation. She is also an artist and photographer. She regards herself as a radical feminist lesbian. She is out as a lesbian at work and in the classroom. She thinks 'it's a really important thing for as many of us as possible to be open about our sexuality, because it does encourage people to be more comfortable about stepping forward.' She was living in a small group household. The young lesbians in her family are important to her. The extant gay liberation and lesbian feminist movements members are still part of her community. She is aware of the queer scene and has been to some of its events but doesn't see herself as a part of it. She regarded it as a separatist response. She argued that the invisibility of the 'fringe' (queer) scene reduced its influence in the wider population and that this was not desirable, yet that it is inevitable, that people choose separation in 'smaller closed communities' as a refusal of the "gay scene".

Also in his mid-fifties is Harley who has an undergraduate arts degree and a masters degree that he was doing when we first spoke. He was working in a project management role in a community-based international development agency. He lived in a small group household, with a partner. He described himself as 'a gay man in a sort of gay community'. He uses the term 'official gay community' to refer to its governance groups and politics (a term which I have adopted) and which he sometimes refers to as the 'official gay movement'. He also acknowledges a social connection with the community of the queer Left. Through travel and the internet, his sense of community is international and he has relationships within queer and lesbian and gay communities in Asia, the middle East, Africa and Europe.

Leonard was in his mid-forties. He had accounting qualifications and worked in bookkeeping and accounting roles. He lived alone. He identified himself (very much) as a gay man. He'd 'grown up' with the term, in the 1980s, in what was a largely male-

oriented gay community. In the years leading up to law reform it was a community in a state of mobilisation. Later it was mobilised in a response to HIV/AIDS. His activism around public domain connected sociality and sex is historically within the normativities of that milieu. It positions him and his colleagues at odds now with the "official" gay community. 'At this stage', he said, 'I don't feel connected to anything … I don't identify with the queer groups, the gay groups, with anybody.'

Maeve was in her early fifties. After a ten-year absence from the paid workforce having children, she returned to part-time work at a time when the information technology field was new and without any formal qualifications got a position in the public sector. She was living with her children and their father. Maeve's principal identity is in being a woman. She is a lesbian and she is into kinky sex. Her sexual partners included gay male friends who were more disposed to kinky casual sex. She identified as queer as a lot of the sex she has is queer sex, 'whether it's with transgendered people or intersex people or biologically cis[gendered] people.' While, like many other queers, she rejected the label "bisexual", she has used it as a political identity. She argued that gender is not to be abandoned or disregarded, as in the bisexual argument "I just like people I don't like gender". She argued that whether the person you're having sex with has a gender or not, 'it's still a part of the whole construct that you're having sex with, you just can't discount it completely. And especially with a lot of transsexual people who've spent a helluva lot of time and energy and money to be a certain gender I think it is incredibly rude.' She was active for some years in Sydney Leather Pride – she said that there was 'not a lot of crossover between the guys and the girls'. Maeve saw a drive to normalisation in the gay community and was critical of gentrification and normalisation among middle class lesbians ('the straight lesbian team') and had little involvement in lesbian community politics, or 'big "L" lesbian politics' as she referred to its governance politics.

Bernard was in his late thirties. With a long experience in disability advocacy, he worked in a senior role in a disability organisation. He was living with a partner, when we spoke, and they were planning to have a child. He described himself as queer and coming from the queer scene in the UK he quickly found a connectedness to the alternative queer scene in Sydney, an 'underground' that he said was:

> small but vibrant and had the politics and the people and the things going on …
> that was about arts and about politics and about food and music and taking drugs
> and having a good time and about lots of the things I liked, and like, and was also a
> scene that was queer and broad and inclusive of women which a lot of the gay
> scene in London isn't … and I've always preferred inclusive spaces.

He also saw a 'broader gay scene' around Oxford St 'that really didn't mean anything' to him. He said, 'the larger more visible gay and lesbian public thing really didn't connect to me or me to it.' Now in his early forties, he placed himself on the fringe of what was for him 'a kind of fruits and suits[2] community of white upper middle-class educated men with money that find their very mainstream drag entertaining [and] don't have good politics around gender … or disability or diversity generally.' On the other hand there were times and parts of that community where 'inclusion can be done well and the sharing of space and power and decision making can be done well by some people and some groups.' Issues like law reform and equality forced the issue about who gets to speak and who is listened to and who is invited to the conversation by government.

Andy was in his late forties. He has a degree in urban planning and regional development and an information technology masters and was a researcher and developer. At the time we spoke he was working but his employer was experiencing financial difficulties. He described himself as queer. He does not see himself as part of any lesbian and gay community. He sees the commercial scene 'dying' because of phone sex apps like 'Grinder and Scruff'. He thinks that the "official" communities claimed by governance groups don't exist. The acronym LGBTI is problematic. In practice, he said, most intersex people have no relationship with the 'LGBT' and most transgender people no relationship with the 'LGB'. These are mistaken inclusions that have 'not happened accidentally or without consent or reason in some ways'. Something more fundamental than adding letters has to happen. 'You can't extrapolate from LGB to T', he said, 'without changing how you frame arguments without changing the agenda and there isn't enough of that as always.' The fundamental problem in this approach is to produce a 'misconception' about 'LGBT', he explained, 'it's not about sexuality, it's about people experiencing some kind of disadvantage because of our non-conformance with sexual norms.' He is also clear about what the queer community is, and it is not a collection of identity groupings or letters. It is 'a network of like-minded

people within that larger space who socialise and party and collaborate with each other and sleep with each other too.' He likes that Sydney's queer community 'is diverse in age, gender and ethnic background and it is welcoming.' *Dirty Queer* magazine, in which he is involved, is about building and reflecting that community. He feels that this queer community is not much contested. 'It exists and that's almost enough in itself. It exists, its palpable, it's tangible, you can touch it, you can see it, you can be part of it.' It is not a social movement in his view, 'more of a community … it's more political in some ways and at some times' (others referred to this question, though not explicitly to movement abeyance). He is part of a social movement of intersex activists that he sees as very different.

Darren was in his early thirties. He was doing a degree in journalism. He got a little work writing and received income support. He mentioned a supportive relationship with his family. He was committed to living in large queer group households (and not just out of necessity). He described himself as queer. For him, queer meant being a polyamorist. 'I've long held the position', he said, 'that you can't own another human being. I've also come to the realisation that one person can't possibly give you everything you need, so those two necessitate polyamory for me or at least an open relationship.' He doesn't 'feel a part of a gay and lesbian community', he said, 'should it exist.' He also said after consideration that gender was something that he noticed 'less and less about people.' He is very much a part of the queer community, though he also thinks it is not a social movement. Some formations within it, he said, are explicitly political, some are less so. Some are ageing, 'very heavy on the over thirties' (they are not reaching out to new people). He says that the community 'doesn't feel heavily politicised. If it's political it's just that it's political in nature. Its mere existence is an alternative to the dominant discourse rather than actively talking to people to change the way they think or to rebel.'

Tom was in his late twenties. He said that he had tried university several years after school but he 'felt alienated from everyone', and at that point of time his 'mind wasn't very compatible with that kind of learning.' He has since done a year of an arts degree and a Certificate in Community Services at TAFE. He was receiving income support. He lived in a larger group household and was involved with the care of two older trans friends. Tom was a lesbian at an early age and later, a boy. He is transmale. He was contemplating gender reassignment surgery within the next few years. He has grown up

with a sense of community in radical movement and community settings. He has lived in punk and queer communities in Brisbane and Melbourne. He is active in the queer community in the inner-west and in transgender networks. He is an artist and his art and installations include transgender themes and resistance to neoliberal sexual politics and the excision of dissidents.

Jerry was in his early seventies. He was not doing paid work and received the Age Pension. He had little paid work in recent decades, due to disability. As a mature student he had been awarded a visual arts degree and post-graduate diploma in photography. He lived with a friend. He was old enough to have had a camp disposition (prior to gay liberation). He described himself as queer and homosexual. The extant gay and lesbian movement networks are part of his community, in everyday life, as are the inner-west queer community and the broader countercultural milieu. Networks of artists intersect these and he had a sense of being in an arts community. He very much feels part of a community around the disability movement. One focus of his photographic gaze was the many collective events he attended and the urban spaces these inhabit. He has little to do with the mainstream gay scene or community, and hadn't for a long time.

Rosie is in her early thirties. She has an arts degree and is a musician, an artist and a filmmaker. When I spoke to her she was relying on income support. Rosie described herself as queer and a lesbian. She is a socialist and a feminist. She still has a sense of being in the community of the Left. She had been active in the inner-west queer community in Sydney for many years and organising in its spaces. As a younger activist she confronted demobilisation in groups of older queers and resistance to opening up inner-west queer spaces to younger activist groups in the community and new concerns. She was part of the group that organised the conference Resurgence: Queer Empire Strikes Back in 2009, a major event based in the inner-west that came out of two earlier events in 2005 and 2007. She was also involved in establishing queer community space. She had recently moved to Melbourne and was active in the queer community there. She was involved with international networks of dissident artists and at the time was involved in support for garment workers and their union in Cambodia.

Wayne is in his early thirties. He has an arts degree and he was an artist on low income, getting occasional funded projects and paid commissions and otherwise receiving income support. He was living in a larger household in a warehouse setting. In the past

he had concerns about 'gay' and its homonormative associations: 'the pink dollar and the commodification of sexuality and the blandness of Mardi Gras' and so on. He describes himself though as gay and 'culturally' queer. 'Language is power', he says, 'but it's just a word. You want to get ranty about the word "gay", go to a factory farm and get some perspective.' His work in organising parties and events and deejaying brings him into gay and queer contexts. In gay bars he introduces political elements and non-conventional beats in his dance music that often fall on deaf ears – it's not straight "house" music. 'For all the talk of diversity in the gay community', he exhales, 'fucking hell! What a homogeneous bunch of people.' The parties he organises in the queer community are driven by the 'desire for a tribe and a place to come together.' For Wayne queer is about much more than sex. He doesn't assume anything about other people's sexuality because of the complexity of the sexualities and lifestyles of people in his networks.

Joey was in his early twenties. At the time we spoke he was studying law (which he did on and off) and receiving income support. He was homeless when we first spoke and staying temporarily with a friend. Joey described himself as gay and queer. He is into radical and transgressive drag (not cross-dressing). He performs his gender in clever, thoughtful and critical ways that are intended to reveal gender as a reiterative, performative process in the service of heteronormativity (he cites Judith Butler). While at times he despairs at the state of the 'mainstream gay male scene on Oxford St and Taylor Square', he also finds the queer scene in the inner-west 'often hostile or disapproving' of that scene.

> I like to cross between. I understand the mutual dislike that they have for each
> other and I like to walk along that line because they both offer something different
> and I want it all. It's nice to go where the boys are. I get sick of the queer scene
> sometimes.

He calls it all 'the gay community' – the 'really politically correct queer scene and the mainstream gay scene' – He still sees it as a 'whole interaction'. He says that he doesn't like separatism, which is how he sees the bifurcation of queer and gay spaces. It is a reference to a broader contest, a doxa of identity, community and the relationship with capitalism and the state.

Alice was in her late twenties. She was completing a certificate course in design, receiving some income support and had satisfactory part-time employment doing telephone sales work. She had supportive relationships with family. She lived at the time in a large group household in a warehouse (since shut down by local council). Alice's principal sense of community was in the inner-west countercultural community and the alliance of warehouses and households that constituted it. She doesn't like putting a label on her sexuality but noted that all of her long-term relationships have been with males. 'People are people and if you're attracted to someone you are', she said, and she is attracted to males and females. In her close knit countercultural community she has relationships with many activist queers and less political gays, but she is distant from the mainstream gay scene, which she hears is declining. Queer events away from that scene, she says, are providing an alternative safe gay-oriented space and she is noticing there are stronger connections, a 'merging' between queer and warehouse events and communities.

Lena was in her late twenties. She was, at the time, doing a TAFE certificate in Music Business, the first study since she left school early to work. Otherwise she is receiving income support and washing dishes. She was living in a large group household at the time. She put a lot of effort into her music but 'it's hard to make money as an artist.'[3] Lena said she was mainly heterosexual. 'I've always had boyfriends', she said, 'but I have always had tendencies to be bisexual. Maybe like seventy to thirty, that sort of thing.' Like Alice she is part of the inner-west countercultural community, and she is also distant from the mainstream gay and lesbian community, but moves through the queer community.

There were differences between the younger and older participants in their living situations and material circumstances. Among those participants of working age who were older, most had a degree and ongoing employment in semi-professional roles. Most of the younger ones, born after 1978 (see *Figure 7*), were studying and relying on income support and low paid unskilled work. The differences in their situations in part related to changing opportunities with neoliberal social and economic restructuring, which will be further discussed in the next chapter. Participants thought about their gender and sexuality in diverse ways. In terms of the identifiers they used they were lesbian, gay, women, kinky, transmale, bisexual, heterosexual, queer, queer but not gay and gay but not queer. For the queers there is a connection between their ideations of

gender and sexuality and collective affinities, identities and spaces. There are plenty of queer heterosexuals in the queer community who are active in its political networks. Lesbian feminism, gay liberation, queer and critical theory shaped the thinking of some interview participants. Others were more intuitively dissident and counternormative. Gender and sexuality were essential characteristics for some. For others they were contested, contestable and relative. Some eschewed sexual identity politics while others played around with its possibilities. Queer solidarity was about strategic alliances, shared enemies and collective responses that require some resolution of the discourses of its elements. The apparent bifurcation of queer and gay spaces and their mutual non-recognition, for some queers, was framed culturally as divergence with the "gaystream" (mainstream lesbian and gay) or as a class difference with petit bourgeois lesbians and gay men. It may be framed as a post-neoliberal (re) divergence from gay and lesbian equality politics.

6.2 Predispositions and motivations to activism

Participants reflected on what motivated their level of commitment and activity. Some of the themes in their accounts related to their early family and community environments, formative experiences and political predispositions. Some related to their (short or long) activist histories, personal and collective experience, and the impetus of associated skills and knowledge, that have given them the confidence to contest the state, or a regulatory regime, a collective normativity or a space, and to organise things. *Figure 7* provides a graphic representation of how long activists had been politically active (in an organising role) and how young they started. Most became active before they turned twenty, and some in their thirties or forties. They became active as early as 1972 and some were relatively new to it.

6.2.1 *Early predispositions*

In discussing predispositions and motivations to activism[4], most interview participants mentioned aspects of growing up, family or neighbourhood. Spanning fifty years, their experiences, of course, were very different.

Marta identified the things that have given her confidence as a performer (and a lesbian): a lifetime of work in nursing, a governance role in a sporting association and her family and upbringing (in the 1950s and1960s), not a radical one. Never in contact with the women's movement or with feminism, her strength 'comes through life

experience'. She says that in 'dealing with people … from a very young age, [she] never minced words.' Significant was her 'matriarchal' extended family, with strong, independent women, and being the first-born in her generation. 'The women were actually encouraged to have balls, but at the same time they had to be women,' she said. Her grandmother was a Labor supporter, which she thought 'probably had a lot to do with it.'

Joey's theatrical bent was expressed early in and in response to growing up in the restraints of Sydney's southern suburbs in the 1990s. His teenage look, straight out of Falcon porn videos involved big 1980s hair, a singlet and tiny shorts. Later he braved the streets and public transport in gender-transgressive drag, on the way to or from somewhere interesting. At an early age he was learning what he now does so well – to critically appreciate the sensitivities and yet contest the boundaries and normativities, to play with monstrosity and defy popular strictures. 'There's always something to rebel against', he said, 'I do need that.'

Many talked about characteristics or qualities of their families or places that influenced their political predispositions in radical ways. Darren's parents were activists on the Left. He recalls a childhood interest in political affairs. He said, 'I've been reading the newspapers since I was eight. One of my earliest political memories was watching Paul Keating's concession speech.' He attended demonstrations and had anti-police sentiments and was drawn to activism at university. Life is 'random' he explains – he might just have easily ended up as a commercial pilot.

While Maeve's mother showed little sophistication or interest in politics, her father, while not using the term 'socialist', quietly professed many 'socialistic' principles with her, such as the provision of public housing, free education, proper jobs and training and job security. He was particularly strong on the importance of joining and being active in trade unions. Later he became a fan of street and public art. Maeve's father had a strong influence on her outlook. She has always been an active union member while she worked.

Andy described his parents as 'working class/lower middle class', and himself as 'always on the Left'. Because of liberal reforms in the UK, he was able to get a grant to go to college. He was the first person in his family to finish school. Andy was active in

the gay liberation movement in the UK and in the mid-eighties in HIV/AIDS activism within the student movement. In response to Thatcher and the conservative political climate he moved to Ireland. He became involved in the labour movement and labour cooperatives. He worked in a research cooperative examining 'poverty and social difference'. He also did research on transgender issues. He was not yet diagnosed with conditions of intersex.

Because of changing circumstances in the family Lena missed out on the formal musicianship training that her older siblings had received, which has been a disadvantage in her performance career. On the other hand 'living and being brought up in poverty', she said, 'I don't ... I'm not a victim about it. I actually feel that it's benefited me in many ways socially because it makes me less judgemental and more openhearted and accepting and [has given me] the ability to live on almost nothing.'

Harley was exposed from an early age to the idea of homosexuality through family radical politics and literature. 'I was always homosexual', he said, 'but I knew the word and what it meant really early, just because of the weirdness of my family, what books were available to the home.' Oscar Wilde and Jean Genet were on the bookshelves and also there were medical books. As a child he was 'unhappy' with the broader conservative political and social environment. Doing in 1972 what most others were doing, he tried counterculture and politics. He explained: 'I had to reject the sort of society I was being offered.' He joined the Sydney Gay Liberation Front.

For Bernard, growing up in a family with disability was a key motivation for a lifetime of disability activism. Growing up as a gay man and experiencing anti-homosexual sentiments in rural UK shaped his political predispositions as did witnessing Thatcher's Clause 28 in 1988 as a young and not out gay man (seeing literature removed from his school library) and government attacks on workers, marginal groups and subcultures. As he put it, he saw the class war and knew which side he was on. He got involved in the Socialist Workers Party and the queer activist group Outrage. He lived through what he described as the Conservative Party's homophobic and genocidal response to HIV (he was training as a HIV counsellor and doing peer education about safe sex and about cottaging, law enforcement and police violence). 'All that sort of stuff was the space that I was in,' he said.

While very close, Wayne's family 'was never very political', and he was different. He has an appreciation of the history of homosexual oppression and how it endures into the present. He was active in queer politics and the gay community from an early age. He started making queer zines when he was seventeen years old. At nineteen he was a sexuality officer at a Sydney metropolitan university, of which he said, 'really got [him] involved in the activist side of life, the queer activism side, and for a couple of years [the mid-1990s] the queer activist side of the student activist scene was going off. It was feisty and angry and exciting.'

Leonard talked about where he grew up, the inner-east of Sydney in the l970s and 1980s. He was very aware of the gay male community and its networks of public beats and meeting places. He 'hit the scene' in the mid 1980s when the community was reeling from the effects of AIDS. He 'learnt very quickly that we all had to look after one another', one of the repeating themes in his activism around beats.

> Back then we were getting bashed and beaten and thrown off cliffs and I've been
> doing the beat since I was ten. So for me it was just a normal part of life, it was
> how you meet people, so that was where that motivation came from it was the
> sense of the collective.

Alice, Rosie and Tom (the three youngest interviewees) also talked about the characteristics, politics or values of parents and family members that had influenced them. They also grew up in counternormative neighbourhoods and times. Alice grew up with her family in bible colleges. Her father was a non-orthodox Baptist pastor. At eighteen she rejected organised religion, but had taken 'some moral part of it'. From the age of twelve she lived next door to a Sydney metropolitan university, which offered diverse entertainments and which she was afforded the freedom to enjoy. Family friends were diverse, and influential in her life. 'Strangely, I thought I was in a sheltered environment when I was growing up but I don't think I really was. It was very interesting [with] influences that inform how and where I am now.' Growing up in places with over ten people, she said, has given her a preference for collective living. She lived in a number of large group households and then started to 'curate' warehouse households in the inner-west countercultural scene. Immediate family remains part of Alice's everyday life and she is connected with her queer cousins in other cities, through queer community connections and mutual friends in other event organisers, deejays and performers.

Rosie's motivation has always come from a sense of injustice in the world and 'being able to have some agency over our condition', something she has always referred to as 'a fire in [her] belly.' She went to demonstrations and protests from the age of twelve. She's 'always been a bleeding heart Leftie' which she attributes to 'having grown up in Newtown.' She describes her mother as an 'armchair intellectual' who would 'always talk about current affairs, read the paper and watch the news and talk about that stuff – have an opinion.' Rosie is a critical thinker, articulate and reflexive. 'My value in the world is oriented by the different struggles that I affiliate myself with', she said.

Tom was comfortable about growing up queer, with queer parents and their close friends (not 'out, open at the time') and other queer family members, who he spent much time with. His parents were student radicals. Tom grew up in inner-city Brisbane in the 1990s, and was around a lot of 'hippie dykes'. At age ten he was in a youth circus which had been started by members of a women's circus and 'most of them were queer or really queer-friendly'. As a young lesbian his experiences I expect were uncommon, involving relationships and resources not available to many. As he put it:

> I didn't have to be in the closet. I didn't have negative messages about who I was that made me feel like I couldn't be open about my sexuality. I never really came out, I was a very butch little kid and then I was a teen gay. When I started high school I met my best friend on the first day of high school, he's a trans guy too actually, we're still friends.

At sixteen he got involved in the defence of a parcel of urban bushland. He says it was 'pivotal', meeting a partner and people ('university activists') who are still 'best, best friends'. In direct actions he 'learnt quickly' and became 'really involved'. While already having a strong anti-authoritarian stance, watching people being arrested, 'really cemented' his 'understanding of systematic violence and the state.' The day after finishing school he got in a van with his partner and headed 'for Tasmania to live on blockades' of threatened old growth forests.

All of these activists had found the confidence to be transgressive and assertive somewhere in their lives, about half of them as teenagers. Some were indeed children of the counterculture and their families and communities gave them a different start in life. Radical and progressive backgrounds offered critical thinking to some or a liberal ethical framework. Experiences of socioeconomic disadvantage and poverty offered a

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different perspective. Embattled positions under conservative and neoliberal rule and/or policing regimes had predisposed most of them to action. Their early experiences of difference and associated discrimination or oppression have been important in their motivations, as has, for many, an intense engagement with lesbian and gay and queer communities and social movements.

6.2.2 *Motivating effects of previous personal and collective action and political frameworks.*

In reflecting on their predispositions and motivations to activism most talked about earlier periods of personal and collective action, as far back as the early 1970s for some, of enduring political frameworks and ways of understanding the world, and the skills and experience they have gained. Some had critical or queer frameworks. Some had more intuitive, counternormative perspectives, coming from their lived experiences. Some held dissident anti-normative perspectives that were not informed or motivated consciously by socialist or feminist ideas.

The level of commitment of some activists was significant. Many were, and had been, full-time activists and some in their employment as well. Some took big risks to their personal safety in their activism, such as Leonard in his defence of sex and privacy in public or Darren's queer music sex party raves, and many took risks against their "better interests", such as in negotiating with police for permits or accepting liability for public actions. Given the costs and opportunity costs of long-term activism (which is further discussed in Chapter Eight) and the demotivating and confounding potential of organising (which is addressed in Chapter Seven) the question of motivation is sharpened. In reflecting on these factors as they have impacted on him historically, Wayne spoke of the need to go on.

> Sometimes the possibility for spontaneity and joy comes through … sometimes in your head there's so much anger and hope that if you don't do something with it, you gonna turn it in on yourself and get quite kamikaze and that rarely works out well. Internalising anger leads to powerlessness and depression … So you do it out of some historical necessity, and you get something from doing it. There's possibility and recognising possibilities. There's more than one way to do things.

Many participants were driven by their personal experiences of difference and organising against gender and sexuality oppression and discrimination. Andy was

motivated by intersex issues and 'personal experience, a need', he said. 'The only way of dealing with some feelings about what's being done is to do something about it, probably the same reasons that drive any passionate change drive.'

Tom was working out things about transgender and did this through his activism. He said, 'when I was pretty new to transgender politics, I ran workshops quite a bit about various issues around being transgender and feminism, and transmasculinity.' It was one to way to make contact with other transgender people and transmale social networks.

Maeve was an active member of PRIDE[5] and Mardi Gras at a time when bisexuals were being excluded from community events and she became 'very vocal for the bisexual community', though she was in a long-term lesbian relationship at the time. She 'wasn't what you might call, a card-carrying member of the women's movement' though she was active about women's rights in the workplace and stood up to sexism there. She was committed to gender equality and to affirmative action 'because there was such an imbalance to redress.' She mentioned several women's movement protests that she had attended. She was also happy to challenge feminist orthodoxies and gave several accounts. Maeve had no association with gay liberation or lesbian feminist movements in the 1980s because she was 'too busy in straightland' as she put it. 'I was quite happy to have sex with a woman, I would have thought it was great, but I didn't know any, I didn't know where they were.'

Harley, an old gay liberationist, described himself as a 'revolutionary socialist' with radical sexual politics, and an anti-assimilationist, referring to the tensions in the early movement that I have referred to earlier, between communists arguing an essential homosexuality that required action around difference and an assimilationism that promoted sameness. He thought the purpose of the gay liberation movement was to 'abolish [compulsory] heterosexuality'. He has thought a lot more since about what Marxism means to the social construction of lesbian and gay identity politics and a trans-historical lesbian and gay subjectivity. He talked about the importance of other activists with whom he interacts or whose writing he reads, and the importance of activism being stimulating. 'In general', he said, 'I'm constantly reinforced by the talents and skills of radical people, most of whom are younger, in Sydney and in other countries.'

Another older activist Megan was a radical feminist, since the mid-1970s. She was involved in the lesbian feminist movement, Amazon Acres (women only land at Wauchope) and the Rape Crisis Collective and was a childcare worker at Elsie's Women's Refuge. She was a separatist for a year but couldn't reconcile this with her relationships with some men. Collective conflict in the lesbian feminist group was productive, 'the good thing about it', she said. The Women's Warehouse (from 1979 to 1981) in the Haymarket was an important space in her history. In all the years since, she thinks, 'there's a definite desire not to sell out, not to give in, to compromise too much.' She criticised activists of her generation who've gone to the "middle" or reinvented themselves. Her radical feminist politics still influence her choice of friends and associates. Her motivation to action around radical lesbian feminist and gay liberation history is sharpened in meeting young lesbians who 'don't know anything about it'.

Rosie, also a socialist and a feminist, was interested in politics and protest at an early age, but her first experiences of organising (like some of the older activists) were at university. She was studying nursing and was drawn into active organising when her faculty was shut down.

> I did lots of organising on campus – anti-war, pro-Palestine, a little bit in the women's collective but mostly it was focussed on education around campus issues to do with the administration and the changes to the funding of higher education.

She also held forums on the implications of WorkChoices for women workers. Rosie's critical perspective was Marxist and very considered.

Bernard's milieu in the UK, in the 1980s, was the alternative queer scene, hanging out with queer ravers and people in the traveller community[6]. He mentioned several mobilisations that had a big effect on him. He was at the Battle of the Beanfield (June 1985) a violent event with mass arrests when police blockaded a travellers' convoy that was attempting to set up a festival at Stonehenge. In 1990 he experienced the violence and police brutality of the Poll Tax riots. He said: 'It was that level of resistance and conflict and those things formed me, definitely.' With his queer and disability activist background, he started working, in the early 1990s, with institutionalised people with intellectual disability. He was [unusually, it should be acknowledged] able to connect with people in that group 'like cross-dressers and lesbians and gay men and bisexual, transgender and intersex people'. He did education with them and began to advocate for them. 'There was a rigid structure around them', he said, 'that said you can't cross dress

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and you can't have relationships with men because you're a man, those controls'. Much of his employment since has been in disability advocacy.

Most of the interview participants interacted with, and some had organising roles in, the free music party scene. It is one of the places where the inner-west countercultural and queer communities mingle. Some had long histories with it. Alice was in an Art School band. She met other musicians when playing gigs and through friends or lovers and warehouse living. She started putting on gigs, parties and events and was attracted to its community building and collectively and downwardly redistributive effects. 'So the idea of the free thing really struck a chord with me because I was a struggling student as well and it was like "where can I go that's free?" And all of a sudden I'm putting on the things that are free.' Art and music are important in defining physical social spaces. Wayne talked, with particular reference to Reclaim the Streets, about the love of carnival in the community and the artists and sound people who do a lot of their work for free.

> They do it because they love it and it's quite a unique event and it's a slice of
> Sydney that's been whittled away over the years especially in the inner west as it's
> become more and more gentrified, and people recognise it is important and
> carnival is important and a cathartic release of music and energy, and all your
> friends are in the one place. It's really vital to people.

Wayne and Alice lived with the uncertainty of (illegal) warehouse living but Alice regarded the challenges as motivating, that they make people rise to them. A warehouse may be shut down but others start up. 'All of a sudden we've got this beautiful community and a whole street of people instead of one warehouse so you need a kick in the arse by not so great things happening.' She made a comparison to the (then) recent election of the conservative Abbott government as a catalyst for action and a challenge to complacency. Not many months later she and a small group of others initiated a major protest against that government, March-in-March, a national event.

Wayne's community activism and (re)appropriations of public and community spaces were inspired by earlier activism, 'being involved in protests around May Day in the early 2000s, and being at the desert convergences at Woomera and Baxter immigration detention centres [2002 and 2005 respectively] and the Pine Gap protest [against Australian involvement in the war in Iraq] in 2002.' Included among those organising in the free music, free party scene are those with long experiences of political activism and

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political musicians and deejays. They are part of the continuity of queer activism. Darren has also had connections with activists who had been involved in the free party movement in the 1980s and 1990s and has inspired his house parties and parties in reclaimed urban bushland.

Marta's work in western Sydney, making safe social spaces for older lesbians looks nothing like the actions around cultural spaces in the inner-west. Beyond the apparent differences the concerns are very similar – making spaces for expressions of group identity and normative practices. She is pursuing a liberal objective though this reveals the limits of legal equality and its distribution. It takes work to address the physical and financial barriers and the preferences of older lesbian networks in their "equal" access to group socialisation and entertainment. While Marta was aware of lesbian venues and events in the 1980s in the inner-west, there was nothing where she lived in Western Sydney. She was unaware, at the time, of the earlier gay liberation and lesbian feminist movements. In the 1990s and early 2000s she was introduced to the inner-city gay and lesbian scene through friends and she spent a bit of time in it 'while [they] had the spare money to do that. [She] wouldn't have known anything about the scene, if it hadn't been for them.' The paucity of social opportunities for older lesbians in Western Sydney is one of the motivations for her performance and event work. Marta is motivated by the improvement she has experienced in her quality of life from greater social connection and better reading of audiences. Her 'extremely unusual voice', in the contralto range and her confidence with it adds to her enjoyment. Her "channelling" of Elvis works on many levels. She enjoys being able to provide a space for people (including her large lesbian following) to be together. 'It gives [her] a space as well and it's a safe place.'

Some activists did not participate in the lesbian and gay scene. Leonard had rejected it, arguing that public spaces offer people a place to meet without the need for the (expensive and controlled) gay commercial scene. Leonard described himself as an 'accidental activist', he 'kind of fell into it.' His work in defence of beats and public sex 'came out of a need to support a group of vulnerable people.' The suffering of friends is the main motivation offered and there is an explicit rejection of any political motivation: 'What motivates my activism, it's my mates ... my mates are hurting and the community is hurting and it has nothing to do with I want to be a political person I don't want to be part of the crowd [the queer community] or a socialist.' Unlike most of the people I

spoke to he does not see himself as any kind of radical, indeed he is defending traditional interests of gay men in extramural sex.

Lena said that 'feminism has had no influence on [her] life'. She acknowledged women's oppression, but feminism was something to which she had not been exposed. 'I'm all about standing up for myself as a human being and not myself as a female.' She explained that she lives 'in a bubble', one that she spent 'a lot of time trying to read books to help' her get out of. While she was 'involved in broader community and activities' this 'bubble' was a space of greater self-determination, separate from 'politics and what's happening in what people call the real world.' She didn't 'really give a shit about that stuff', as she put it. 'What I care about is people's hearts, their emotional states, I guess.' Her 'bubble' is a social space full of difference and possibility 'and kindness and love and art and music and creativity and no politics as such.' Politics for Lena is about governance and conflict, even though there were dimensions to her performance work and event organising I regarded as political.

Joey straddled queer and gay spaces. His concern for the death of the gay scene in commercial venues around Darlinghurst motivates his burlesque revival – doing performance nights in gay venues is an attempt to encourage people to come out. 'I think a lot of people just stay at home now' he said, 'rather than go out to these awful venues, it's like a lot of people have stopped going out or they say they're not into the scene'. He explained that the content of his work draws at the personal level from contemporary events, rather than the past, though he identified past influences such as feminist studies at university (he talked about Gayle Rubin and Susan Stryker specifically) and being inspired watching others perform and following them on Facebook (older drag queens). 'That's definitely encouraged me a lot' he said, 'because they were just able to be expressive and have a lot of fun in the same city as me, and I think it could be that much fun now if we could learn from it and take it to the next level.' A broader concern about the impact of lock-out laws saw the first incursion of Reclaim the Streets into the Darlinghurst area in 2015, its first outing from Sydney's inner-west.

One of the themes emerging from discussions was the empowering effect of learning to resist authority and the confidence this brought to activism. Indeed, as will be discussed in Chapter Seven, some were very skilful in managing police around permits for events,

and managing relationships with police commanders while they escalated their actions (for example, getting permission for a protest event in a park, and then occupying the adjoining road). Some had developed a lot of confidence in dealings with police and demonstrated very assertive and uncompromising relationships with them while appreciating the responsibilities of organising such events. Some activists were very confident in their organisation of illegal events (zaps, street parties, raves) and in dealing with police and council officials. Leonard, while recognising the dangers to himself, is 'prepared to get into serious trouble'. He was empowered by his early interactions with police in his beat activism. He spoke of an incident where he challenged three police officers in a park at night about their activities. He was 'created' by it. 'That incident was the night when all of my fears just went out the window', he said. 'It was the first time I'd ever stood up against that kind of thing on my own.'

Another theme was around activists' motivations to physical mobilisations and events. The first street protest that Maeve joined was organised by Electronic Frontiers, about proposed internet censorship and filtering on internet service providers. 'A street march of nerds', she said, who didn't know what they were doing and argued amongst themselves about the technical details. Not many years later she was involved in organising events herself. She talked about the buzz of collective action in public space, of snowballing mobilisations through social networks and the opportunities they provide for pleasure, sociality and motivation.

> I like it if I go to a march or something like that there are people there that I know. I can be with them, I can feel part of the group… It's not so good when you don't get media coverage, but the thing is there's fifteen thousand people there and each of those people has a network of thirty or forty friends.

Confidence in dealing with authority extended to the workplace as well. When Maeve returned to work after having children she was vocal about industrial relations and organisational concerns within the workplace, while maintaining open and candid relationships with management.

Another skill that Rosie referred to is a kind of political wisdom from experience that has helped her to deal with political conflict in organising. She reflected on her political development. When she was young she 'always had a bit of a bleeding heart' but she wasn't as informed as she could be. 'There have been times that I reflect back now and

feel a bit embarrassed about how vigilant I was, morally vigilant and really black and white,' she said, 'but I think it's just a stage you go through in some ways, in establishing your political identity.' She feels that her politics are more generous now. She illustrated: 'like, I can see where your political development is at and where you're coming from and what kind of conversations you're yet to have and different ideas that you're yet to encounter through your organising.'

The continuity of critical, radical and dissident politics over four decades involves disappearing, changing and emergent forms of criticism and resistance, and responses to changing forms of domination. New kinds of collective anti-neoliberal action have "new" historical and contemporary elements. Some of the activists I spoke to were Marxists, feminists and revolutionaries. Some had a deconstructive ability and queer theoretical reach. Some were knowing and experienced radicals or dissidents who had their own frameworks, based on collective resistance to capitalism, conservatism, neoliberal restructuring and moral discourses, heteronormative gender and homonormativity, racism and colonialism, or their everyday lives. Some had been exposed to concepts in the context of higher education, in the activist/academic literature or social media. Some were relatively new to organising and these ways of thinking about domination and resistance. Activists learned a lot from their collective activism over (some or) many years, in organising mobilisations or events and in dealing with police and authorities. Their activism had put them in touch with earlier activists and the historical elements of their milieu or project. These skills, knowledge and experience, the facility and knowingness these offer, are part of their ongoing development and motivations.

6.3 Activists' social contexts

The fifteen activists that I selected, moved in and described six distinct social milieus (they intersected as we will see, with others). They are introduced below: the queer community and the gay and lesbian communities in Sydney's inner-west, surviving networks of activists of the lesbian and gay and lesbian feminist movements, a large countercultural milieu in Sydney's inner-west, a social network of older lesbians in central and western Sydney and international milieus (social networks associated with extranational activism). Some moved in multiple social milieus (see *Table 10*) and this and their collaborative relationships in local milieus are represented in a sociogram in

Figure 11: Interview participants, their milieu and collaborative relationships (in 2011)

Inner-west queer community

Darren

Tom — Rosie

Andy

Joey

Megan

Harley

Maeve

Wayne

A lesbian and/or gay community

Hector

Leonard

Jerry

Alice

Marta

Inner-west countercultural community

Lena
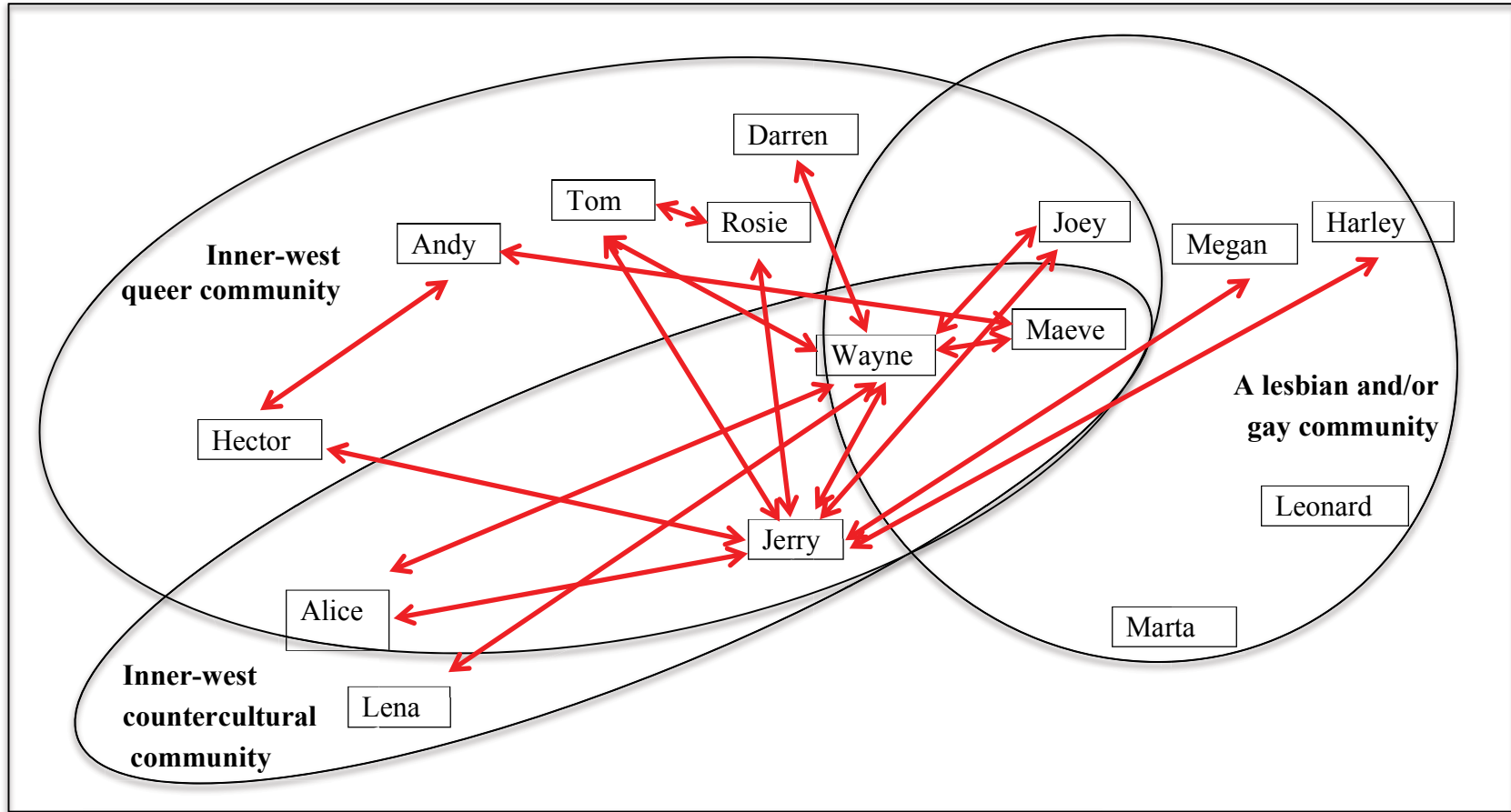
Activists' communities or milieu   Activists working together on projects

Notes: Activists' milieus were identified in interviews. Collaborations were identified in interviews and participation.

Figure 11. The relationships they depicted, involved working together on campaigns or projects. Otherwise most of the inner-west participants were aware of each other and some were friends. Each of them had extensive collaborative relationships and networks. The sociogram shows graphically how within the sample of fifteen, these relationships overlapped more around some activists and these also moved in multiple milieus. It's important to note that a different selection of individuals may have produced differently configured relationships and contexts.

The *inner-west queer community* has been identifiable at least since the late 1980s and early 1990s. It takes a while to appreciate its embeddedness in the everyday and all of its parts and networks. The Red Rattler in an industrial area of Marrickville (see map) is a significant community space for social, political and community action, celebration and entertainment. Collective households in warehouses and large houses provide further spaces to these ends, as do the streets and parks with regular collective invasions for unsanctioned social and political activity. There are commercial venues that add to queer space, several queer cafes and some of the hotels. The regular parties of the queer calendar, such as Bad Dog and Kookie, are very friendly community affairs that add to its definition and continuity. Some activists have commented on its gender diversity (women, men, transwomen and transmen and queer heterosexuals) and intermingling compared with queer communities in comparable cities. It tends to an inclusive practice and counter-racist normativities. Within its overlapping social networks is a strong activist tendency and networks. Several interview participants have talked about how it is more or less political at different times. It has no overarching organisations but it has many collectivities. Its overlapping political networks have many centres. Several people described them as 'teams' or 'crews' around various core activists or groups of activists, who organise and give leadership. One called them 'fan clubs'.

The existence of *inner-west gay and lesbian communities* was contested by some queer activists but not by those who saw themselves as a part of one. In the 1990s people described lesbian and gay communities (plural). Ambivalence to and fragmentation of the gay (male) community has been observed since the 1980s (see Bernard et al. 2008 for survey comments on this theme). The lesbian and gay population is large in the inner-west. While there is no reliable data about sexual identity and prevalence, ABS analysis of Census data[7] shows that Sydney and Marrickville Local Government Areas have the highest percentage of same-sex couples in the country (at 11.3 and 7.4 per cent

respectively) compared to the state and national average (of 1.1 and 0.7 per cent respectively). The percentage of those with lesbian, gay and queer identities is likely to be considerably higher. But as one activist's artwork reminds us 'a shopping centre is a poor excuse for a community'. The ideations of "gay community" for interview participants were different, even incommensurable (hence my use of the term "ideation") as will be further discussed. "Community" evokes notions of caring for each other, sharing resources and abilities and meeting in its public places. So, there was a gay community for some and not others. In the inner-west there is a visible lesbian and gay social scene (distinct from the queer one), the 'public' of queer's 'counterpublic' (using Werner's terms). The governance groups of the "gay community" also claim a constituency here, an LGBT, and sometimes LGBTI community which one interview participant referred to as 'the official gay community', a term which I have adopted. As we will see these additions of letters representing incommensurable things are inclusive gestures, but empty ones. The focus on formulating collections of "identity groups" fails to recognise that what is at issue is gender and sexual oppression and resisting heteronormative regimes and sex binaries and having a collective response, as several participants argued.

In Chapter Five I described the enduring social networks of *78ers*, members of *the Gay Liberation Quire* and other early activists. Reduced as they are in number, there remain *extant gay liberation and lesbian feminist movement networks*. Some are involved in the range of contemporary activism. The *78ers* have had a continuing presence and status within the "official" gay and lesbian community, particularly in relation to Mardi Gras. There have been intense contestations recently in social media around "the facts" of events, the "precipitating" roles of individuals, even whose idea it was, all of which had been thoroughly contested in 1998. At the same time there has been a push from some radical *78ers* to organise again, to protect the name of the *78ers* from commodification and gay conservatives, to be vigilant to historicism and depoliticisation of history and to counter its "gaystreaming" through celebrity culture.

With empirical connections to radical arts and music collective households in the 1990s, the *inner-west countercultural community*, has in its networks a formal alliance of people living in collective settings, in households, artist studios and warehouses, some with larger spaces for parties, events and performances and the business of collective life. It is a predominantly heterosexual milieu, but not heteronormative in the usual way

(one activist noted that the division of tasks is not gender segmented). Many of the queer activists I talked to felt very comfortable in this milieu, found it inclusive and in some ways radical and dissident. There is a lot of lending/borrowing (equipment, resources, vehicles etc.), collaborative campaigns and projects, mutual support and help. Their private internet-based social network facilitates information exchange, communication and mutual defence (against opportunists and thieves, or council compliance campaigns, bad real estate practices and so). Warehouse living also comes with hardships. There are limitations on organising, particularly the difficulties of remaining under police and council radars and having a public political profile.

Western Sydney is a large and populous area. There are not a lot of social spaces for older lesbians to get together. Through my support of an older family member, I was introduced to a very local *social network of older lesbians* (in central western Sydney) and a broader one in the west with which it interacted, and Marta who organises events and music performances in clubs that bring them together. While most of those involved had no connection with radical sexual politics (in the past or the present), I was reminded at one of these events, as I looked around the venue, of socialist feminist parties in the late 1970s, in only one regard – there were five men and ninety women and most of the latter were lesbians. Some were younger but most were over sixty, some in their nineties. While there are gay, lesbian and queer social groups and events in Western Sydney, many in this group had problems of access (physically and financially) and around inclusion.

Some activists, as will be detailed below, are involved in work that puts them in international relationships and *extranational milieus*. Social movements, political movements and autonomy struggles are the spaces that they move in, as well as virtual social spaces in internet communication and social media.

6.4 Activists' areas of action

Activists' principal areas of action are introduced here. They identified nineteen of these. *Table 10* illustrates their various and multiple involvements in these, in an organising or activist role. Most inner-west activists attended each others events and actions.

Table 10: Interview participants and their principal spaces and areas of action

Activists' principal spaces and areas of action	Darren	Andy	Lena	Leonard	Wayne	Harley	Bernard	Joey	Megan	Alice	Marta	Maeve	Rosie	Tom	Jerry
Social spaces/milieu															
Inner-west queer community	●	●			●		●	●				●	●	●	●
Inner-west LGB communities				●	●	●		●	●			●			●
Extant early gay liberation networks						●			●						●
Counternormative milieu (inner west)	●		●		●			●		●		●			●
Western Sydney LGB communities											●				
Extranational movements						●							●		
Types/locations of action															
Anti-government action and protest					●		●			●		●			
Opposition to police violence	●	●		●		●	●					●			
Queer student activism	●														
Community action and public space	●		●		●					●		●			●
Free music/party movement	●		●		●					●		●			●
Art, music and performance				●		●		●		●	●	●	●		●
Housing and queer collective living	●														
Queer youth activism													●		
Sex worker activism													●		
Disability movement							●								●
Transgender activism													●		
Intersex movement			●												
Gay Lib & lesbian feminist history						●			●						
Public-connected sociality and sex	●			●											
Critical global sexual politics						●							●		
International solidarity movements						●							●		
Left political parties and groups						●			●				●		
Trade unions and labour movement	●											●	●		
Law and legislative processes			●				●								

Alice, Maeve, Bernard and Wayne had a principle role in organising *anti-government action and protest*, mobilising against the federal government. March-in-March (2014)

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was one, starting as an idea within the warehouse alliance that took shape in those spaces and became a mass nationwide protest against the conservative Abbot government and its divisive conservative and neoliberal policies. Almost all interview participants were active against Federal government policies and actions relating to refugees and asylum seekers, and they were organising protests, support for refugees, community discussions and so on. Others, Darren and Jerry, were also involved in their campaigns against Baird's conservative NSW government, mobilising a strong and creative community opposition to its Westconnex motorway development and more recently to the alcohol "lock-out" laws in Darlinghurst, Kings Cross and the city and their immediate effects on those communities and effects on the inner-west. Reclaim the Streets was a vehicle for some of this.

Activists mobilised *opposition to police violence*. The bashings of people by police in various incidents at the 2013 Mardi Gras brought a rapid response from queers, who had a thousand people on the streets two days later. The event revealed two different community responses according to queer activists. The governance groups of the lesbian and gay community quickly sought to contain the incident, to defuse community opposition to police and to protect their collaborative relationships with them. The queers aimed to discredit the police and dramatise their repressive role.

The restructuring of higher education was affecting increasingly "time poor" students who have had, in recent tradition, a role in political dissent. Darren was involved in *queer student politics*. He was active in his campus queer group as well as the Cross-Campus Queer Network of NSW, a space, he says, where feminist orthodoxies are still in play. 'These days it's all about privilege. We no longer talk about the patriarchy. It's the kyriarchy[8]. It brings in class and race.'

Darren, Lena, Wayne, Alice, Maeve and Jerry were involved (variously) in organising *community action around the (re)appropriation of public spaces*. The promotion of cultural diversity and social cohesion was one focus. Making spaces for counternormative culture and celebration was another. The resistance to social control, alienation of spaces, gentrification and development were among their concerns. In the prologue, I have described one such mobilisation, Reclaim the Streets, a regular event over the last decade in the inner-west, the varying themes addressing immediate concerns. There are pop-up, unauthorised, portable street parties; warehouse district

street parties and arts festivals; illegal music and sex party raves in secret (public) locations (such as abandoned industrial sites and urban bushland). Music, sound and visual arts are, as elsewhere, critical in defining these temporarily autonomous spaces and their (counter) normativities, and deejays and artists have an organising role in this. The same participants had connections to the *free party movement,* which has an international history going back to the 1990s, and international networks of deejays and organisers. In the countercultural spaces of the inner-west there are local events like Strangelove (freely given performances in unalienated venues) and plenty of free warehouse DIY parties (some regular events, like Déjà, have been going for years). Another group, Space Trash, provided a forum for film and video makers. The philosophy is downwardly redistributive (free events), a community-based alternative to privatised entertainment and venues. Marta was, like some of the inner-west activists, making spaces for collective celebration for her networks of older lesbians. Doing events in public places was not feasible in Western Sydney.

> To hire a hall these days to have a dance, you've got to put down a five hundred dollar deposit, you've got to be out of there by midnight, you've got to have liability insurance … I would love nothing better than to find somewhere to put on a dance, like they used to have … at Parramatta Golf Club [the monthly Dolphins Dance].

She negotiated venues in (membership and community-based) clubs for her shows and her cohort and fan base mainly of older lesbians. In common with inner-urban activists she experienced a neoliberal imperative towards private venues that legitimise and regulate behaviour.

Most of the interview participants made *art, music or performance work.* The themes of their activism percolated through their zines, videos, images, screen-prints, photos, deejay set lists, printed t-shirts, placards, posters, installations, songs, music or the characters they invented and explored on stage. One example was an event in the Sydney Fringe Festival in 2013, days after the election of the Abbott government. A walking tour of Newtown and surrounds organised by activists and billed as 'a charming guide through the downfall of society itself', equipped participants with funny hats and high visibility vests with '2013 when we were stupid' printed on the back[9]. Cultural gestures may not alone solve problems of governance but they operate to create collective recognition among participants and to transmit this to others, particularly at a

time of great sadness such as this. They are part of the latent pole of visible collective action.

In the inner-city of one of the most expensive cities in the world, particularly for students and young people, Darren and his group have pursued a particular interest in *secure housing and queer collective living*, establishing an incorporated group to pursue their interests. It is a response to the difficulties of poverty and living in gentrifying neighbourhoods with little affordable housing. The group does a lot of social political activity in it fundraising as well as free events (group outings, queer house parties and bush raves). Some activists were involved in *queer youth activism*, around issues of queer and gender questioning young people. Several had worked in queer youth homelessness services and programs promoting participation and wellbeing. Tom was involved in organising an annual "camp out" for young queer and gender-questioning people, and providing for their support and care.

Some participants were active in movements that addressed constituencies inside and outside of the queer community and that overlapped around them. Tom was involved in *sex worker activism* and Scarlet Alliance, which is the national peak body for sex workers. While being a diverse group, some sex worker activists move through the queer community and the discussions about and proscription of whorephobia in some settings and normativities is in part due to them. *Queer disability activism* has had a major effect on the disability movement and its governance groups and less of an impact on the lesbian and gay and queer communities. Bernard and Jerry are long-time queer disability activists. Tom was involved in *transgender activism*. The Transgender Lobby Coalition of the 1990s that Jesse Hooley (2003) describes was very small, with eight members, and Left and post-modern orientations[10]. Some of these are still active[11]. Transgender social networks in the inner-west of Sydney are larger now and more diverse in sex and gender. There is plenty of interaction between trans and gender-questioning activists and social networks within the queer community and its activist networks. "Transphobia" is more or less proscribed in queer spaces and normativities. The broader national movement according to Tom was politically diverse (including radical and more conservative elements). The *intersex movement* is small and relatively new. One of its aims is to stop involuntary surgical and other gender 'corrective' treatments on babies and children that have been shown to cause long-term damage to physical and mental health. Intersex people have diverse identifications, sexually

(mostly heterosexual). There is a small membership-based organisation, an autonomous group affiliated internationally – Organisation Intersex International Australia. One of the problems for Andy is the misrecognition of intersex as some kind of sexual identity (which will be further discussed in Chapter Seven). It is the implied transgression of biological sex binaries that gives intersex and other struggles around gender and sexuality their similar ground.

Jerry, Harley and Megan were or had been involved in *radical gay and lesbian and lesbian feminist movement history*. Among their concerns were the loss of that history, its sharing with younger people and those new to radical queer politics, and in particular its appropriation and depoliticisation – such as the tendency of Mardi Gras to ignore gay and lesbian activism before 1978, to get the details wrong, to focus on celebrity former activists and to gloss over the pain and violence associated with resistance. They were also *78ers*.

A small network of gay male activists with contacts in regional NSW is engaged in a rear-guard action against a normalising, privatising and domesticating push, in the *defence of public domain connected sociality and sex*. Leonard is one of them. Two aspects of their engagement are with policing and police behaviour at beats and with political programs (involving the collaboration of lesbian and gay community organisations) to eliminate beats through environmental design. They defy police in tracking over-zealous policing and the activities of poofter-bashers, and gather the information that the men using beats are reluctant to make public. Their principle objective is the care and protection of the latter. They confront the rendering of what was once an important gay male collective counternormativity (of extending the envelope of public sexual expression and privacy in public) as dissident sexuality.

Through travel and the internet Harley has been able to participate in social movements and gain insights into *critical global sexual politics* that have challenged his assumptions about sexuality in various countries. The internet is affecting sexual identity and sub-identities. Contemporary gay and queer identities are strong in countries where it is not expected. Palestinian queers, for example, oppose the pink-washing of Israel as a modern liberal nation. There were international aspects to the work of many activists I spoke to, for example, through international organisations (like Organisation Intersex International, or Disabled People's International), through

international social networks (such as those of queer deejays) and social media networks. Rosie and Harley were engaged in substantial *international solidarity movement* work in Australia and elsewhere (personal support for queer activists in Palestine and South Africa, and practical and material campaign support for Cambodian garment workers). They are contributing to the development of social movements in various countries, as Harley put it, that can 'rebel against imperialism', poor government and economies.

A few of the activists I spoke to were or had been involved in *political parties and organisations of the Left*, including the (Left tendency in the) Greens, the Socialist Alternative, the Socialist Alliance and some were associated with anarchist groupings. Rosie said her involvement in the Socialist Alliance was very important to her political development and networks. Harley, Megan and Jerry were members of the Greens but were critical of their policies and not active in their branches and placed themselves to its Left. For Harley the contemporary socialist organisations bore little resemblance to their antecedents (problems of reductionism, identity politics and the acritical promotion of liberal concepts are explored in Chapter Seven). Some activists (with radical orientations) had come into contact with socialist and anarchist groupings in their organising. Their (sometimes negative) interactions with these, their conflicts around strategy and their concerns about a drive to gain constituency in autonomous social movements did not dispose them favourably to collaboration. Andy, Maeve, Harley and Rosie mentioned their past and contemporary activism in *trade unions and the labour movement*. They had done research, ran union campaigns, were workplace delegates or were active in workers' cooperatives, and a few who were in ongoing employment (older participants) were still active in their unions.

Working in rights frameworks and using *legal instruments and legislative processes* is a feature of several of the abovementioned areas of action. Activists maintain their (variously) critical view of the state and, at the same time, engage with it in these processes in strategic ways. Bernard and Andy used these approaches, as well as others, to further the rights of queers with disability and of people with conditions of intersex. It's important, as Andy said, [referring to a 2013 Senate enquiry into the forced sterilisation of people with disability] for people to be recognised within the law, and for intersex people it 'will have major implications over time' in relative health and well-being outcomes. Bernard's activism around improving access to sex workers for

people with disability, radical and contentious at times, was made possible, he explained, explicitly because of liberalism in Australia. Disability discrimination legislation opened up a space for activists to argue, amongst all the other rights and access issues, for the sexual freedoms of people with disability. More recently I would add to these activists those who have used an implied right in the law to protest, as far as police authority is concerned, which has been under recent sustained attack from the Baird government.

These are the milieu in which activists moved and the areas in which they, individually or with other interview participants, were engaged. We will visit them again in the next chapter as I examine activists' collective engagements and action and some of the issues they confronted in their organising.

6.5 Conclusion and methodological reflections

This chapter introduced fifteen contemporary activists and their personal characteristics and located them in a taxonomy of their (sometimes intersecting) social milieus and fields of action. Activists described their (often unusual) habituses and their motivations and predispositions to collective action. There were clear effects of changing social and economic policy over time (as with the *78ers*) with marked differences in the material circumstances and living situations of younger and older participants. Among those participants of working age who were older, most had a degree and ongoing employment in semi-professional roles, most in community or public sectors. Most of the younger ones, born after 1978, were studying and or unemployed and relying on income support and low paid unskilled work, and had been subject to the effects of neoliberal and conservative economic policies and the growing social inequality since 1980, referred to by Pusey (2010, p.128).

Most participants had benefited from family and community environments that encouraged and supported their sexual and gender differences and radical aspirations. Many had long histories of organising and collective action. They had learnt a lot and become more confident in organising mobilisations or events and in dealing with police and authorities. Their activism had put them in touch with earlier activists and the historical elements of their milieu or project. These skills, knowledge and experience, the facility and knowingness these offer, are part of their ongoing development and

motivations. Collective dispositions were incorporated into personal habitus over time (after Bourdieu 1977, pp. 78-9).

The interview cohort was diverse. The age range of participants ensured the expression of different historical and contemporary elements in contemporary action (from gay liberation and lesbian feminism, critical politics or dissidence, and queer theory to post-neoliberalisms) within the multiplicity of collective action (following Melucci 1995, pp. 53-4). The inclusion of topics relating to personal and collective identity revealed participants' politics, collective affinities, social networks, their ideations of gender, sexuality and community and their various relationships with the labour force and the state (historically and in the present). Following Green's critique and 'post-queer methodology', the methods connect participants to '"the social" and … broader structural effects' (2002, p. 523) and derive terms like queer and gay 'empirically' (2002, p. 532) and use them accurately and as participants variously inflect them in personal and collective identity. Interview participants identified their gender and sexuality in various and sometimes multiple ways (including gay, lesbian, bisexual, heterosexual, and transgender). Queer identity was part of being connected to queer collectivities and spaces, a queer collective identity. For the queers I interviewed a queer identity was not a sexual identity. They said they were gay or lesbian or bisexual or heterosexual or transgender too. It was a collective identity delimited to a queer community and its groups, parts and networks.

Notes, chapter six

[1] Ruby Red was a lesbian nightclub in Crown St. Darlinghurst.

[2] 'Fruits in suits' is the name of the social network of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Business Association.

[3] Music technology is accessible and makes recording easier and cheaper and in her milieu there is an economy of lending and borrowing such equipment but she makes very little money from music and performance. She referred to small demand for CDs because of illegal copying and downloading.

[4] Comments came from discussion of participants' motivations to collective action, and not from a systematic collection of life histories.

[5] The Sydney PRIDE Steering committee was established at a public meeting in 1989. The PRIDE Sydney Lesbian and Gay Community Centre in 26 Hutchinson St., Surry Hills opened in June 1995, closing after financial losses in 2007. It continued to organise PRIDE festivals and parties (drawn from *Pride History Group: Chronology, a chronology of lesbian and gay communities, movements and venues in Sydney*, 2015)

[6] He described this community of Irish and Romany-Gypsy people, countercultural protestors and alternative lifestylists, living in their vehicles and doing the rounds of protests and festivals. They were not all queer friendly, he stressed, but there were queer travellers.

[7] Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012, *Same Sex Couple Families, Reflecting a Nation: Stories from the 2011 Census, 2012-2013.*

[8] The term was coined by Fiorenza (2001).

[9] There is a photo and promotion of the walking tour 'When we were idiots', at <https://www.facebook.com/SydneyFringeFestival/photos/a.117636564915368.18543.112708685408156/652499224762430/?type=3&theater>

[10] Yet it achieved amendments to the Anti-discrimination Act making, discrimination against and vilification of transgender people unlawful in NSW.

[11] Resident and long time activist Norrie mAy Welby, through a High Court ruling in April 2014, was granted the right to a 'non-specific' gender.

Chapter 7: Organising: collective action, identity and normativities under conservative and neoliberal rule

This chapter draws on comments that interview participants (and others) made relating to their organising, their mobilisations and collective actions, and to collective elements and groupings, introduced in the last chapter, and their normativities. The social, political and economic environment impacts on activists' capacity and resources. It presents new challenges and restraints in their organising. These are presented in the first section. In the second, activists speak about issues in their various activist pursuits and collectivities and the normativities of the groups of which they were part. As was illustrated in *Table 10*, activists had interests in multiple fields of action. In the third section activists speak about their organising in movements or networks that intersect with gay and lesbian or queer communities or networks.

7.1 Effects of the social, political and economic environment on activism

In Chapter Three I described the benefits that many *78ers* had from the effects of the Whitlam government of free university education, expanded public sector employment and direct funding of community programs. In Chapter Five I showed how in 1998 for many their various employment trajectories remained in the public and community sectors. Fourteen years later the older interview participants were, or had been, in public or community sector jobs, several of these threatened by defunding, privatisation or contested funding. The youngest activists have not experienced anything like the kind of downwardly-redistributive government policy that the older activists have.

7.1.1   Neoliberal economic and social restructuring and activists' organising

Some collective action was in response to conservative governments and neoliberal economic and social policy. One of these was the national anti-Abbot government, March-in-March protest in 2014. It was a surprise to the establishment and its origins unclear. Jenna Price captured this in *The Age* on February 4, 2014, ruling out the political parties and unions and the Left as being responsible for it. It was an authentic grass roots phenomenon she concluded. Few were aware where it was actually coming from. Because it was organised through social media it happened differently in different places and because of different people. In mid-March 2014, and after some five months of organisation, around 100,000 people joined protests around the country against the Abbot government and its policies, among them the treatment of those seeking refuge or

asylum (and its deployment in politics and propaganda), the neoliberal restructuring and privatisation of the higher education sector, the privatisation of public assets and Abbot's climate-change scepticism. In Sydney there were 15,000 people, a large number from the inner-west countercultural milieu and queer community. Almost all of the activists I interviewed were there somewhere.

It started with three people who wanted to take the radical social media conversations to the next level. The idea went around the Marrickville Warehouse Alliance, Alice said. 'So about ten of us … sat down and brainstormed who we could get to speak … run the sound … get the trucks … design the flyers … do the social media and absolutely everything and delegated things.'

Communicating with others in the months leading up to the event, she discovered that 'it's not just the small community you're in that's having a problem with what's going on, it's everyone but they don't know how to voice it.' She felt that in Australia people 'get complacent … and lazy' and that they 'need to be oppressed before they start giving a shit.' This was also true of her own milieu 'because we're so spoiled in so many ways' (referring to their having a social and cultural space of their own making). The challenge, she said, was that people understand 'what's happening' and we reach a 'tipping point before things get too bad, and before the environment gets too bad and before more asylum seekers get killed … a tipping point in the larger consciousness of the country.' She was surprised by the national response. 'It's incredible', she said, 'that we have people in our [broader] community that want to put this kind of thing on and give people an avenue.' She found that a lot of people she spoke to in her milieu were unaware of aspects of government policy, part of a sense of 'helplessness' with 'the mainstream media being controlled and controlling the government.' The chorus of silence from the media about March-in-March (apart from the predictable populist press focus on extreme positions and 'ferals') was indicative of this, for her, and extraordinary given the size of the event, this further feeding the sense of powerlessness.

Maeve, who was in the large inner-west queer contingency (see *Image 7*) which had worked on t-shirts and placards in the week before, had talked to people who'd 'never gone to any kind of political protest before and didn't know what to expect.' She didn't care about the media treatment, defending the idea of protest, not just for its mobilising

and politicising potential. 'Every placard you see is a headline' (one that will be endlessly reposted on Facebook). She felt something Australians did very well was funny placards. 'It might seem like a stupid thing', she said, 'but they're biting, they're sarcastic, they're cynical and bitter and funny and that really appeals to Australians.'

Conservative and neoliberal government policies reached into every part of activists' everyday lives and impacted on their organising. They referred to the restructuring of vocational and higher education (user-pays and deregulation), the gentrification of inner-urban areas, the increasing regulation and alienation of public spaces, the domestication of homosexuality and its rendering in private settings and changes in policing and a heightened sense of social control. Some of the activists I spoke to came from poor childhood financial circumstances. The restructuring of vocational and higher education impacted the younger ones who had not had the support of family, under the more recent regime, in buying their way into education, training or work experience.

Lena, in her early thirties, was in uncertain housing and low paid work. The future makes her anxious. It is unpredictable. She worries about 'being able to afford to live in Sydney.' She said, 'I get paid fifteen dollars an hour, what am I supposed to do with that? Buy milk and bread? How are you meant to save for a house? University – how am I supposed to pay for that?' Leaving school early, she says she 'didn't even know about university at the end of high school,' until other people 'were talking about what they were doing' there. She says it 'was never an option' for her. She is doing a TAFE course and accumulating a debt. It is the first time she's studied since she left school.

The restructuring of universities has made employment more precarious for workers. Maeve worked at a metropolitan university in an information technology role. She recalls a lot of union unrest around casualisation. Like her, a lot of staff were on casual contracts, facing uncertainty over their employment. An active unionist she participated in campaigns, strikes and picket lines in her workplace and promoted union membership. 'You could be the best worker in the world', she said, 'you could know everything', but the university's interests were to 'exploit the fuck out of you … get more value out of you.' The challenge was to 'claw back some kind of advantage, whether it's monetary or training or promotion or recognition or permanency.' One day and after many years, she was not 're-employed'. Her earlier experiences of permanent public sector employment were different. 'You were in that role unless you did

something ridiculously stupid, and they sacked you.' If something was going wrong with you at work 'they asked why, what's happening, what's going wrong? And they would fix it or they would counsel you… Now it's: "you've done something wrong, off you go".' Other older activists in public and community employment had similar concerns. Megan's long held job at TAFE has been under threat, on and off, for some years, and a source of uncertainty, as it is refashioned as a player in a privatised vocational training market. In their community sector roles Harley and Bernard have had to wrestle with contestability in funding and contend with private sector interests.

The restructuring of higher education is having a direct effect on student resources and activism. Darren has observed how students are incorporating full-time study and work now, which he said 'takes up the free time that normally would have been spent organising.' Work and study also put pressure on their time and ability to make social networks. It's one of the things that drive his activism in queer collective housing and free parties. 'Housing affordability is a massive issue', he said, for students living in the inner-city. Access to higher education is having an effect on the broader dynamics of queer collective identity and action. Andy and others had an issue with how some activists with higher education use their skills and knowledge in political debate and contestation (this is discussed later) which has led, he said, to the privileging of certain kinds of queer discourse. 'Now', he said, 'education is becoming expensive, and education is becoming privileged again. And Australia imports skills as much as it develops skills among Australians.' These are 'the broader issues', he says, 'that affect our community.'

As affordable housing was diminishing in the inner-city, affording to live there was a challenge for those on low incomes. Joey says that all the talented, creative and inspiring people are poor. He found it very difficult to live in Sydney with a low income. Indeed he was regularly homeless. He saw gentrification and economic restructuring forcing people into fulltime work, something that he definitely did not want. He needed time for his performance work, 'time for nightly mayhem out in public space and dingy venues.' He saw the warehouse and collective living scene 'cutting through' the high property prices and rents, along with its redistributive informal economy.

Wayne mentioned some recent and past collective attempts at DIY markets in the inner-west, opportunities for artists to sell their work. Facing the 'gentrification in Newtown' and being 'squeezed out' into surrounding suburbs to the south and west, the markets were 'cultural events' in their own right and, helped them pay their rent. 'We're all artists and activists', he said, 'and it's quite a poor combination.' He talked about the vibrant cultural spaces associated with collective warehouse living and its low standards of amenity. He described it as 'really fucking difficult sometimes because you get into a space and you gotta put your walls up and build your kitchen and all that kind of stuff. It maybe cheaper rent but fuck, you pay for it.' The winters are particularly bitter. 'People have to do remarkable things in order to find an affordable way to live in the inner city and also have the space that warehouse living allows you, to do creative things.' The local council actively shuts down their spaces, while its officials acknowledge privately to Wayne that 'it brings money into the local area and it allows hundreds of people to either do creative things or live in the area.' He longed for the kind of 'long-term vision', such as where European governments and cities support vibrant cultural areas. The lack of that vision is a reflection, he says, of the gentrifying, changing face of Marrickville.

7.1.2   Neoliberal spatial politics

Some activists connected gentrification, redevelopment and housing unaffordability with the displacement of the poor and the regulation and surveillance of public and community spaces. Council officers closed down warehouse households and venues but it was not their only intrusion. Councils variously restrict the size of groups in most inner-city parks. Darren was talking about the queer raves he organised with others in inner-city bushland. Police were a problem but council was more of a concern. He said:

> The council are ultimately the final arbitrators of public space and to hold an event of my size in that park and to do it under council regulations we would have had to inform them months in advance, I would have had to buy public liability insurance and … give council a fee. All those things were not possible. The consequences of that is that if a council ranger turned up … we would have had a massive fine to pay which would have been more of a problem than if the police had come and asked us politely to turn [the music] off.

The regime is a privatising one that discourages spontaneous and unprogrammed activity in public space and renders the costs and (implied) risks on participants. Darren

was concerned by the escalation by councils, particularly City of Sydney, Randwick and Marrickville, in pronouncing alcohol free and prohibited zones. It was restricting the public spaces and streets that could be used for events and represented risks for their organisers and those participating. In an alcohol-free zone police might pour out your drinks but in an alcohol-prohibited zone you might be fined. 'Either way', he said, 'it puts a dampener on any kind of event you're trying to organise and it gives the police an excuse to interfere.' It was a challenge even at the level of planning a protest march route and minimising police harassment of participants. The consequence was, he said, a 'gradual but continuing reduction of public space'. Added to this were councils 'cracking down on' and fining bill posters, making it more difficult to promote events and these events more clandestine. The privatising effect is to favour commercial venues. 'It's like the only fun you're allowed to have is inside the venues that we don't want to be in', he said.

Maeve observed that a very large civil crowd celebrating on the streets without permission doesn't happen in Western Sydney. She explained, 'I think if you get a large group of people on the streets out there and it's somebody's party got out of control and the police are called, so it's a threatening nasty thing that can lead to drunkenness and stupidity.' She thought this 'kind of thinking' related to the populist media 'headlines about ferals' (she was referring to the *Daily Telegraph's* coverage of March-in-March and student protests). They are writing for 'people out there, who are used to seeing crowds as a threatening thing and something that isn't a good thing or a positive thing.' They are vilifying something and they have 'never felt the nice thing about it', she said. It is missing from their crowd-based activities, like going to the football. 'You don't feel it', she said, 'because it is a sanctioned activity.' The idea of taking over a public space for a party or event, according to Maeve, 'can be inspirational for people who haven't even considered doing that.'

Beats in the inner-west have been vigorously prosecuted by police for over a century. Law reform in 1984, decriminalising male homosexual acts in private enabled them to operate more openly. The homosexualisation of the area over recent decades has made for more active beats in public toilets, shopping centres and parts of public parks. A new wave of moral persecution came with a Liberal state government and a Catholic Police Commissioner. The homonormative turn now involves attempts to design them out of existence, such that they are more readily surveilled and no "privacy in public" defence

can be sustained. Co-locating children's playgrounds with known beats, as Darren put it, 'so that people are charged with child sex offences' makes the stakes considerably higher.

This neoliberal turn involves a "proper" and respectable place for homosexual sex in domestic settings. There are products, mobile phone apps, and commercial venues to privatise the process of random public meetings. The sentiment embodied by arguments that "you don't have to do that sort of thing *anymore*" (as Leonard has been told often) reflects this. Of the activists I interviewed, he (along with his group) was the most explicitly engaged in resisting a neoliberal sexual and spatial politics, opposing the excision of beat users from a normalised, domesticated and privatised (male) homosexuality. The neoliberal sexual politics at work (that he alleges and describes) involves state and local government with the co-operation of lesbian and gay community governance groups to eliminate beats, using "crime prevention through environmental design" strategies (this is further examined in Chapter Eight). Leonard and his group do not frame their contest in these terms. For them it is police violence, homophobia and morality, and self-interest and betrayal in the community. Leonard refuses to be shamed.

There was a sense that conservative governments and neoliberal social and economic restructuring were increasingly intrusive in everyday life. Strategies of refusal have worked in the past to build rebellious communities. In one form or another and in every domain the state is coming for them, where they live.

7.2 Organising, collective action and collective normativities

Activists had a repertoire of action types and also organised to defend community and public spaces, to reinforce collectivity and to celebrate. Their comments about these showed the groupings and parts involved and some of their normativities.

7.2.1 *Community action and the (re)appropriation of public spaces*

Many of the activists involved in interviews were participating in some way in collective action involving the appropriation of public spaces for events, mostly in inner-Sydney but also to its west. I have mentioned the types of events in Chapter Six: unauthorised pop-up events, mobile street parties, warehouse district arts festival/street parties, and raves in abandoned industrial sites and urban bushland. In the last few years

I have been to variously organised, pop-up queer events, some "authorised", some not, in Newtown, with portable sound, vision and lighting. The deaths of Michael Jackson and David Bowie were the focus of two. Some have been doing it for a long time. Wayne recounted the night of John Howard's defeat in the 2007 federal election when he, along with others, took over Newtown Square for 'a free screening of the election results', he said, 'with a sound system and music and stuff, just to get the whole neighbourhood together to witness the end of a real shitty era.' One of the key, aforementioned, issues for activists in appropriating public space is police and local government regulation and control. With Wayne's election party, then as now, he employed what he described as a 'gentle assertiveness' with the police.

> As far as standing up to the cops, it's about having a degree of guile perhaps, just say, having a degree of incredulity and going into the conversation with the conviction that the community is entitled to celebrate or mourn the changing of the Federal political party in power 'cause it changes the whole tone of the country and the discourse of the modern day.

Unauthorised pop-up events require some resolve of their organisers and participants to stand up to police. The "Michael Jackson" event was queer in its conception, given that "queer" and Michael Jackson are an unlikely juxtaposition. There were mobile sound systems and video projections and several hundred people. It was as usual a very social and uplifting event. A deal was made with the police when they arrived. When they came back later they were dispatched by those assembled who chanted "Michael" in unison. A later finish was negotiated. Street parties and protest marches usually involved applying to police for a permit. Several of the activists I spoke to were assertive in their relationships with police. They knew the limits to police powers in respect of opposing demonstrations. They could negotiate about particular streets or traffic and safety issues but they couldn't say no. Wayne said they had to 'take you to the NSW Supreme Court' to stop you.

Many of the interview participants were involved in some way in Reclaim the Lanes, some in the organising (at the core and periphery) or others who participated. I was given several accounts of the origins of Reclaim the Lanes. It is revealing of policing tactics and monitoring of social media. It started as an idea, an impromptu lane party with three hundred people invited on Facebook. By the following day over three thousand said they were coming, to what was a small laneway. The police tried to work

out who they were for three or four weeks. 'We finally called them', one of the activists involved said, 'and they were extremely relieved to receive that phone call.' They used aliases the first few times they talked to them until they were caught out. The Police associated the event with Reclaim the Streets 'come back to ruin their day' and they were over-ready when the party went ahead. According to accounts the Police had 'twelve horses, two minibuses of riot police and the police helicopter on standby' for a couple of hours until 'they realised we were a just a laneway party.' They worked on this relationship with the Police though as one said, 'there was probably a distinct but unspoken lack of trust on both sides.'

It became an annual event over the next four years but it wasn't supposed to. It had to end, Alice said, when people started expecting it to happen, referring to 'that whole idea of it being a big pop-up thing that no one expected and took everyone by surprise, something like a flash mob but better.' While it lasted it was, she said, 'a really nice melting pot of different communities that have come together' and an opportunity for the warehouses to work together, each involving an intense couple of months of work in the lead-up.

The membership of its organising group changed over time and there was a core group of activists. It was unincorporated with no articles of association or committee. It was collaborative but not formally collective in method, using more "event management" or entrepreneurial approaches, where leadership was foundational on doing the work. Risky aspects of organisation were managed (council and police liaison, finances) and a group of activist artists and others took responsibility for organising elements of the events (activities for children, placards, flags and banners, mobile sound systems) or tasks such as liaising with neighbours along the route, the logistics of marshalling large numbers of people and keeping them safe (styled as watching out for the "ambience") or cleaning up. Processes were largely informal. There were no meeting minutes – rather there were bits of paper, checklists, running sheets and a balance sheet. The issues and the meanings of action were discussed along with the logistics. Core activists encouraged others, as one said, 'to take ownership of their contributions and take credit for them.'

Reclaiming public space for diverse and inclusive cultural and social action was explicit in the conception of the events, the communication with immediate neighbours and the

approaches to dealing with local government, council rangers and police. It was not regarded as political by some of those involved. Lena played a small role, she said, marshalling and cleaning up at a few of them. We talked about a post-event meeting where we went around the table each saying what it meant to them. I had said that I liked the politics, the collective experience of reappropriating alienated public spaces, even temporarily. 'I guess the politics of these things aren't discussed as politics these days', she responded. 'I think in the past, like in the seventies it might have been classed as a political thing and now that we talk about it as a political thing it makes sense that you would describe it that way.' Others and those more centrally involved were seeing the effects of neoliberal spatial restructuring of urban areas. The final Reclaim the Lanes ended at the Brick Pits at Sydney Park, the site of many (unauthorised) free parties over many decades and long before the derelict industrial site[1] was redeveloped as a park[2]. 'We thought that was a nice gentle statement about what the whole event was about', Wayne said.

As mentioned in Chapter Six, the activists with the most confidence in dealing with police had experience of more traditional methods of protest, confrontation and direct action and the way police work. Several problems were identified in mobilising and encouraging new activists in the countercultural milieu. One identified later in this chapter, was the problem of people having to stay "under the radar" of police and council officials because of their living arrangements and legal status of their accommodation. The other was an antipathy towards the police, one called it a fear, that people had to get past in acting assertively with them.

Some of the activists I spoke to did participate in meetings with police and in negotiations around different actions but as Wayne noted, there were not many who were willing or able to 'sign that bit of paper'. One of those who would (and did) was Maeve. While witnessing a police officer's assault on a parade onlooker at the Mardi Gras in 2013, she was verbally assaulted by police for attempting to cross the road. She complained to her local Federal MP and was then interviewed in her home by a police inspector and offsider and a representative of the Ombuds office, she said, about 'the incident I saw and the guy screaming at me.' Not only was she kept up to date by her local member, she got a personal apology from the Police Commissioner. The point she was making was that while she was very confident in her approach, she was able to present as a 'married with two children housewife' from a middle class suburb 'who

was having a lovely night in town.' She thought that if she was 'some feral from Newtown' they would have thrown her letter in the bin. She asserted that police responded differently along class lines. She had noticed this in fronting for police permits for events. She said that 'anyone who thinks Australia is a classless society they're fooling themselves. It's totally class-ridden. If they don't see it then they're not looking on purpose. They're purposefully not looking.'

7.2.2   Collective action and community spaces

Several of the types of action, introduced in Chapter Six concerned collective community action and space. Many activists I talked to were involved in some way in making spaces for the processes of collective identity and (counter) normativity, that were also counter heteronormative. In evoking the beauty of these spaces Wayne referred to "Temporary Autonomous Zones"[3], as places 'where normal rules and patterns of behaviour don't apply.' He painted a picture of other possibilities.

> There's been beautiful moments where the smoke machine has filled the laneway up with smoke and there's flags and there's two hot boys making out in front of a sound system playing hard drum and bass at a stupid volume, that is beautiful. It's a vision of what life could be like in the everyday.

Like other activists I spoke to Wayne referred to the Free Party movement, where he locates some of his activist tradition. It is dissident of normative controls and anti-authoritarian and it is downwardly redistributive, with people giving freely to each other, 'a gift economy', he described it as. One of the events he is involved in organising, he estimates, would cost close to one hundred thousand dollars, 'if everybody got paid'. He is characteristically ambivalent about the ideology. 'You can go into the political side of it, and the beauty of the temporary autonomous zone … or you can just say it's a big fuckin' party let's get drunk, you can go either way with the free party crowd and both perspectives are completely valid.'

Autonomous moments have to be seized, and the opportunity to do it confronts normative self-regulation. At a Reclaim the Lanes event that I was at with Maeve the moving party-parade thumped and danced from lane to lane, the route was chosen for aesthetic and safety reasons but involved crossing or travelling along major local roads at some point. Maeve noticed when taking to the roads 'you could just see the whole crowd lift, like this, "we're fucking stopping traffic in King Street" and there's a girl

hulahooping because we don't give a shit and there were placards.' Taking over the road has become counterintuitive with our self-regulating mentalities.

> People are looking around seeing this stuff happen and going 'are you allowed to do that?' 'Are we allowed to do that?' And as soon as you get people asking are we allowed to do that, you have to think why are we not allowed? What is it that's stopping us doing it? What is this "allowed" thing? And that's the political part of it.

Making collective spaces for celebration was a common theme for activists, whether they were organising a flash party on Newtown Bridge or a spectacular street party in an artists' warehouse district. Maeve and Tom referred to a very different 'autonomous zone', Gurlesque, an event which ran at the Imperial Hotel in Erskineville, according to Maeve from around 2001-2, every month for about six years. Gurlesque was fronted by two artists, Sex and Glitter and was, uncommonly in a pub venue, a women only space. 'It was a space for girls who were strippers to get up, do a show and take your clothes off', she said. 'It didn't matter what you did, if you were professional, non-professional, if you had a show for ten minutes you could do it. You could do spoken word poetry as long as you took your clothes off.' She was a regular fixture at the event and often made herself available for acts involving audience participation. To begin with, the premise was challenging for some and the comperes needed, as she put it, 'to train the audience to be supportive in a positive way 'cause women were so unused to seeing women naked at all and applauding it and being appreciative of women showing off their bodies' no matter their size or shape. For Maeve it was the absence of the male gaze and a type of objectification that was an 'us and them type thing' that made it different. She described it as more of 'a giving energy', and while performances varied 'the whole culture of it' was encouraging. 'It didn't matter how dud the act was everyone still gave their support to it.' As performers were drawn back again and again their skills improved with their performances, 'getting better, more polished, more clever and incredibly insightful, a lot of the humour was very political. Very political and pointed.' The format of a writer doing a reading and making comment and at the same time taking off her clothes, she said, could be political 'and really hot'. Tom was also a regular participant and it was a space where transmen in women-only spaces became an issue. Many transmen were 'righteous', he said, 'about their right to be in women's space' given their history as women. The attempt to make Gurlesque a women and trans

only event raised further questions but the intention, he said, was to include those that were already in. There's a promo[4] from 2008 for Gurlesque at Hermann's Bar (Sydney University). Gurlesque is described as 'an environment for women and trans of all sexualities, body types and ages to explore their inner archetypes, let go and have fun with creativity, with like minded others.'

Darren was part of an activist group that has responded to the privately owned licensed venues around which gays and lesbians have built a culture. His cohort experiences these spaces as exclusive and overly controlled. The group has two goals, one is to build 'a subculture in a space that's other than a privately owned venue', he said. 'The second aspect of it is that people should be able to have fun without paying a fortune for it, whether they're queer or not.' Darren describes it as 'moving from a structure where you pay for fun, for a culture where fun is free, high quality and people are respectful towards each other.' As mentioned earlier, student poverty drives his free party agenda. His bush raves are "underground", not advertised but promoted privately on-line which, he said, is 'not necessarily a bad thing – it just means that we build up more slowly. One of the uncertainties is the expansion of alcohol-free zones. He said, 'it means we're limited to particular parks and you don't know three years from now when the zones are up for review … if that park is going to be added or not.'

The appropriation of public spaces for social and political collective action remains an important strategy for activists in Sydney's inner-west, in mobilising and politicising social networks and making them visible, to each other and in the community. They are important opportunities for newer activists to gain skills and confidence in organising and in dealing with the (various) authorities. Actions and events in public, community and private spaces presented opportunities for producing collective identity and recognition and contestations around (counter) normativities. Some of these were ongoing and others, temporary moments. Celebration was high on the agenda, as well as art, music, light and sound.

7.2.3   Politics and culture – making art, performance and music

As mentioned in Chapter Six many of the interview participants were artists, musicians or performers. Darren, Andy, Bernard, Megan, Alice, Tom, Jerry, Rosie, and Wayne were artists. Between them they produced the zines, videos, images, screen-prints, photos, printed t-shirts, paintings, placards, posters and installations I referred to earlier,

and some of them deejayed as well. Rosie, Marta and Lena played in bands. Lena's band played at warehouse venues, Newtown pubs, festivals and doofs. Rosie's band was based in Melbourne.

I've been to several dozen of Marta's shows in clubs in Western Sydney. At one club in the central west she had a monthly gig (a lunch dance) where the audience included members of the club and its women's auxiliary, local lesbians and their family and friends. The local lesbians, she said, 'don't travel too far afield given health issues and finances and stuff.' She had a more mobile following from social networks in Western Sydney more broadly who have followed her performances for over ten years. She did occasional shows with a band. Apart from her ongoing commitment to provide safe places for older women to get together she is a serious, talented and nationally acknowledged Elvis Tribute Artist (ETA). She has aspirations to be acknowledged by Elvis Presley Enterprises in Memphis. She doesn't sex up her performance or 'play to the men' as she says of other female ETAs. She focuses on her voice which 'carries the songs more competently', she says, and I would agree, 'than most of the ETAs.' She feels that she is acknowledged for her voice and talent rather than who she is, which is what she wants.

Joey talked about his performance work. 'It's just creating a real life moment on a stage in a room of people, and I use makeup and costumes and wigs to create different characters.' He never does drag that is female impersonation. He does things that look good. It isn't transvestism or fetish. 'It's fashion. It's art', he said. He pushes the limits but not unknowingly. He said, 'I get very bored about when I see the way a lot of men are required to present themselves in society and I think it's very limiting and on stage I've got the perfect chance to do what I'm doing.' He's kept up a tradition from surviving suburbia that 'you can either look completely crazy or you can look a bit threatening.' He talked about the relationship between queer and gay "drag". Queer performance is informed by drag in the gay scene in miming, music and 'flamboyant emotionalism', he said, but queer performance breaks out of female impersonation, and subverts gender. Being 'very playful' and having an 'almost anarchistic space' is his 'ideal of a queer moment of performance … when we actually suspend these normative rules and we suspend our assumptions and prejudices and kind of enjoy the moment, it can open up other ideas.' Joey's attention is drawn to (usually Left and critical) proscriptions. 'A lot of people have their minds made up about things and a lot of things

become taboo quite quickly because of that.' He acknowledged though the dilemma between regulation/restriction and 'idealism' on the one hand and confusion and absurdity on the other. He noted that some performers go from being criticised politically to becoming 'very celebrated people, quite controversial ... if what they're doing is intelligent.'

Most of the activists I spoke to had an art, music or performance practice. Some tried to make (at least a part of) their living out of it. Many used their skills in their organising as well, or referred to their politics in their work.

7.2.4   Political normativities: collective conflict

Part of the productive processes of collective action is the contestation in its "latent" pole of the mutual recognition and collective normativities of its elements. In these processes of collective identity the tensions are often expressed as conflicts and interview participants described a range of these, encountered in their organising. The political tendency within Sydney's inner-west queer community, as mentioned in Chapter Six, has multiple elements.

Some of the activists I spoke to identified a queer identity politics, which they experienced as a space of control. Wayne identified 'different queer networks in Sydney … the really political one that can be really painful … and the other one that is fun and pragmatic.' His views and language were strong, 'the hyperpolitical queer mafia' he called the former. His antipathy was born of experiences in activism and organising. According to him, they follow 'absolutely the path of the righteous they're absolutely correct, whether it's about what language to use or issues of cultural appropriation or privilege or power.' In his experience of organising he found little acknowledgement, on their part, of their privilege as mainly 'university educated white people'. At issue for Wayne in organising was people 'having issues with everything' and that the few people who did the work had to do a lot of additional work, as he says, to 'make these people happy because in a collective we operate by consensus and basically it's the loudest and most insistent voice that gets their way.' It changed his commitment and approach to collectivism in organising.

Joey had a different problem of "causing offence". He described 'this very politically correct tribe right now' that are 'co-opting queer'. He said that there was no respect for

dissidents. The conflicts play out on Facebook. 'You can be ostracised from a tribe', he said. '"Calling out" on issues [such as] "call out racism", "call out transphobia", is very popular. Those doing the calling are often humourless bullies.' He'd like to fight back but 'it means being ostracised from whole parts of the community and being regarded as a fuckwit and [being] … written off as white male privilege … I won't be regarded as an individual, or a freethinker.' He says that there is 'a perverse credibility in being able to claim victim status … usually in order to regulate someone else's behaviour. He refers unsympathetically to processes involving explicit contestation by various collective elements, with queer and intersecting identities, of queer collective identity and normativities in queer spaces.

Andy has observed the dynamic and has a different perspective. He has moved among the queer communities in Melbourne and Sydney. He regards Sydney's as a more age diverse community. For him the younger people are more political in terms of control or 'policing' of speech and clothing. Older people, he says, are more likely to have 'been there and done that before.' It involves 'the privileging of particular ways of speaking and doing, of education and particular kinds of politics.' For those who say or do the "wrong thing", he says, 'some of it is deservance, and some of it, well, you don't know until you know.'

The younger "political" queers Andy mentions are "younger" than him. For Joey it was coming from older queers telling young people (nineteen years old) what to do, which puts their antagonists in the middle, age wise. 'Once upon a time that might have been perceived as a generation gap', he said, 'I might have felt galvanised by rebellion against someone a generation older than me. But now it's like the older generation has power to surveil and censure you.'

Seeing queer identity politics play out on Facebook, Joey found a lot of it 'quite distasteful'. 'It all seems like a lot of people paying lip service to different ideas', he said. 'Like this status if you hate rape, and things like that and I just go "is that what activism is on the internet at the moment?" It's kind of made it all a bit daggy at the moment, it's a bit silly.' Harley talked about the limitations of social media that make being together in physical space more important. He referred to the limiting effect of Tweets and short Facebook or Skype messages that promote superficiality and short attention spans, reductive thinking around gay marriage and different kinds of relating.

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Politics by one-liners, he said, can't address issues like strategy, identity, community or analysis. 'I think all of that's really interesting about where it's gone. And that's true for all social movements not just true for queer politics. It's true for how we do Palestine.' Darren remained positive about the use of social media as most people had access to it. He felt that the tendency to reductionism can be countered by 'building a culture of links to other resources'. He thought social media was 'a great tool for organising but not the best tool for discourse.' For Andy internet-based media were accessible and essential for organising in the intersex movement with a dispersed constituency.

In Darren's account of participation in organising in the queer student movement and its annual national conference, Queer Collaborations, was a concern for students being alienated and turned off activism by the repeating arguments around groups wanting 'autonomous spaces and caucuses to organise in, people who need them like transwomen and people of colour.' You end up with a three-day argument about why white men can't have their own caucus, he said. 'It just annoys me that we get stuck in the same cycle over and over and over again. It's why conference numbers are dropping it's because they never actually do anything.' In organising, he found an over-determination of collective process. The working group started with twenty members and within four meetings (spent deciding committee structure and grievance and other policies) had two members. It pushed him to a more event management approach. He said:

> If you have something enormous to do, of course you have to set up those structures but if you're just doing something small like organising a conference for a hundred people, you don't need to spend four weeks deciding how your organisation is going to work.

There were implications for conflict when identity politics became an issue in community and household settings. Alice detailed one experience which broke up a successful household. She said, 'That has really shaped in recent years my view of labelling. I find that that has flipped the whole thing.' Being driven from a "political" household for 'politically incorrect language' leaves a bitter taste in Joey's mouth.

Many interview participants were critical of Left political groups that 'colonise other people's struggle', and of their methods. As Wayne said, 'I've seen them just want to tap into the energy that's behind a particular issue like gay marriage or the Jabiluka

campaign and anything like that and try and get recruits out of it. It's a cult.' His experiences have pushed him to art and cultural activism to 'get things done'. His experiences of people who 'just like to talk and complain', have recently changed his organising approach. He said: 'I actually stopped believing in collectives to a degree a few years ago because it's always one or two people who do the fucking work.' His community-based action doesn't attract socialist or anarchist groups. They are not people he wants at his events 'because often they're people who are joyless.'

Identity politics, the processes of contesting collective identity are part of the engine in collective action's "latent" pole. It is productive, it can be strategic and, as Maeve pointed out, it can be played with and be a lot of fun. The tendency that some interview participants perceived as a controlling, political politics is a feature of social movements and not a new one. The fact that a collective identity politics is contested suggests that a queer social movement exists, in abeyance or otherwise. It resonates with the (multiple) insides and outsides of social movements I have referred to earlier. Identity politics may act to include and accommodate some in collective identity. It may also alienate others who transgress identity or contest its regulation. There are dangers in the socially embedded field of collective identity becoming the principal focus of the action. It may happen at the expense of whatever external collective action it has existed to underpin. The spaces that allow for, as I have argued, the mutual recognition of participants and their (contested) collective normativity, that can so easily be transported to mobilisations and public places may be at risk. I would observe, though, that the occasional mobilisation, like the demonstration at Taylor Square and the Police Centre in Darlinghurst following beatings by police of those attending the 2013 Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, pulled two thousand people at a few days notice and a prepared, coherent, angry and extremely queer response. Given Megan's concern about "queer" as a kind of separatism, she was surprised by the turnout which, she thought, was a 'social media success'. Parties like Bad Dog and Kookie continue to bring the queer community together socially. Those who see the alienating effects as a problem of process and civility (Andy and Darren and others) have argued for simple courtesy and more consideration in the ways issues are contested in spaces and particularly in social media.

7.3 Organising of activists in overlapping movements

Multiple movements or political networks overlapped around some activists (these were introduced in Chapter Six). Some of these came into play in the contestations of queer identity politics around identity, inclusion and the accommodation of difference. Some constituted the queer elements of broader and more diverse movements.

Transgender activism in Sydney has grown from the small group that was active in the 1990s. The transgender community in the inner-west of Sydney has also grown and is now more diverse in sex and gender, with transwomen, transmen, and those of non-specific gender. At the signature events of the queer community (such as Bad Dog) and in queer spaces like the Red Rattler transgender people are a visible element. Transphobia, like racism, is more or less proscribed in the rules or conventions of queer spaces (for example in the guidelines for performances at the Red Rattler). Tom had a peripheral involvement in a transgender activist collective, Still Fierce which was, he said, 'a big mix of older transwomen, a couple of young political transmen, quite an interesting big diverse mix of people with different class backgrounds and various different politics.' Their main achievement was a convergence in Canberra, in May 2011 of intersex, sex and/or gender diverse people. Tom talked about some of the difficulties he found in organising among transgender people. For those undergoing 'physical transition', he said, 'it is time-consuming and 'so inward, it's heightened.' Transgender people as a group have 'very diverse politics and extreme, extreme amounts of trauma.' He said that conflicts in the network, tensions around class, led to its end. He was not closely involved – he had withdrawn from organising for a year because of 'burnout'. In Sydney, as one of, he said, few transmen and new to transgender activism, he organised a workshop series in a queer community space in the inner-west, the themes were about sex and the 'intersection between being feminist and being transmen' and the action was about reaching out to others. 'I think I was just looking for peers and I didn't really have a good grip on it, I was just feeling it out. I just did a lot of personal processing in a very public way.' As mentioned earlier Tom participated in Gurlesque, an event where transmen in women-only spaces became an issue. He felt that his own 'politics around that took a while to evolve' because of his experience of exclusion, he said, from 'most male spaces.'

Also mentioned earlier was a small, relatively new *social movement of people with intersex conditions* (formed in Australia in 2009 and internationally affiliated). They promote the rights of people with intersex conditions and are among those who have experienced long-term negative effects to their physical and mental health due to involuntary surgical and other treatments that sought to 'correct' or normalise their gender. As is discussed later they have used liberal legislative frameworks and policy processes in their activism. The internet has helped those with intersex conditions to organise and disseminate information and provide support. Andy said to begin with 'you don't have the words for it and you have to find out the words and you have to try and name it and it takes a long while.' Like others, intersex people have diverse identifications, sexually. Yet they are a recent addition, as the 'I' in LGBTI. 'Talking about intersex as an identity … happens a lot', Andy said. 'It's also a demonstration to fail to understand what it's about.' What queers and people with intersex have in common is their experience of what Andy says is, effectively, homophobia. 'People … are stigmatised because of differences about sex and gender norms whether it's about behaviour or identity or bodies, so that's the commonality. It's not about identifying as something', and identification he says is 'meaningless'. He said that intersex is about biology. The problem with regarding it as an identity, he said, encourages 'erroneous' thinking such that 'intersex is some intermediate gender identity between male and female.'

The disability movement in Sydney is remarkably queer-friendly. It is in part due to the efforts of its gay and lesbian activist members, over several decades in its membership, organisations and their governance. Lesbian, gay, transgender and queer disability activists came together to form Access Plus Spanning Identities (APSI) in 1997. It was a lobbying group as well as a social network. Bernard came into contact with members of the group at a professional level. 'Stuff … started to happen', he said, 'at the friendship level, you know, it was people I identify with about belonging to a community of activists and queer disabled activists and that sort of space.' He observed that in working in disability movement organisations 'the boundaries between activism and service delivery are difficult to define.' I reminded him of the first time the difficult subject of assisted sex was raised, a decade earlier, in a public forum in the disability movement about sex and sexuality, organised by APSI. It was not explicitly or

exclusively queer, and it was well attended and we were both there. There was something queer about disability, Bernard reflected:

> It's a political thing for any disabled person to become sexual … even for the straight disabled person there's a coming out they need to do, and a resistance. There's a pushback they have to do which is inherently political then and brings in that idea that there's a queerness about … what they're engaged in.

APSI members started working with sex workers who were interested in improving the access of people with disability to sex workers and to train and encourage sex workers in disability positive sex work practices. Out of this evolved the group Touching Base. Acknowledging that the sex industry is mostly male consumers and female workers Touching Base was broader and queer inclusive from the outset, in the sex workers with whom it engaged. A group of heterosexual males with disability might have had a very narrow focus on the sex industry, he said 'but that's not the group of people who came together, and I was one of the people who made it a queer space and a safe space for queer issues.'

With an international focus, Harley has moved about the world gaining access to what he described as 'interesting political conjunctures and movements and activists' and has been able to develop 'insights into all sorts of complexities about *global sexual politics*.' Through exposure to many places that are unconnected and with men from many countries on the internet he has found that 'a lot of assumptions' he has 'about sexuality are not universally valid'. People through internet and increased travel are adapting their identity to what is available. Gay dating sites offer sub-identities and these are also more widespread than is acknowledged. The category of bisexuality is problematic in a lot of countries, he argues, 'you can't develop a bisexual identity politics when all the heterosexual men will have sex with men or transgenders in certain circumstances.' Contemporary gay identity is strong in many countries where it is not generally expected. Queer is a contested term in Palestine, he says, as much as it is in Sydney. Harley saw the sexual politics of the future as coming from surprising places, and predicted that, for example, Vietnam will have gay marriage before Australia. The focus of his activism at the time was Palestinian solidarity and the intersection with Palestine around "pink washing" (selling Israel as an advanced capitalist liberal democracy). He supported international actions particularly by Jewish lesbians and some queer Palestinians against it. He saw a controlling of expression of pro-Palestinian

voices in official gay community structures. Rich Jewish and Israeli gay men in New York, he said, offered funding to Democrats and Republicans tied to gay marriage and support for Israel.

Most of the activists I spoke to were not members of *Left political parties or groupings*. As mentioned in Chapter Six, some of them were members of the Greens but none were actively involved, or even supportive of its policies or politics, placing themselves to its left and even avoiding its sexual politics and Rainbow Coalition. Some were troubled by their alignment with community governance groups. None of them were currently members of socialist or Left groups but several had had past associations or membership.

A number of activists voiced concerns around the relationship between autonomous social movements, people who are self-organising, and external Left political groups seeking constituency and influence. The autonomous groups they mentioned were people with disabilities, people with HIV, homosexuals, Palestinians, community activism around public space, community action against homophobia and the marriage equality movement. Harley referred to the multiplicity of self-organising groups. 'There are divisions of gender and class and belief and politics and all that and they're not homogeneous at all.' This complicates the movements' interactions with Left political elements. The tension between the two produces conflicts around who is in charge of (say) a gay marriage demo and related contradictory strategies and also produces structures for political and personal interest of the participants (e.g. career paths). Some of the activists that I spoke to were hostile to the Left groups with which they interacted. For Leonard the Greens and Left activists he encountered in one community coalition were young, middle class and university-educated and too many of them were straight. He found their positions contradictory. He said that the Socialist Alternative line was that 'we were not allowed to attack the Church. We were thinking that the origin of all homophobia is the Church.' Wayne, as described earlier, had moved to a style of organising that allowed him to exclude Left and anarchist groups.

The main Left parties (the Socialist Alliance, Socialist Alternative) were not the same as those some activists had known or been members of in the 1970s. The Socialist Worker's Party of Australia (SWP) was a Trotskyist organisation until the late 1980s when it ended its association with the Fourth International and proclaimed itself

Leninist and changed its name to the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP) until in 2001 it established the Socialist Alliance (Recoba 2002). It was dominated by the DSP and the International Socialist Organisation (ISO) (*Leftist Parties of the World: Biver* 2005). Its policies recognise that heterosexism exists at every level of society and sex and gender discrimination is "entrenched in all of the key institutions of society – education, health, the law, the media, family, church and state", and that LGBT and intersex people challenge the family, "the cornerstone of capitalism" (*Equality for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender and intersex people: Socialist Alliance, 2013*). In a seemingly contradictory move it stands for "equal marriage rights for LGBTI people" (*Marriage and civil unions: Socialist Alliance, 2010*). The Socialist Alternative is a Marxist/Trotskyist organisation that split from the ISO in 1995 (*Leftist Parties of the World: Biver* 2005). It acknowledges that freedom from exploitation and oppression includes the liberation of LGBTI people and fights "for an end to all legal and social discrimination" (*Statement of principles: Socialist Alternative, 2016*). A smaller group, Solidarity, was re-formed in February 2008 with the merger of Socialist Action Group, the ISO and Solidarity *(Who are Solidarity: Solidarity)* the latter having split from the ISO in 2003 (*Leftist Parties of the World: Biver* 2005). The Communist Party of Australia, which was also significant in the events of 1978 and to which to Gay Liberation Quire also sang, was involved in the new social movements of the 1980s. It had gone into decline by the late 1980s, dissolving itself in 1991[5].

Harley had observed these changes in Marxist and Left parties in Sydney since the 1970s, and noted an increasingly reductionist understanding of homosexual oppression. He argued that they had abandoned a traditional Marxist understanding and critique of the family, gender roles and marriage 'to some extent self-serving for their own current involvement in marriage equality.' He referred (respectfully, it should be noted) to the two larger Left groups, Socialist Alternative and Socialist Alliance which 'in their own way' were committed to this understanding. The Socialist Alternative had a 'political culture', a 'tone' he felt was 'christian religious' like and 'a bit hyped up'. It fed into a situation where as Harley put it, 'they like situations to be black and white and simple.' In respect of the history of gay liberation in the 1970s, he said, 'I don't think it's alright to have a simplistic view or several decades later to not have a more analytical approach to it or a self-critical approach.' Darren described them as trying 'to hook you in – socially friendly as possible towards you, and before you know it you're in a cult.'

The Socialist Alliance had made a mistake, Harley thought, in equating laws proscribing same sex marriage in Australia with laws against mixed-race marriage in the United States. Having not been involved in 'lesbian and gay and transgender politics since 1980', he asserted, 'to put themselves forward as the key leaders of the gay marriage campaign is opportunist and about recruiting.' Others made similar comments on this. The problem Harley locates in a 'process of dumbing down' their own politics since the mid 1980s, with the abandonment of Trotskyism in their reaction to 'changes in Cuba and the Soviet Union' and adoption of (he claims) Stalinist theory. This meant that 'they had to de-educate, they had to get rid of their middle level people that had any sense, and they had to de-educate their central leadership and their members.' One effect of this was a deliberate, simplistic understanding of all areas of politics, including sexual politics and 'a vested interest' among organisers of political historical discussions about Gay Liberation or Lesbian Feminist movements 'in simplifying it all'. He noted that they have 'moved the ground towards liberalism in the sense of legal reforms' reducing the 'feminism and gay liberation of the seventies to a set of achievable democratic rights issues'. They were continuing this strategy, he said, 'by simplifying the questions about marriage equality, which is one of the only things they can fasten on to.' They have abandoned basic 'traditional Marxist understandings', he said, such as 'Engels on the family as an oppressive institution, and particularly a critique of the nuclear family, gender roles and marriage.' He talked of lost and complex neo-Marxist critiques (by Gramsci, Althusser and others) of the multiple ideological apparatus of state and the depth of understanding activists had about deconstructing and tearing apart ideological structures: 'the media, education, medicine, sport, family, gender roles, love and desire and aesthetics', he said, 'all of it had to be, using 1980s words, deconstructed at the very least and heterosexuality as a system or a practice had to be deconstructed.' All of that was gone. 'It didn't last long', he said. He reminded me that he doesn't have a 'hard line on all of this', just a 'really complicated understanding'. It means, he said for example, that talk about the complexity of homonormative developments and the excision of marginalised groups in the pursuit of equality is hard for the socialists to listen to, and regarded as an attempt to 'sabotage or undermine their leadership against the Labor Party.'

I had noticed this challenge, of speaking articulately about something that cannot be heard, or received or properly understood. He came up with two further examples, the

deconstructions of sport and religion. He said that it was interesting now to deconstruct sport as an imperialist construction, in a Marxist environment. 'People look at me like I'm completely nuts', he said. In 1973 in such a setting his argument, whatever its merits, was intelligible. If he said now that 'our position is to completely deconstruct religious control of our lives through churches, schools and hospitals, that would have been uncontentious but now it's alarming for the mainstream Left.' While there's still plenty of activism happening he is concerned that 'our ability to analyse key areas collectively is minimised.' The radical moment that existed for that in the past is 'not there anymore'. A 'deep critique of all social structures' has given way to 'liberalism, that is symbolised', he says, 'by simplistic demands around equality and law reform and empowering the state and rainbow flags and simplistic talk about homophobia' which he has always regarded as 'a liberal construct', as if the problem is one of individual thinking 'rather than the structure of the family and of gender roles and heterosexuality'. He remains 'unhappy' when supposedly Marxist groups use the term acritically as if 'there's a reform strategy around people's education that will work as if there's no structural or material basis for any kind of oppression.'

I have described a *countercultural milieu* in Sydney's inner-west (it is centred around Marrickville and its residential and industrial precincts), and an alliance of warehouses and large and smaller collective households. It has elements that are more or less political. Alice told me the history of the alliance.

> I remember sitting with a whole bunch of warehouse people and we were talking about running a gig at Midian, when that was still going. I said, 'we've got all these warehouses, we've got to have a collective, what are we doing, we've got to have a name, like warehouse association, warehouse alliance', and the next thing I'm at home making flyers for some gig and writing Marrickville Warehouse Alliance on it, and next thing we were all getting tattoos of it on ourselves, absolutely ridiculous, in the space of a week it was just this group.

She felt like she belonged in her 'little space' while the broader alliance connected the spaces. There is a lot of lending and borrowing (equipment, resources, vehicles etc.) mutual support and help. A private Facebook group facilitates information exchange, communication and mutual defence against opportunists, thieves, council compliance campaigns or bad real estate practices and so. The milieu is one in which most of the

activists I spoke to moved and felt comfortable. 'A friend of mine calls them "ferals"', Darren offered. It was a dissident milieu that he 'always really liked'.

> There's a real revolutionary aspect to it without the sitting around in meetings, having speech codes and the like … and identity politics. Of course I see the value of those things but I see how they limit fun and limit change.

Joey enjoyed the countercultural crowd with his performance work. They were less vigilant about the meaning, more likely to see it as 'psychedelic fantasy' and unlike some in his queer audiences, they did not criticise or censure its politics.

For Lena, this community was welcoming of differences. An organiser of a regular music event, Déjà, she thinks that while people might be ridiculed in a commercial venue for being 'gay or straight or transgender or black or whatever', as she put it, it is unlikely that that would happen at events in community spaces. 'That's exactly why we do things like this', she said, 'so that people can come to a place where they feel safe and welcome.' Talking to Alice about an event at Dirty Shirlows[6] that we had both attended, she reflected on similar themes.

> I went in and every two minutes I saw someone I knew, and I felt completely safe with absolutely everyone, and I think knowing people even if you don't know them well, if you've only met them a few times and you feel safe around them … I think that comfort and safety are the foremost things of having a community.

Rejecting the individualism and competitiveness of the mainstream Alice saw the community as collaborative and redistributive. Part of this was being collectively 'aware of the separate things that everyone else can do and of everyone's differences and separate talents.' For Alice there was something easy about it. 'Somehow,' she said, 'our community works together to put on amazing things and we all know our place and it's like this machine that just runs and does its things. It feels like it's not even an effort anymore to do the things we do.'

Maeve also spent a lot of time in this milieu (as well as lesbian and gay male networks). I put to her that the collection of spaces (warehouses and large households) of the alliance and those associated with it and their art, music and party events, wild though some of them are, were typically civil affairs from my observation, and while they were 'predominantly heterosexual' they were not typically heteronormative. 'If they were',

she responded, 'it would be hideous!' Her theory was 'that it's the way that they treat the women, and it's the way the women socialise in there', and in the division of labour.

> They will not do all the cooking. They don't. They all have jobs and they expect the guys to do things too and they do. They don't go 'ohh go an get me a sandwich' or carry on, I've never seen that sort of stuff happen, and I think they don't see it. They just see how they work as normal.

She was aware of this because in her (family) household the division of labour was gendered. She was also aware that some of the women are bisexual and some of them 'just like cuddles.'

While warehouse living had some advantages for some it also had many disadvantages and hardships. One of the limitations on organising that Wayne mentioned was the underground nature of the alliance and difficulty of remaining under police and council radars. As he said, few are in a position or are 'prepared to rock the boat'. Some households have residential leases or tenancy arrangements. Some are set up as artist collectives in industrial premises and are subject to surveillance of property use in terms of their Development Applications (DA). Some of these have had to stop their events prior to council inspections. Some households are more vulnerable than others. Those with events involving very loud music and/or attracting people, drugs and alcohol have additional problems in staying under the radar, as Alice described a past dwelling.

> We'd worry if we saw police in the laneway. We didn't hang out our washing where it could be seen. We didn't go through the front door, ever, because the businesses would see us. We'd always enter and exit by the back door which was on the alleyway. We knew our neighbours and they were good. So that was more uptight but I think we had a lot more to lose.

Contradictions were revealed in council's regulation of spaces on the one hand and its arts and community development role. Alice described how a council planning and development section was onto one warehouse 'about their DA and not having any more parties' while its Arts section was 'advertising their gigs on their website'. Her household at the time we spoke was vulnerable too, though she was philosophical about it. 'You've just got to be in an interesting middle point', she said, 'of being aware of relaxing which is hard sometimes if you're running a couple of free events a week.' An end to her warehouse home was expected. 'You can be wary and stress out about it or you can just have fun and realise it's going to end some time and move on from there,'

she said. Indeed her household has since been evicted. Places thrive, sometimes for a while, and some are closed down, but from them new places start up. The affective investments of the activists initiating warehouse and group living and DIY venues was profound. They knew that they were making alternative collective and community spaces, and a milieu in which to organise politically and they were energetic about it. Alice said:

> I like having all the things that I'm overseeing. I'll organise things and delegate things and make sure they get done, and I stress out a little bit about how much I have to do and I get very little sleep but I love it and I would be absolutely lost and a husk of a human if I wasn't doing anything, if I was sitting around on the dole or doing an office job or whatever normal people do.

It is a strong statement about collective action giving meaning to everyday life. This countercultural milieu and its embedded and overlapping social networks accommodated the latent pole of collective identity in activists' organising, in broader mobilisations such as March-in-March in 2013, actions around the defence of community and public space like Reclaim the Lanes and Reclaim the Streets and opposition to the NSW Baird government's policies. Wayne said that in these events 'there's a shitload of queer people' participating and involved in organising.

Some of the activists I spoke to were concerned that I would misrecognise their *liberal equality activism* and use of legal frameworks and the state as gay and lesbian equality politics, given our discussions about neoliberal sexual politics in community governance groups. They were unaware that I had spent decades in the governance of social movement membership-based organisations most doing government funded service delivery (disability advocacy, disability employment and housing among them) and that I accept the value in pursuing inclusion of those who remain structurally marginalised, who are, borrowing Bernard's metaphor, still "outside the tent", who are yet to benefit from the personal freedoms and recognition that have been achieved by other groups in more liberal times, and addressing the mechanisms of their exclusion. Nor am I naïve about the limitations in being a provider of services or advocacy for government, for example, the potential for compromise, co-optation, political shifts and unexpected or unwanted outcomes. It is an important distinction to render nevertheless, between a neoliberal sexual politics which is exclusive or excisive and projects that are progressive and inclusive or downwardly redistributive.

Some of the activists I spoke to mix liberal strategies and dissident and radical activism in their pursuits. Social movements and activists can leverage the state or use legal frameworks in strategic, even disruptive ways, legal frameworks that were borne of earlier liberal times, for example, the *Sex Discrimination Act (1984)* or the *Disability Discrimination Act (1992)*. One example of this was intersex activists' use of legal instruments and legislative processes. The forced sterilisation of people with disability has been a long time concern of the disability movement. A Senate enquiry into the involuntary or coerced sterilisation of people with disability in Australia in 2013 made space for Andy and his colleagues to pursue issues relating to the right of people with intersex conditions to bodily autonomy, and protection for children and young people from potentially harmful, gender "corrective" procedures and treatments. He regarded legal equality as critically significant, given that, as he said, 'some people are more equal than others'.

> It's actually quite powerful because it establishes us as a group recognised by law for the first time, which will have major implications over time, because we can start asking questions about health issues and other issues and try make sure that the health outcomes that we get are decent and comparable to the rest of the community, which they are not.

The studies he cites in his submissions show poor health outcomes and very high levels of distress among people with conditions of intersex. Andy's view is that because of lobbying and representations and use of legislative frameworks, 'government is currently ahead of the population with respect to thinking about intersex.' His engagement with the state and its processes is very time consuming. Large amounts of time are dedicated to making submissions and representations to government and legal enquiries.

Another long time concern of the disability movement has been the sexual freedoms and rights of people with disability. Improving access to sex workers for people with disability has been radical and contentious work at points. Bernard said that with liberalism in Australia and disability discrimination legislation, a space had opened up for activists to argue that because sex work is not criminal in NSW that this is an issue 'about equal access and because there are these various barriers and points of disadvantage or discrimination it's not equal.' While it is about benefiting from the liberal normalisation of sexuality and sex-work it is also a potent cultural challenge to

broader notions of the sexuality and sexual freedoms of people with severe and profound disability. It is a space where in the face of centuries of religious paternalism you can properly say, as he did, 'we're disabled people and we want to have sex with whores.'

For Andy, marriage equality was noisy compared to other equality projects that were important and useful in his intersex activism. He talked about the National LGBTI Health Alliance as 'proactive and inclusive', and a 'network of organisations and individuals that collaborate with each other on pretty much all of the issues except marriage.'[7] Compared to marriage activists their 'approach is a bit more cellular and discrete and collaborative and [only] some of it is visible' in press releases contributed to by intersex, transgender and lesbian and gay rights lobby organisations. It was 'a very strong and collaborative engagement', he said, 'and there are some very significant individuals at work in that including some figures on the inside.' It is problematic terrain though, where activism can be reframed as health promotion, where funding relationships with the state can limit criticism and over-determine influence on community politics, where excisions and marginalisations can be "accidental", where the structural origins of anti-homosexual sentiment can be concealed behind an individuated psychopathology of homophobia and a drive to gay and lesbian equality can be somehow consistent with overall inequality.

There were other comments about equality. Marta made a strong distinction between the liberal promise of equality in the law and the institutionalised discrimination that challenges substantive equality, not because of a critique of neoliberal equality frameworks but because of her experience of the Family Law Court. She was attempting to prove she was in a lesbian relationship with her ex-partner who argued, and the court agreed, she was only a tenant. She makes the point that if they'd been able to marry this could not have been disputed. 'So we can have the marriage, we can have the properties, we can have all that. Unless your name is firmly imprinted on that paper, you won't get any justice.' More broadly in everyday life, 'in society you can't [always get justice] even though we're equals here, something might happen and we're not necessarily gonna get justice. As soon as they find out you're gay, for some reason you are gone.'

7.4 Conclusion and methodological reflection

Participants' comments about organising, mobilisations and collective actions showed the multiplicity of elements and groups and some of their (counter) normativities. Participants were active in contests in cultural domains as well as the political system. As Melucci suggests, social actors embedded in everyday life, spaces, relations and identities deploy cultural politics that challenge social practices (1995, p. 41). Participants had a broad repertoire of methods and forms of collective action, authorised and unauthorised. The lens of collective identity and the embeddedness of collective action in everyday life reveal some of the effects on activists of their social, political and economic environments. These include conservative and neoliberal social and economic policy and regimes that figured some of their activism, but definitely impacted on them 'where they live' and on their resources. As discussed in Chapter Six social and economic restructuring had impacted more on younger participants who had poorer material conditions and fewer resources (particularly educational resources) compared to older participants who had experienced a (relatively) kinder and redistributive policy environment when they were younger. Whether all these rationalisations and market reforms of public services represent neoliberal economic restructuring, or rather that they may be conservative and "developmental" of the state's role in welfare and services, as per Weller and O'Neill's argument (2014, p. 109), the net effect over forty years is to change the state's downwardly redistributive relationship with (younger) segments of the population. Corporate risks have been downloaded, as Pusey (2010, p. 133) observes, into households. Poor housing affordability, along with casualised employment, and reconfigurations of spatial regulation restrained participants' individual and collective resources. Most inner-west participants made the connection between the redevelopment and gentrification of the area and associated homonormative spatial reconfigurations and the displacement of poor, working class and dissident queers. This evokes Manalansan's interpretation of a 'structural violence' in the gentrification of queer neighbourhoods of 'narratives of emergence and disappearance' (2005, p. 152).

Participants organised against conservative NSW and Australian governments and their policies. They railed against the gentrification of inner-urban areas, the alienation of public spaces and their regulation (by police and local government), changes in policing and a heightened sense of social control. Some were concerned about the spatial

reorganisation of homonormativity and the marginalisation of public sociality and sex and a complicity in this among gay and lesbian community governance groups, evoking concerns about which constructions of lesbian and gay are promoted or privileged by gay and lesbian NGOs in equality politics, which individuals and groups become 'acceptably visible' and which are marginalised or excised (as per Richardson 2005, p. 524, also Duggan 2003). Several participants mixed radical and liberal pursuits in their activism, engaging social movements with government and its instruments in the pursuit of the sexual freedoms of people with disability and the bodily autonomy of those with conditions of intersex.

Collective actions involving appropriations of public spaces were important for community and movement, mobilising networks, exercising cohesion, attracting new participants, expressing radical community sentiments and passing on the skills of dealing with authorities. Actions and events in public, community and private spaces presented opportunities for producing collective identity and recognition and contestations around (counter) normativities, or making autonomous moments and zones, for celebration, lawlessness and non-commercial sociality. In relation to Melucci's bipolarity of collective action (1994, p. 127) these events, both inwardly and outwardly focussed, produced the contested collective normativities and mutual recognition, the embedded and 'latent' pole of action that could be transported to 'visible' action. Among the resources of activists were skills in the arts and the media. Art, music, performance, light and sound were critical elements of these moments and defined their outsides.

Through the political parts of the queer community in the inner-west ran threads of queer theory, anti-colonial theory, radical and Left politics, feminism and transgender critiques of transphobia and cisgender. There was a strong identity politics at work in these networks, evidence of a queer social movement (in abeyance or otherwise). Its (counter) normativities were clear around those who engaged in queer action (for example, around polyamory and public sociality and sex). They were clear around interview participants who were dissident, who variously transgressed, played around with or refused queer norms. Some associated queer political spaces with control. This evokes Brown's concern as to the reflexivity of 'critical queer scholars and activists' in seeing their complicity in processes and 'forms of privilege' (2012, p.1067), which is a concern in a context where higher education is being (re)privileged. Some of the

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activists I spoke with were organising in other intersecting movements and social networks and in these interactions there were contestations about strategy, identity and inclusion and attempts to incorporate difference in meaningful ways. The multiplicity of the movements makes these intersections between parts of movements (for example the relationship between conservative and radical transgender movement elements and the queer community and its parts) .The sexual diversity of "queer" is not simply additive of different parts (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, heterosexual and so on). Each addition is generative, driving a reframing of all the parts or elements, part of the tension with which they are held in collective identity. Participants' involvement in overlapping social movements and networks reveal the multiplicity of local action and its historical and contemporary elements.

Notes, chapter seven

[1] I remember seeing Severed Heads and SPK play there in the 1980s.

[2] And home, coincidentally to a beat heavily prosecuted by police and rangers.

[3] A term coined by Hakim Bey (1991).

[4] Time Out Sydney, November 2008

[5] The contemporary CPA is the renamed Socialist Party of Australia, a Marxist-Leninist group which had split from the CPA in 1971 and took the name in 1996 (*Leftist Parties of the World: Biver* 2005).

[6] Dirty Shirlows is a stable, long-term household in an industrial building with a large performance and event space.

[7] Though several years later it is in disrepute, its critics raising concerns about poor management and a dysfunctional relationship between chair and board. There was a membership petition calling on the Executive-Director and Chair to resign (Rodney Cruise, 2016) In February 2016 the Alliance announced that it had lost it peak health body funding (*Tips and rumours – LGBTI Health Alliance in trouble: Crikey 2016*). Igniting the situation, soon after, was the executive-director Rebecca Reynold's contradiction of the Alliance's position on the implementation of the Safe School's Program, saying publicly that it should be optional rather than mandatory for schools (Busby 2016).

Chapter 8: Neoliberal sexual politics, equality politics and future challenges for critical, radical and dissident collective identity and action

This chapter continues the presentation and analysis of contemporary activism, and the exploration of the points of disjuncture, formations and reformations that constitute the continuity over time. It relates to two questions that I asked interview participants. One was about how they viewed contemporary gay and lesbian politics (part of their responses were described in Chapter Seven). The notion of a lesbian and gay equality politics (in the sense that Richardson uses the term) was familiar to many participants and it posed challenges for some, in various ways, in their organising and activism. The other and concluding question related to how activists saw the challenges for their activism in the future.

8.1 Gay and lesbian equality politics

At a distance from the official lesbian and gay community, Lena gets the idea of equality politics, 'like homosexuals are included as long as they live like normal heterosexuals?' She thinks that it's an imaginary inclusion. 'It is still the norm to be married with two-point-five children, that's still the norm in society, but a lot of people don't believe that it's normal to be a homosexual.' The interpretations by participants of equality politics varied. Some comments related to a desire for inclusion, with an acritical view of the state and its mechanisms of exclusion. Some concerned the emphasis on sameness with heterosexuals and legal equality and the unequal distribution of this equality. Another problem was identified in the conflation of a single abstract of homosexuality, ignoring the multiplicity of forms and intersections with class, gender, disability and ethnicity. Some remarked on technocratic tendencies in lesbian and gay community governance organisations and moves involving the excision of queers and dissident homosexuals and their marginalisation from a virtual 'gay mainstream'. Some related other experiences of neoliberal sexual politics and homonormativity.

Harley talked about the problems of investing or making demands on increased state power when we live in one of the most hyper-regulated "liberal democracies" in the world. He was not talking about projects like Andy's, to stop surgical and chemical intervention in babies, children and young adults with conditions of intersex, which was

'taking a power away'. He was most concerned about vilification and hate speech legislation around gender and race. He had observed that in the end, the dominant groups use it against the oppressed groups (his examples: men using it against women, Jewish groups using it against black people or critics of Israel). Because religious organisations are exempted, he said,

> it's a bit silly to say that you can have anti-vilification laws about homosexuality or sexuality because the main generators of official anti-homosexual discourse are exempted but in some legislations what it means is that radical queers or homosexuals or whatever can't say anti-bisexual things or anti-heterosexual things.

Megan also wondered about investing more power in the state and the contradictory effects of the Police Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officers (GLO) of the NSW Police. While she'd had a satisfactory resolution with a GLO addressing an harassment issue she was unsure of the net effect of having lesbian and gay police, whether it has reduced hate crime or increased policing of lesbian and gay and queer communities. In the seventies the impetus was "get your laws off our bodies", or "not the church, not the state", and now, Harley said, 'our legal agenda is to increase state control over our lives.' Marriage equality was like this for him because 'it's allowing the consolidation of an ancient regulatory thing about relationships which is entirely inappropriate for same-sex relationships.' He suggested a libertarian approach would be more effective: removing state control of gender, removing it from all documentation, removing it as a social category in which the state can intervene. This is the kind of relationship equality campaign that he could understand, 'taking away a power'. On questions of difference, and responses in indigenous programs, domestic violence programs and disability programs, he said, 'these questions of identity don't need to be hyper-regulated in order to have positive action.'

8.1.1   Excisions and marginalisations

In the process of pursuing narrowly defined legal equalities premised on sameness there are opportunities for narrowing the parameters of difference and making new outsiders of problematic, awkward or dissident groups. According to Harley the 'mainstream' of the movement has sacrificed the marginal (migrants, defenders of public sex, injecting drug users and sex workers) 'whole categories of our lives had to be written out of the story'. He experienced this again in the Same-Sex reforms of 2007. Activist networks ran a campaign to warn those who would be worse off, particularly in reforms of the

Social Security Act. Lesbian and gay rights lobby, positive peoples and disability advocacy organisations made submissions to a Senate Inquiry[1] into the reforms arguing for savings provisions for some people (e.g. a grandfathering clause or exemptions for the very disabled and very old) or a "no disadvantage" clause – all to no avail. With the rendering of homosexual relationships in the Social Security Act, many of those who were affected lost income (partly or altogether, including secondary concessions) and some faced a new regime in the treatment of their assets and unplanned complications around residential aged care. The impact was greatest on people with disability and older people. With the wholehearted support of lesbian and gay lobby groups for the reforms and their drive to sameness with heterosexuals, they didn't think, in their consultations about the implications in the Social Security Act for the oldest and most disabled queers and their differences or they forgot about them altogether. Bernard said:

> I do think that it was forgotten, and it's forgotten all the time, which is why we need to speak up all the time and that's why organisations and groups are there because that stuff is forgotten all the time and we always need to be saying 'this is how it's going to affect us' and 'this is why it's different for us'.

Harley's disappointment was in the reforms to the Migration Act. After a long and hard fought campaign many years earlier, the Lesbian and Gay Immigration Taskforce achieved, in 1985, a broad "interdependence" relationship category that recognised difference rather than sameness with heterosexuals and made it easier for same-sex partners of Australians to demonstrate their interdependence and migrate. The Same-Sex reforms, he said, replaced this category with the de facto same-sex couple definition, which does not recognise 'the different places that people come from and the different sexualities people have' and the challenges of producing official evidence of interdependence or cohabitation in many countries. It was another effect of the reforms of which gay and lesbian lobby groups were unaware. He felt that 'our political movement had allowed a lot of sacrifices, in accepting these reforms.'

He was concerned to see the privileging of monogamous marriage over polyamory and the marginalisation of queer polyamory activists, by the Greens in the same sex marriage campaign and to see where that might go. 'There is something about the critique of monogamy that is really, really important', he said, 'because I don't think that's our tradition, I don't know what "our" is but as someone who adopted gay identity and politics in the 1970s, it's not ours.'

In the course of defending public domain-connected sociality and sex, Leonard attended a community event that was recruiting for a twelve-step program for sexual compulsives. It was when he first heard the term "sex positive" ascribed to him by one of his critics at what for him was a 'sex negative' event. He wondered:

> Why is going to a beat three or four times a week a negative thing? Why all this remorse and shame around it? To be tied down to one monogamous relationship, to deprive ourselves of sexual expression because someone over here thinks its an indecent act. That's bringing on yourself mental health issues, that's when you get depressed and isolated, shame and stigma.

He despairs that 'our community has become so conservative', that community leaders 'want us to sit in our homes, away from everybody, and tap away on our computers and have sex in our bedrooms where no one can see you.' It is about respectability. It may also be a product of the changing behaviours that followed the HIV/AIDS pandemic that Altman referred to as a 'new puritanism' (1992).

Marta hadn't had any contact in Western Sydney with the governance organisations of the (official) lesbian and gay community. She participated in the Mardi Gras parade for the first time in 2006 with an older lesbian group (GROWL) and had a great time (some of the people in her social networks are associated with the group). She regards the people running the lesbian and gay governance organisations as ageist: 'They're quite happy for [old people] to die off', she said. 'It's a problem they don't want to know about. They're not interested in old people, it's all about what they are interested in.' Nor, she said, do they appreciate the position of people who are not like them or poor. She made a comparison between these community governance groups and the governance of the country. 'If you listen to the rhetoric of the Abbot government at the moment, they don't care about the aged or people with disability either. The government's [also] not consulting with their membership.'

Megan observed that, particularly in respect of Mardi Gras, there was no equality between lesbians and gay men in the phrase 'gay and lesbian equality politics'. Mardi Gras had a male chair, she said, 'it's still very much a gay male parade', with little 'lesbian or lesbian feminist perspective'. A lot of the radical lesbians she associated with would not be involved with Mardi Gras for those reasons. She said that some lesbian feminists participating in the *78ers* contingent leading the parade in 1998 were

apprehensive about depoliticisation and trivialisation. Many women approached were hesitant to get involved in lesbian and gay movement history with the Pride History Group. Their concerns about Mardi Gras were enduring. With the current Mardi Gras's control of participation, text and representation in the parade, Megan saw this as excluding 'hard core lesbian feminists' (those who want to stand out and want women's and lesbian issues to be raised and be more prominent) and as including those less radical. She said that the "official" gay movement is social norms driven. A lot of women activists of the seventies and eighties 'stand back now because they don't see a place for themselves.'

Among the groups that activists identified as being marginalised in the equality drive were immigrant partners of local gays and lesbians, public sex activists, injecting drug users, sex workers, queers with disability, elder gay men and lesbians, polyamorists and radical lesbian feminists. They were new outsiders (or outsiders once more) either out of neglect or because of new collaborative relationships with or accommodations of the state.

8.1.2   Gaystream – gay mainstream and gay commercial scene

Wayne understands 'when people describe others as gaystream.' He sees gaystream as another part of mainstream culture, 'popular culture and 'market forces' at work. 'The politics', he said, 'and even the clothes are just boring and that's okay. Not everyone can be in that three per cent of crazy creative people. Fuck! The world would be a completely different place if everyone was like us.' He gives an example of very negative dealings with a real estate agent he described as part of the broader lesbian and gay population and of gay men who assume that they have 'cock' in common with him. 'They're charlatans and narcissists', he exclaimed, 'I wouldn't have sex with a bunch of them no matter how hot we are because we would never be in the same place.' He'd 'just have to leave [the venue] because the music is terrible and people assume you're straight if you don't look like them or your body shape isn't the gay ideal.' He has given up on some of the venues.

Joey sees the gaystream in gay commercial venues and rails against increasing blandness and regulation of behaviour and dress and exclusions. He described them as dingy dives with bad music and expensive drinks and exploiting peoples' desire to come together, to meet. Not presenting in an acceptably masculine way is, he said,

'cock-blocking' yourself. 'A lot of guys look at you', he said, 'and think what the fuck's going on here. It's not necessarily an act of courtship going out looking ridiculous. It's not a mating thing.' In mainstream gay bars, he said, 'I wreck people's nerves, in a way … and I often get refused from venues on Oxford St based on what I'm wearing or I get accused of being drunk when I'm not. There's a lot of pressure for you to be bland.' His accounts of his summary and impugned exclusions, sometimes violent, for being 'too silly' (not drunk) are credible. Following their refusal to let him into the Midnight Shift[2] on the basis of what he was wearing, the bouncers assaulted him, he was 'kicked along the footpath' as he described it, and this was witnessed by others. Another account was poignant. He said: 'It made me really angry, you know, you're talking to a bouncer out the front of a bar called Stonewall with an upside down pink triangle out the front and thinking this is a bit ironic, you know, being thrown out for voguing'. A serious concern was that the security guards do nothing to assist anyone who is being assaulted in the venues or outside of them. A friend of Joey's had his jaw broken outside a venue by a patron and the security guards, he said, threw him out into the street, and wouldn't ring an ambulance or help him. He explained that it was 'some straight guy who was at ARQ who didn't like him because he was too extreme – he does a lot of Joan Crawford impersonations in your face – but it's a gay bar.'

Joey argued that there was too much about sameness between straight and gay in the gaystream and that gay culture had lost its otherness and sophistication. He made a reference to the 1953 science fiction movie *Invaders from Mars*. 'Equality politics is where we have a bar on Oxford Street called "Gay Bar" filled with pod people.' According to Joey the 'straights' of the countercultural scene were more interesting than the gays, look good and fuck more with gender than most gay guys. 'Everyone's got this androgynous Mick Jagger, sixties, rock and roll look going on', he said, 'and I think this is hot. And they're getting stoned and partying and it's wild and the gays are a lot more conservative now.' The 'best dressed', on the other hand, on King St and Oxford St, he said, are the 'psychopathic deranged people'.

Talk of lesbian and gay equality politics made Wayne strident. 'There's a shitload of gay liberals out there', he asserted, 'so the current state of equality politics sickens me.' Most of the gay men at university were Labor Left, 'gay boys in a political party', he said, 'that's opposing stuff I don't care about … [around] equality, same sex marriage and stuff like that.' According to him 'they were shooting themselves in the foot …

really cute, but fuck! They're just part of the problem.' The effect of gay and lesbian equality politics, he said was the inability to consider ideological alternatives or transform society. He saw this in Mardi Gras.

> I see the bloated carcass of Mardi Gras these days and it's just disgusting and they're spending, like, thirty thousand dollars on a fucking lighting rig for your parties which many people can't afford to go to, and they're boring anyway, musically, and there are hungry people on the street five hundred metres from your party. It shows incredible privilege and a real haste to jump on board and be apart of the machine and it's the same machine that's eating you alive.

The 'career gays' are very separate to him, he said, they 'live in a different world'.

8.1.3   Same-Sex marriage and the marriage equality campaign

At a distance from the "official" gay and lesbian community, Lena supported equality of lesbians and gays in the law and same-sex marriage as common sense. She was not interested in marriage personally. She saw the benefits of non-inclusion as 'you can't get married and can't be divorced.' Alice, at a similar distance, didn't believe in marriage but thought marriage inequality sent a mixed message to young queer people. Marta was channelling Elvis loves songs without changing the pronouns, for her friends and cohort in Western Sydney, marriage among the themes. While it wasn't for her at the time, she also thought that it sent a negative message to young lesbian and gay people while it was not legal. None of the activists I spoke to were interested personally in marriage. Most had strong views about it, either critiques of the concept of same sex marriage or the movement for it.

Rosie was opposed to 'the state sponsored marriage framework' because of its objectives being 'all wrong' and their history being fairly easy to recognise. The campaign was 'not a progressive fight'. Marriage was also implicated in the 'demarcating and deferring of national identity' and citizenship, she argued. 'Who is a legitimate person in life and who's recognised and who has rights and how are those rights dispensed?' Harley held a similar line about marriage equality as an appeal to inclusion that ignores the social and political mechanisms that devalue and exclude. He thought it reinforced the regulatory power of the state over gender and sexuality. In 'our political tradition', as he put it, when we made demands on the state, it was to limit state

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and police powers. Jerry had never had monogamous relationships or marriage like ones. Like Harley he thought it was not 'our' tradition.

Wayne had no problem with the idea of marriage per se. Yet the campaign for marriage equality he rejected because it was coming out of 'an aspirational politics' that stresses sameness. He likened it to housing, which he regarded as 'a human right'. The idea that everyone had a 'right' to home ownership marginalised all those who do not want to live that way. 'The whole politics about we're just like everyone else, no you're not!' he remonstrated. He recounted a poster, with a nuclear family outside a house with a line through it and 'Queer, the privilege to imagine more' as text. It 'tapped into' other things he'd been doing over the previous few years, involving 'the power to imagine more, the power to imagine difference, the power to imagine a long-term committed relationship that's also kinky and polyamorous and maybe involves a third person every once and a while.'

For Maeve marriage was 'some stupid construct from the dark ages that should have been turfed out hundreds of years ago.' She didn't even want to waste time talking about it. Having been married for several decades to a gay man she thinks it's hilarious. She's been married 'more than straight people have been', and she wishes we could get over it. 'Don't have one! Don't have a marriage! Don't have marriage for anybody I don't care! You don't fucking need it, it's just ridiculous.' Bernard's personal view was that it should be 'banned for everyone.' His collective view was that if it's available to some it should be available to all couples and polyamorous groups. Megan was opposed to marriage but thought people had a right to choose. She thought it encouraged conformity. 'I don't want to be someone's wife', she said, 'it just goes against my feminist grain.' Joey railed against this scary new world.

> I hated suburbia when I was living there and I was always wanting to be in a different world, the city with its eternal bachelors and more bohemian ideal, it's not about forming a family and going to work... We've a lot to teach the heterosexual world about sex and pleasure and enjoying life and not being trapped.

Joey raised the "marriage equality can undermine marriage" argument, with the treatment of polyamory in the marriage equality debate (discussed below). It showed, he said, how 'gay marriage' could be disruptive and destabilising of heteronormativity and a slippery slide to networked and polygamous and extended mutually supportive family groupings (though it was theatrically over-stated).

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For Rosie, 'being active around gender and sexual oppression', means you can't avoid arguments around legal equality frameworks and marriage, and 'you'd be an idiot to ignore it' because they are global arguments and big movements, and 'they're obviously speaking to big groups of people, whatever they were saying.' Others are paying attention to who is speaking. Bernard views the marriage equality campaign as very 'straight', playing the monogamy line. He believes there are two camps in the marriage campaign, one that knows what is being traded off in appealing to respectability 'and then there are some people', he said, 'who don't have what I would call a sophisticated view of what's going on and what the thing is that they're trading off, and what's outside of the tent still.' As discussed later by others, he thought the campaign was about wealthy middle-class gays and lesbians. He wonders about queer activists who support the campaign and where might their 'place be in all of that at the end of the day' just as his place might be in 'this push for the equality-sameness thing, because', as he said, 'we're always going to be on the outside and in some ways that's where I always want to be, but not.' Harley said that the campaign was neoliberal because it's about individual choice. In promoting lesbian and gay marriage the socialist groups were employing a liberal definition of freedom rather than a socialist one, which he felt was a mistake.

In response to conservative and ultraconservative attacks on same-sex marriage that claimed it would lead to the legalisation of polyamorous marriage and sex with animals, the Greens marginalised polyamory in their defence of same-sex marriage. A group of queers formed a Polyamory group in response, 'it started off as a bit of a joke and [an internet] troll', Darren said. Indeed none of them were interested in getting married, in couples or groups. Interviews with members that were published were picked up by National Party Senator Corey Barnardi and read in parliament. 'I confess I may have been intending, mildly, to derail the same-sex marriage campaign a little bit', Darren said. 'I was under no illusion that I could actually stop it. I figured I might as well put the boot in while I'm here.' The group received considerable media attention and despite being a bit of a joke it ended up carrying on its public demands for polyamorous marriage. Right wing Christian groups picked it up around the world and in third world nations as evidence of the homosexual agenda. 'I had no idea of the ramifications of that, I had no idea who used these websites or how they form opinion, but I was worried

that it may actually ... you know a jest in a first world country is a couple of dead people in a third world country.'

While marriage privileges certain kinds of relationships over others, Darren has come to the conclusion that the marriage equality campaign is good as long as it doesn't achieve its goal. One of the side effects of the considerable effort and resources going into the marriage campaign and the sustained and unmoving political opposition to it and maintenance of discrimination, is the normalising of homosexuality in the mainstream and in popular discourse (and linking marriage to issues like anti-gay violence). But it is not the sort of normalising that Leonard is interested in – sex in the bushes and beats contradicts the domestication and privatisation of homosexuality that marriage implies. He was concerned and disappointed with the Left groups, that marriage equality had overtaken all other issues, and that these other issues had now become incommensurable with the marriage equality campaign itself. Andy argued that the focus on marriage, from 'more vocal parts of the community' and 'a small number of figureheads' obscured inclusive action on equality.

Several despaired wasted resources. 'All that energy, all that work and crapping on about it', Maeve said, 'and I just think all of that could have been directed to something that would help: health issues, homelessness all the things that could have been fixed up.' Wayne wished that instead 'we could have thousands marching about gay and lesbian suicide in the bush or kids getting kicked out of school,' what the money 'could do for young lesbians and gay men who have been thrown out of their family homes.' Joey saw marriage equality politics as a skewed and distorted solidarity, with money wasted on it while 'abject poverty and chronic and severe illness are not a concern in the gay community.' For Andy it was a distraction. The marriage equality campaign and the 'whole celebrity culture going on' around it, to Andy, was 'very "cup of tea"' – something of interest to people or not. 'You focus on things that interest you more', he said. 'We have a choice. You don't have to participate, you can participate in other stuff.' Nevertheless these other issues do not produce the antagonism that same-sex marriage has.

None of the activists I interviewed were interested personally in marrying, queer or otherwise. Most had a critique of the historical and contemporary social, political and economic functions of marriage. Some tried to derail the campaign but most were

indifferent. This indifference had made a vacuum, one said, that had allowed neoliberal and conservative activists to determine the marriage equality agenda.

8.1.4   Gentrification and middle-classness

For Megan, these days, the 'Mardi Gras parade presents a much more middle-class sensibility to the world.' Fair Day is the same in terms of who goes. She typifies these as middle-class, in management jobs, with high wages. She parallels the drive to respectability in the lesbian and gay scene and equality politics, with lesbians within the women's movement, historically, and 'equality feminism'. She argues that lesbian issues were downplayed in the women's movement and this was about respectability.

> In those days in terms of the women's movement there was a strong lesbian and women's movement separation as well. The desire to have lesbian politics and lesbian issues brought to the forefront was always downplayed in terms of abortion rights being more important, considered to be more important for the women's movement generally to look at. I think it was about respectability, it's not about being equal.

Wayne, like others, rejects gentrification, middle-classness and refuses inclusion. Many of those in the lesbian and gay population are drawn to a lifestyle that he typifies as 'the picket fence and ... working forty hours a week in a job that you probably hate, working to pay off a house that you're probably sick of, with your partner. It's the curse of modern life and hyper-industrialised society.' It was something he didn't want to be part of. Here he was, in his mid-thirties and he was 'just moving out' of a warehouse into a cheap rental property in an industrial area. He said, 'I've chosen a particular way of life and a path and it's just me.' The class differences are most noticeable for Wayne in the people at marriage equality rallies, with whom he feels he has nothing in common. 'If I take the mobile sound system and play music most of them hate the music and most of them look at me as if to say "look at this weird dude hanging out with his gay friends, is he a straight ally?"'

8.1.5   Neoliberal sexual politics

Ten years ago the term "neoliberal" was rarely heard in discussions of sexual politics. The idea and language have currency now among queer and critical activists. I'm at a warehouse party, a temporary autonomous zone is in effect and things are getting hectic. I'm in an animated and funny discussion with a performance artist who is working up a

stage show with neoliberalism as a giant preying mantid that is devouring people, sucking them dry and they believe it is feeding them. He asks me what insects I think would represent neoliberal 'sexual' politics, with air quotes around the "sexual" – 'I think it's all very unsexual,' he adds. Very funny! I perform an improvised insect theme, doing air brackets, and referring to the tendency to dense political epithets in queer social media spaces that we have been talking about earlier. 'I think neoliberalism is a locust plague, that eats everything in its path (privatises the public domain). Each area (or life domain) it arrives in is new and different. A (technocratic) class of grasshoppers determine how it will be eaten and the feast commences (deploying the appropriate privatising moral discourse and strategies) until there's nothing left and the plague moves onto the next tasty life domain and so on. Their diets are as diverse as public assets, public participation, public services and welfare, public freedoms or public sociality and sex. Their privatising moral discourses of individual choice and personal responsibility percolate through strategies of gay and lesbian domestication, respectabilisation and demobilisation. The diffuse discursive control this implies is like an ideological apparatus or a social class, but individually they are just grasshoppers.'

'That's gorgeous, that's got to go in', he says. 'Can you write that down and email it to me?'

Rosie thought that the problem with marriage equality and other lesbian and gay equality politics is that they have been abandoned by queer activists, and that the outcomes reflected that. She thought the argument against state regulated identities should have a particular relevance to 'gays, lesbians or queers' who 'have a particular subject position' to 'argue for identities that are much more free and enabling and that are community and people oriented.' That boat has been missed and the campaign has been controlled by NGOs with their own conservative agenda, she said, making it 'very difficult for people that didn't agree with that political perspective to have a platform in those movements.' So there was no broader dialogue or 'deeper critique' of state regulation of sexual and gender identity and its deployment of 'homophobia as a distinct part of that'. For Rosie the lesbian and gay equality movement was not progressive. On the other hand the hard Left response 'often from the autonomous political spectrum', she characterised as 'Fuck this movement! We don't want to have anything to do with that movement', was inadequate. 'People aren't going to land at

your perspective magically,' she said. 'This is the society we live in. It's about frameworks really.'

Harley talked about the differences between neoliberal sexual politics in Australia and the United States. His concerns reflected those of Duggan and Richardson, but they came from his work in international solidarity movements and his associations with activists around the world over four decades. He was glad that 'gays in the military' was not an issue here. He said, 'that would have been immensely horrible.' He noted that in the U.S., private philanthropic funding of NGOs by conservative rich gay men and lesbians affects the politics of gay rights organisations and their relationship with the Democrats. While the International Lesbian and Gay Association had a structure of elected representation, nominally democratic in his view, the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, based in San Francisco was unaccountable in its governance and its large donors and their influence were unknown. The argument that homosexuality is genetic, he said, is 'popular'. It is a convenient neoliberal "gaystream" position, a non-radical counter to religious views, of moral choice. Harley referred to the controversy around Sex in the City actor, Cynthia Nixon's assertion of choosing lesbianism and whose accusers claimed was bisexual because she had had relationships with men[3]. For him this was 'an anathema to a liberationist politics.'

While, as I have discussed earlier, the effects of neoliberal sexual politics are pervasive in lesbian and gay community governance groups, Leonard doesn't frame his contests with NGO and government representatives in this way. The abandonment of public sex and the drive to respectability in the gay community means, for Leonard, that beat users are now more 'repressed' than they were in the past, and now by their own community leaders and organisations. 'They say if we want acceptance,' he said, 'if we want recognition in the community then we can't go around behaving like this.' What was once a normative part of the subjectivities of many gay men and their community is now a dissident practice, an illegal practice, and one that is at high risk of excision from the "official" lesbian and gay community. Harley pointed out that the outcomes were impossible to predict. He reflected on the ways that the commodification and privatisation, through mobile phone applications, of what was previously free and public domain connected sociality and sex has shaped new ways and technologies of meeting people and sexual partners that have implications for how people view community and identity. They occasion a completely different structure of identity and

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community – he sees this both here and in other countries. 'The meaning is hard to know', he said, 'but the impact is profound and it is from commodification. The complexity of negotiating sex with someone in public space is different from knowing someone using Growler is four metres from you.'

8.1.6   *The Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras – depoliticisation and control of dissent*

For Wayne Mardi Gras Fair Day no longer holds any appeal: 'it's over-policed, you get your bag searched to go into Fair Day. What the fuck! I just stopped going once they started doing that. It's a joke.' A group of friends put on Mardi Gras Unfair Days. 'We'd take a wheelie bin [sound system] and eskies with food to a park in the neighbourhood and just have a picnic with music and put some decorations up that was just relaxed and comfortable and the opposite of Mardi Gras Fair Day.' He has heard bad stories from friends who have worked for Mardi Gras.

Leonard smuggled some unapproved placards into his Mardi Gras parade contingent. When an official came she reviewed the declared placards ('marriage stuff') and 'that was all good.' As the contingent joined the parade the concealed placards which said 'End police harassment' were affixed to the van. Leonard said, 'we had a couple attempts by marshals and police to take the placards off the vehicles but I had a video camera on them so they retreated.' Leonard saw the police as 'very well entrenched in the Mardi Gras bureaucracy.' He observed that Mardi Gras was antipathetic to Leftist groups, implicating the political party allegiances of its staff and governance group.

One of Megan's concerns about the commercialisation of Mardi Gras were the sponsors and their floats. She said: 'You have to be careful what you are advertising and what you're choosing to support and put up there as being okay.' One of her questions for sponsors was about how they were dealing with anti-homosexual sentiment in their workplaces.

With her interest in radical lesbian and gay history Megan was disappointed by the Mardi Gras pop-up museum, which opened temporarily in February 2013. She had concerns about the safety of the material, lack of lesbian feminist content and the shallowness in its concentration on glamour, glitz and parades. The whole approach concerned her. She compared it with the approach of the Sydney Pride History Group that had 'embraced all aspects of our community and community origins.' She said that

'there was a minimal amount of lesbian feminist memorabilia in there, and certainly the lesbian-feminist movement of the late seventies early eighties was quite big in Sydney.' It was one of the often-levelled criticisms against Mardi Gras, she said, 'it's shallow, the political activism is way down the list.' Further evidence was Mardi Gras's promotion of celebrity lesbian and gay *78ers* which she saw as 'not challenging in anyway'. The lesbians who were central to radical political action and organising throughout 1978 and mobilising elements of the lesbian feminist movement, she says 'don't have a name now, and they wouldn't stand out in terms of representing the lesbian activist side of our community.' Since the first workshop of the *78ers* social history project in Leichardt in 1998, the question of who gets to speak for the *78ers* has been an ongoing concern.

8.1.7 *Mardi Gras and disability access*

Each year that Mardi Gras parade comes around Bernard feels 'ambivalence and almost reluctance' to participate. This is in part because whatever access arrangements are made on the night they invariably fail. Whatever goes wrong it always turns into 'something really wonderful' on the night. Marching up Oxford St with twenty friends with cerebral palsy using electric wheelchairs and other friends and associates in the disability movement, he has felt 'a personal sense of support and boost in esteem or whatever from being involved.' He has felt defiance. 'It feels brilliant', he said, 'it feels like a "fuck you", it feels like "here we are, don't forget us", and claiming a space within the community which is really important and I'm really glad we do it.' He thought there was an activism in doing it, that participating had a political impact. He felt 'very much on the fringe of the Mardi Gras parade thing' he said, 'but fuck it, it's great and it's just good to be there.'

Each year he complains about the access and 'how they fuck it up'. Things that are planned rarely work out that way. He observes that the staff members are always changing. Each time he has talk to a different person.

> Trying to educate them about what it means to be peg-fed in an electronic
> wheelchair, to be expected to be there from three o'clock in the afternoon …
> waiting potentially in the rain, you need medication, you need access to an
> accessible toilet, so that you can have your personal care dealt with, with some
> dignity. It's bracing yourself for that conversation, just as the person with cerebral
> palsy using a wheelchair braces themselves every time they go into a public event

organised in this city, because we do it all really badly. It's just that kind of gearing up and it's tiring and it's boring and you deal with fuckwits who think that they don't have to make an event accessible.

He reminds them of their obligations particularly under the *Disability Discrimination Act* of 1992. He notes minor progress with the provision of accessible portaloos though whether they are on the right side of the cyclone fencing is another matter. He has been surprised by the level of interaction between members of his disability contingent, many of whom have profound disability and communication impairments, and other parade participants in the (locked down) marshalling area, during the hours before the parade starts. He admits to having very low expectations of the gay community. 'I actually see some really good stuff in people appearing not to be afraid, or repelled.'

The policing of Mardi Gras and Fair Day events had alienated some activists. Control of 'decency' and political representations and text within the floats and parade contingents is an anathema to activists and a disincentive to participation. Older activists monitor the depoliticisation of Mardi Gras history. The elevation of commercial interests and institutions in the parade disturbs some. Radical lesbian feminist antipathy to Mardi Gras is more or less perennial. For queers with disability, and despite the challenges of access and participation, it is an act of self-inclusion, a coming out and a coming in.

8.1.8   *Gay and lesbian NGOs and their workforces*

Harley's analysis of the development of lesbian and gay workforces pointed to a point of class-fractional disjuncture. The occupations of those in the early, emergent gay community of the 1970s, he said, were in the service and caring sectors. The "normalisation" of homosexuality and diversification and growth of a lesbian and gay community had resulted in new gay and lesbian workforces in retail services, the academy, community NGOs and the public sector (there was evidence of this later development in the *78ers* survey). Harley argued that public and academic sector workers failed to 'self-critique', failed to connect the new gay and lesbian employment sectors to pre-existing community commerce and related employment workforces. He was suggesting that they failed to see themselves as part of the economic colonisation of the earlier, more working class gay, drag and transgender communities. It was an observation with profound implications, particularly for the effects of class as to which ideations of homosexuality prevailed in community governance. One impact of

government funding of feminist movement services, he said, was the movement's investments in some issues and the abandonment of others – his examples were public sex, drug users and sex workers.

In 1972 there was nothing to lose in relation to opposing government. Now NGOs have a great deal to lose in resources, impacting on management career paths and salaries. Harley noted that little is said about the fact that former radical lesbian and gay activists now have commanding roles in the federal and state health bureaucracies. The funding of AIDS councils, he said, 'introduced a different material reality to that of the movement'. Similar to the earlier funding by Whitlam of feminist-based women's services, movement activists 'suddenly had to do either bureaucratic or heavy service delivery jobs and that had an enormous impact because the work burden was very heavy on the newly funded sector'. This happened with HIV/AIDS but also in relation to anti-violence and lesbian and gay rights lobbies and 'all of that'. The politics involved, he said, 'two sets of deals with government', with Labor or independents like Clover Moore. The "A" gays in the sector were all ALP or Clover, or in relation to the Liberals there was this weird "secretly the Liberals are okay".'

Harley observed that funding constrains the politics of big agencies (and their sector dynamics) around criticism of government and accepting the limits of criticism: 'overtly, with the Liberals, that you don't criticise government at all, and with Clover and the ALP there's also a buy-in to the limits of where you're going to go with that.' He said, 'there were all these issues which we were constrained about.' He is certain that 'government funding of NGOs really did narrow our viewpoint and it became what's achievable given the current relationship with political forces.' The funded NGOs had a political obligation to support the legislative (Moore and ALP) agenda (he refers to the NSW Labor Government of Kristine Keneally, defeated in March 2011). Darren felt there was something inevitable and unsatisfying about the kind of hierarchies that develop in gay and lesbian NGOs, 'when activism becomes official and becomes sanctioned and state-sanctioned ...and that's always going to be disappointing and conservative and have an agenda that's not community-oriented because their agenda is their funding.'

Harley thought that drug company funding of AIDS organisations had led to their support of intellectual copyright and against cheaper generic drug treatments (despite

international social movement campaigns for treatment access). AIDS councils are major advertisers in the gay media and articles and editorial content may be tailored to the interests of advertisers and influence community opinion. An example he gave was their support for HIV and homosexual anti-vilification law, in the absence of any critical analysis or contestation, and ignoring that the major generators of anti-homosexual sentiment speak from "protected ground".

For Leonard the terrain was 'all guided by government and funding', and a lot of 'jobs for the boys' nepotism. In the responses to the activism of his group around the defence of public sex, he saw a separation in the queer community between queers aligned with lesbian and gay community NGOs and 'queer queers'. His accounts of those he regarded as quintessential self-interested bureaucrats, described their 'smoothing over' the contradictions in their roles in the queer community and included their employment trajectories, from one 'stepping stone' to another. He felt a rejection from these parts of the queer community and he had withdrawn from the social spaces of the political queer community, he said, exhaling deeply, 'the modern queer I can't relate to them, they're not about community they're about themselves. For me it grated on everything I'd been bought up to consider. We looked out for one another. We were dying. And these are just individualists.'

Leonard noted that the police work with the lesbian and gay community, always through ACON, which he said was their 'default for the community', something that I had also noticed in local broader events where they often appear to also be a "default" for representation of a gay and lesbian community. While he heard private criticisms of ACON in the community he observed a general reluctance to speak out. He noted their employment policies that restrain community activism and what can be said on social media, Leonard claimed, 'you just have to toe the line'. He thought that the community was 'having the wool pulled over their eyes'. He was cynical of their relationship with government and their diversification of income sources and activities.

There is evidence of lesbian and gay community governance groups having an over-determining effect in community politics. Perhaps the most revealing of political over-determination for Leonard and others who were involved in the strong community protests in response to police violence and over-policing at Mardi Gras in 2013. Governance groups responded with a closed "community" meeting (participants had to

register to attend). It was held with police and other apologists present. Leonard called it 'a snow job, a con job'. He didn't understand, he said, why the community is 'allowing this crap to happen'.

The funding of AIDS councils and later, anti-violence projects and lesbian and gay rights lobbies changed the 'material reality', as Harley put it, of a social movement. These NGOs drew on a new professional workforce in the gay and lesbian communities and created career paths (a liberal workforce which was a legacy of earlier developments and movement successes as I have mentioned earlier). The new reality for governance groups involved a narrowing of viewpoints within funding constraints and deals with government about the limits of criticism. The conditions existed for NGOs (with this new kind of relationship with the state) to have an over-determining influence on community politics.[4]

8.1.9   Unequal distribution of equality – class and location

Some of the people I've talked to in the inner-west use the metaphor of 'bubble' to describe their milieu and spaces. For Megan who was not really a part of the scene the inner city is 'all quite safe and sound'. She thought that 'the younger [lesbian and gay] generation' were 'less political' than hers and needed to be reminded that the situation in rural and outer metropolitan areas is different.

Marta has seen a growing normalisation of homosexuality in Western Sydney, 'I think slowly over the last ten or fifteen years we're becoming more established in the community', she said. She has positive relationships with her neighbours. 'We're letting people know we want to buy houses, we want to have kids, we want to get married. We want to do all those normal things because we are normal.' It's a label she has no anxiety about. And yet the challenges she faces in finding suitable spaces for performance events for her social networks of older lesbians suggest that everyday life is perhaps no easier than it was in the past. 'I think the main problem with that is, because we are a minority community, in the face of the heterosexual world and the standard is that anything that is different is deemed dangerous, and that's why it's hard to find a space.' The pubs, except in the inner-west, she says are 'straight-oriented'. Some of the clubs she has used are 'gay-friendly' though 'they probably wouldn't advertise it that way.' In seeking to be accepted in a mainstream (club) setting and avoid conflict, Marta argues that one adjusts one's presentation, something that her generation

was taught to do, to 'adapt to our environment'. When she was young, she said, 'you go out you're polite, you're nice, you're quiet, you're reserved. We can be a bit outrageous, we're older, we've lived through all that. We're at an age where "if you don't like it then take a walk".' She thinks that contemporary young people have not been taught to adapt. They are confronting. 'They think they can do as they please because it's their god given right.' They attract conflict 'and they find it hard to find a space'. Means are also an issue. 'A lot of our community family are disadvantaged, all right, it's the same in any community. You've got your upper, your middle and your lower, what you call them, classes, that's up to you. You've got your strugglers and your battlers.'

Interview participants identified aspects of a lesbian and gay equality politics impacting on their activism and organising. Their accounts related to tendencies to respectabilisation and domestication of sexuality and the drive to an acritical inclusion in the state, as in the marriage equality campaign. They concerned the limits of narrowly defined legal equality and its the unequal distribution. They encountered the technocratic tendencies in community governance groups: their evocation of a virtual gay and lesbian mainstream, their marginalisation and excision of dissident groups that sit awkwardly with them and their collaborative relationships with the state. "Equality" politics was shaping the future of sexual politics in the "official" gay and lesbian community.

8.2 Future challenges to activism

Participants identified other challenges to the future of their activism: in the political environment; in the collective objectives and political normativities of radical sexual politics; in the processes of organising; in the outcomes of equality politics; and the fortunes of individual activists.

8.2.1 Challenges in the political environment

Some of the challenges that activists predicted related to: neoliberal and conservative governments; the further neoliberal restructuring of the economy; the implications of attacks on various social groups and the funding of public services; and the viability of everyday life and the challenges for activists' motivations and resources.

Bernard was troubled by a future where the division of church and state is profoundly compromised, and because of what was happening in church organisations and funding

of public services, a vision of 'state and church being brought back close together again.' With a neoliberal and conservative government, he saw gay marriage becoming a stand-in for demands for real social equality.

For Rosie the attack on the funding of women's refuges and accommodation services was a major challenge for the future, in how it would affect 'queers, homeless queers that have been kicked out of their communities and women suffering domestic violence.' Most important, she said, was to understand the 'relationships' between 'the way the government acts and what they say as well as what they do' and the different effects this has on 'gender and sexual oppression … and what the function of that is, the function of them under-funding these social services and legitimising these decisions.'

When we spoke, one of the immediate challenges for Marta (who is a research worker in indigenous children's health) was the likely effects of the Abbott government's pre-budget announcements on indigenous communities. 'They've only had forty, maybe fifty years to develop something to sustain their world and I'm going to say, with what's going to happen, their world is going to be totally torn apart again ... it's going to be the same for us.' She was 'horrified' at Abbott's abolition of the position of Disability Discrimination Commissioner in the Human Rights Commission. At fifty-five years of age, when we spoke, she saw her long-term future in the workforce as five to ten years and the proposed changes to age pension eligibility and age of access will have a major impact on her. Government is illegitimate, she said, 'where it doesn't care about or listen to the people and is more interested in power.'

For Tom the biggest challenge will be to afford Sydney's rental market and the pressure that high costs of living put on one's time. In the community he grew up in, he said, 'everyone had so much time because no one had a job … we were all pretty crazy'. Hanging out at the youth centre and using the resources, 'travelling, learning, going to festivals and conferences and putting on our own events', Tom felt that 'there won't be a time again where life allows for full-time volunteer community work in that way, especially not in Sydney.' Tom is not interested in a career or a secure financial future. The ideas are somewhat alien and not suited. 'I've had a lot of opportunities to integrate into mainstream life and job path', he said, 'but just haven't taken them and I think that's because it is better mentally for me not to. It feels kind of funny having security and a future.' His parents had recently 'lost all their money' leaving them without

security and he found it 'kind of freeing in a way', there would be no inheritance. He didn't see himself ever having any money, but he does have 'a really strong community'. The future scenario of putting his caravan on someone's land is enough. Hustling and sex work remain an option. Indeed at between one and six hundred dollars an hour it reduces the appeal of low wages. He said that he and his friends 'always joke about how we think about things in terms of how many blow jobs that would cost, like that's three hundred dollars, that's two blow jobs.'

For Bernard the biggest challenge was to keep positive and motivated to action in the face of disappointment. There is a great deal of frustration that goes with activism and dealing with neoliberal governments and, he asked 'why am I even bothering?' He decried that there was 'such an unsophisticated view of government by government in this country and … such a poor view of civil society groups and a countervoice and a critical analysis of what's happening in the country.' Increasingly, funded organisations were 'gagged' in doing systemic advocacy. Apart from being 'just bullshit and insidious and revolting', he said, it was also very 'short sighted in terms of the gain for us progressing as a group of people living in one place.' He called it 'pathetically short-sighted and unsophisticated' and very 'disheartening'. With an understanding of what you were 'up against', he said, one ended up with the view that 'your energy and contribution isn't valued as being there to make a positive difference, that it's seen as an irritation.' He finds the bullying by government members of disability advocates in private both incredible and unusual. He observes that 'Australia is quite brash in its bullying of people.'

With Darren's activism around queer collective living and free parties, he saw a challenge in 'the increasing poverty in money and time among the people that would normally be most vocal in demanding social change, students.' Rosie reflected on the impacts of neoliberal economic and social restructuring. If she was part of 'the total restructuring of the system' she would organise it very differently. For her in 'the way we've created the world we've created a difficult life for ourselves. It's hard to enjoy just being alive'. Neoliberalism has impacted on activists' time and resources. The 'memory of big mass social movements that have achieved change' seemed to be of the distant past, she said, thanks to the intervening ten years of the Howard government having 'smashed us and smashed our confidence.' Indeed, by affecting a cascade of neoliberal and conservative policies across multiple domains Howard was able to keep

activists occupied while as Maddison and Martin suggest his strategy was to 'delegitimise social movement activism and public protest' (2010, p. 112). From attending more recent Bust the Budget and pro-refugee demonstrations Rosie believed that many people are yet to 'connect the dots'. Much of what comes from organisers and speakers, she said, is 'still very liberal-democratic and electorally focussed and bureaucratically focussed.' Nevertheless there were 'a lot of dynamic movements starting to evolve and grow' and it was a particularly significant moment for the country. It was also, Rosie thought an important time for the Left 'to be involved and offering their discussion, their experience around some of these ideas that they're encountering and strategies for the way forward, to build and strengthen these movements and opposition to the government and its politics.' Rosie really wanted 'to be a part of those movements.' It was 'very rare', she said, 'to have opportunities like this where the antagonisms are very sharp, that people are self-organising in the capacity that they are in the moment and it's a rare point of history that needs to be capitalised on.' This meant 'making sure that we are fighting as best as we can at this point of time because things happen very fast.'

8.2.2   The future of sexual identity politics

Marta saw the end of the categories of sexuality and gender as the biggest challenge of the future, 'to get rid of that division of sexuality.' She was considerably heartened by Norrie May Welby's success in the High Court in being 'able to have non-specific gender ... that in itself is an icebreaker', she said, 'it's a start to our marriage situation, getting rid of gender.' She referred to her lesbian friends in Western Sydney.

> A lot of the thinking, or the feeling more so, amongst my friends … we generally think it's not necessarily the gender of the person, it's the person themselves that you fall in love with. Yes there are the stalwarts, I only sleep with men, or I only sleep with women. Then you have your stalwarts who will sleep with either one and say they're bisexual. And then you've got the people, the young people who say they don't like the term bisexual.

These latter had a more fluid and queer identity. Marta was emphatic, 'I think the biggest part of our fight is to get rid of that sexual discrimination, get rid of that sexuality model: you're gay, you're straight.' This wasn't coming from any queer theoretical position about fluidity. It was a response to a lifetime of labelling and stigma and an appeal to ambivalence. Recognising that she was putting forward 'a simple idea

but a difficult thing to do', she wondered if people had it in them. 'We're meant to be an intelligent animal', she said. 'We're not so intelligent and sometimes we're very cruel.'

Lena thought that, 'as a whole, people still have a fair way to go with gender', that for most people gender and sexuality are still regarded as essential qualities. For many it remains difficult terrain. She spoke about a recent relationship to illustrate. It became rather more complicated when she found out 'he was bisexual and he was on with sites like gay.com and screwing men.' At first she was positive. She thought, 'this is excellent, we can have even more fun'. The problem was that 'he didn't accept it himself … he was just humiliated and went off the deep end.'

With critical reach and a global view, Harley has a vision of a post-gay global radical sexual politics that will come from somewhere else. He is hopeful that 'ephemeral but interesting social movements' on all continents will leave 'an opening for some new fairly profoundly radical thinking which won't be like anything we've experienced before'. This change will affect Australia and 'global radical politics'. He predicts that gay marriage will be in a lot of countries 'even in Vietnam'. Gay rights and gay marriage as activist concerns will be long gone. He foresaw that 'there'll be a different form of sexuality politics that we don't know.'

8.2.3   Challenges in the processes of organising

Wayne talked about the challenge of attracting and encouraging new activists. He had been involved in the organisation of major events and organised small ones single-handedly. He couldn't see why others can't at least do the latter. 'It's scary that there's very few people within the critical or radical or dissident headspace that do so many things.' More disturbing, he said, was the problem of 'free riders', people who become passive consumers of other's activism or worse, do not help at events or clean up after themselves. For Darren, collective enthusiasm was a key challenge: 'keeping people's energy up.' Many of the social events he organised served to do that. For Andy there were challenges around resources in the intersex movement. Without any funded organisations, resources were limited. Despite a growing membership, he said, 'we have very few people who have the capacity to work, deliver, be the public face, contribute at that level.' The fundamental challenge was still about healthcare and bodily autonomy.

Some of activists' concerns related to social media, virtual spaces and online activism. Bernard is concerned that with a shift away from organising in physical spaces to more virtual, on-line interaction, there is a challenge for organisations in working with this virtual engagement and providing a space for this constituency and doing things 'in virtual space instead.' The problem unique to virtual spaces is the 'speed of information', he said, and with that 'there's depth which is lacking … in terms of that deeper conversation about human rights and what's really happening and an analysis of power isn't going to be happening at that super speed level.' Instead, Bernard said, issues require 'critical thinking and a deeper conversation' which is one of the challenges of moving into those spaces.

From her professional and personal experience of social media Maeve mounted a defence of 'the keyboard warrior' that she thought was a much-vilified kind of activism. She argued that people are reading a lot of 'other people's opinion and their experiences and their reactions' and relating it to their own experiences, whether they realise it or not. By way of illustration she cited a recent shooting of young women in the U.S. where people were communicating in social media and thinking about violence against women and its systemic origins and how it is reproduced. She also cited the response to over-policing and police violence at the 2013 Mardi Gras and the social media response to that, which, she said, 'motivated a lot of people to be political, to write to their local member, to write to the police, to write to the paper, to protest that', which she herself also did. With her familiarity with internet communication she was able to post, from her sickbed at the time, a video she had taken of the police bashing Jamie Jackson, to the Facebook page of gay activist and star of *Star Trek*, George Takei, the most subscribed Facebook page in the world. She noticed he had just posted something and fired it off. The message and video was accepted by the staff moderating his site within ten minutes and viewed over three million times within two hours of being put up.

Wayne noted that a lot of young people 'do all their reading' on the internet. The challenge he thought was in getting people off Facebook into real physical spaces. The idea of clicking something that 'will show that you're against some policy or action', he said, has 'really sucked the texture and sensuality out of activism.' He thought it was reflected in contemporary protest that is 'bland and boring and formulaic.' The protests of the past, he said, 'were just really feisty and spontaneous.' He found that the 'sheer volume of information and perspectives' on the internet was overwhelming. He also felt

that direct action in the physical world couldn't be compared. 'What can be accomplished', he said, 'when eight people go into the office of some multinational and chain themselves together and when eight people click something on Facebook, are just worlds apart.' He has time for 'gay luddites and radical faeries', living in rural areas, who have 'realised the value of not being part of the machine.' He used Facebook a lot himself in promoting his events.

Some concerns went to organising and identity politics. One challenge for Rosie in effective organising and collective action is to work around what she described as 'campaigns that have a tangible outcome'. Her approach has been informed through organising and 'seeing stuff that works and galvanises people together and inspires confidence in people's perception of change and empowerment too.' Struggle is important and so is winning. In the absence of these kinds of objectives community activism 'quickly becomes self-referential and utter inertia'. This tendency to being self-referential is a problem of identity politics. Maeve referred to a lesbian and gay identity politics that through normalisation and a drive to gain acceptance has become 'watered down and not as punchy'. She is happy for there to be a gay and lesbian identity politics as there is still need for action on discrimination and violence and the celebration of difference. She is happy 'that there are things that celebrate the gay and lesbian community. I like it that people think it's a nice thing to be', she said. 'I like that positive energy that comes towards it. I think, "well, sure, do that".' Identity politics is 'limiting but it's nice, it's got a social aspect to it'. She had little invested, herself, in these sorts of identity politics:

> I don't want acceptance, I just want people to be ambivalent about it. Don't go for acceptance, go for ambivalence, where it doesn't matter who you sleep with unless you want to have sex with that person, where it makes no difference. Strive to be ambivalent.

The danger she saw in gay and lesbian identity politics was the possibility of becoming irrelevant. 'You might end up with a gay or lesbian group or society or community that rate the same as trainspotters', she said. 'You know what I mean? Like, "that's our special subject, that's what we're interested in, we're trainspotters".'

Rosie railed against collective conflict around queer identity politics, discussed earlier (in section 7.2.4). The challenge for the queer community, she said, was to 'break its

bubble' and engage with other struggles, not just in 'gender and sexual oppression'. To do this people will have to deal with the 'abusive social practices' associated with a 'mutant identity politics' and 'have an approach to struggle that's bigger than just controlling and policing people's behaviour and involvement.' If it doesn't 'break its bubble' and address the limitations of this aspect of identity politics, 'when other movements become bigger ... these kind of politics will cower and fade and become not relevant anymore.' Darren also sees a problem of identity politics that poses a major challenge to the queer movement in becoming censorious and destructive. The failure of queer identity politics, he said, 'is that it is indulging in this "call out" culture that is detrimental to movement building and there's a bigger focus on the party line and on saying the right thing and not making anyone else feel unsafe.' This focus comes at the expense of 'finding common ground between people with differences and being okay with people being different or having different ways of expressing themselves or different opinions.' Darren felt that he hadn't seen 'a lot of that bigger focus on movement building that means people are motivated to find common ground rather than find reasons why they are different from each other.' Wayne thought it was critical not to forget those who might be re-engaged in activism. He thought it was a 'huge' challenge for the future of activism to do a kind of politics that doesn't alienate people and is successful in engaging demobilised gays and lesbians.

One concern for the future related to organising and class in the queer political scene. One of the challenges that Wayne sees for queer political action is a movement that he regards as very middle class, 'very white collar'. In spaces like at a recent Queer Collaborations Conference he wondered how many working class people there were. He felt that they were alienated from critical and radical communities because of a class distinction. He felt that they were looked down upon. He was passionate: 'These people make the fucking sun come up in the morning, they keep the infrastructure of society going.' He thought there was 'no real acknowledgement … of the quite large and very hidden and largely silent [number of] blue collar worker or unemployed lesbian and gay people, and people who can't work because of their health … or something.' Megan suggested that perhaps it was easier for middle-class people to step forward, she said, into 'political, I hesitate to say, void space and be proactive.'

8.2.4   Challenges in the effects of equality politics

Harley thinks that the "official" gay movement has done badly on the interstices of class, disability or ethnicity. 'It's telling what is seen as intersection politics', he said, 'which is contestable.' On the other hand, he argued, there is a radical sexual political approach to all key issues and mainstream issues and a lot of forgotten agendas, for example, how the churches got to be major providers of government funded services. The "official" gay movement, he said, failed to inject politics into the key social questions around race, gender, class, imperialism or the environment. It lacked creativity, humour and innovation.

Wayne said that gay men and lesbians need to resist homonormativity and demobilisation. He said that 'basically' lesbian and gay politics need to evolve. Some of the things this involved were 'not being so formulaic and dry, not thinking that a rainbow flag says everything you need to say, not idolising someone who might be famous just because they're gay and thinking that they're some kind of icon.' Darren thinks that after same-sex marriage is achieved, the challenge will be 'convincing lesbian and gay people … that they've got to look after other people as well ... other oppressed people, like transgender people.' Bernard foresaw a similar challenge in building a deeper human rights conversation across the community when legal equality is won and 'it hasn't delivered what people think it's going to deliver', with continued discrimination, violence and hate crimes. This conversation has to go deeper, he said, than 'a superficial legislative process', to fundamental rights to safety, and freedom from vilification and violence and the 'right to be outside the tent and to be safe and happy and well.' This challenge involves dealing with neoliberal governments and their agencies [that reduce freedom to a narrowly defined legal equality] who will say 'we have what we were demanding – equal rights.'

Facing an alignment of policing and lesbian and gay community governance groups, and what he regards as an abandonment of public sex by activist groups, the challenge for Leonard, and his colleagues in their defence of beats and beat users, was to adapt. They have chosen to go underground. 'We call it feeling in the dark', Leonard said, 'we're out there and we're talking to people and helping people. We have been pushed so far underground we're making networks.'

Harley doesn't believe that traditional radical lesbian and gay demands have any life left in them. The transformation of HIV organisations into lesbian and gay health services is deeply troubling to him. He argued that while sexuality may be a source of difficulty for some people, it has little to do with disease processes and treatments and at some point there is little to be gained from what he called 'a capital "l" lesbian or capital "g" gay angle'. While he believed that there is a sexual political line to be had on anything, he thinks that this logic doesn't apply to gay and lesbian health.

> There's all sorts of sexual political approaches to all of that. I know that sounds contradictory but if you look at ACON and how it's positioned itself as a gay and lesbian organisation I'm really sceptical and always have been about how far you should go along that track.

He recalled a conference in the U.S. in the late 1980s that was 'very inspiring around HIV' but he departed from the view 'that if a bus runs over a lesbian then that's a lesbian health issue.' At that point he thought, 'no, it's not.' The idea that people's problems can be solved 'through a gay and lesbian path', he said was 'a wrong way of looking at the complexity of any health problem.'

8.2.5   Challenges for individuals

Very low income, uncertain employment and a physically hard life was the reality of some of those with whom I spoke. The long-term opportunity costs of fulltime activism were also a challenge, in terms of where it may leave them in the future. 'It's weird', Wayne explained, 'I think I've been ruined as far as traditional employment goes but I can organise stuff like this, it's in my skillset. I don't have a CV. I don't have a resume. But I've organised this list of things.' It was not a new realisation for Wayne. Alice also knew what she was forgoing. 'I don't think I need those things though', she said.

Lena thought the challenge of being more free was often contradictory to individual's thinking and realities. 'People absorb the contradictions', she said, ' they want to do these things and they find they can't.' Her illustration concerned internet dating sites.

> I found on these websites married men, a lot of men that had secrets and they couldn't be themselves, that led me to go onto anonymous sites where people were asking questions about all kinds of stuff and there's a lot of pain there, a lot of people that can't be free because of the confines of their own mind. They recognise themselves as suffering without realising that everyone else is suffering as well.

With a Foucauldian resonance of complicity[5] she thought that 'maybe we're oppressing ourselves.' People have told her 'oh, I couldn't do that' and she wonders 'why couldn't you do that ... or "I can't speak up for myself" ... what's stopping you? You're stopping you. I think people can be their own worst enemies.'

Some spoke of the challenges of being or remaining happy and well. Marta's challenge was framed personally. 'I just want to sing and be creative', she said, 'and my idea of success is happiness, that's success. If I was happy everyday I would be successful … Love, joy and truth are the things I'm trying to achieve.' The truth of her voice, I asked. Yes, she said, 'I don't caution my lyrics. They are how they are and I don't want to ever.' Her message was about magic (she pointed to one of her tattoos). 'I believe that there's magic in everything', she said, 'but the kind of violence of this reality has made us believe that there isn't any.'

8.3 Conclusion and methodological reflection

Following Brown (2012), my analysis distinguishes between liberal homosexual normalisation and neoliberal neo-homonormativity (as per Duggan 2003), and between liberal homonormativity and queer counternormativity, in the context of place and their historical elements. Gay and lesbian equality politics impacted on activists and their organising. Its dynamic tended to rendering homosexuality in the private domain, with domestication and a pursuit of respectability. This produced a new marginality as described by Duggan (2003), Richardson (2004, 2005) and Agathangelou, Bassichis and Spira, of 'dissident (working-class and culturally diverse) intimacies, sexualities and kinship forms' (2008, pp. 121-2). Past and contemporary activists saw, in the pursuit of equality, a tendency to excise or marginalise problematic, awkward or dissident groups (migrants, injecting drug users, sex workers, old and disabled, defenders of public sex, polyamorists and 'hard-core' lesbian feminists).

Some activists questioned a tendency in gay and lesbian equality politics to invest more power in the state. Further to this was a drive to social inclusion and what Richardson describes as a valorisation of lesbians and gays without any critique of the social processes and politics that devalue (2005, p. 532). Some activists had a critical view of equality politics, consistent with the argument of Agathangelou, Bassichis and Spira, as 'highly individualised narratives of bourgeois belonging and ascension' and the selective promise of 'mobility, freedom, and equality' (2008, p. 124). Whatever their

views, for instance, none of the interview participants were personally interested in marriage. Most had strong concerns about marriage and critiques of the marriage equality campaign. It was producing tensions, like those described by Agathangelou, Bassichis and Spira (2008, pp. 121-2) around its appeal to citizenship and social inclusion and the reconsolidation of the state's regulatory role in sexuality and gender, notwithstanding the ideological dissonance it represented around the historical role of marriage. Equality politics contradicted a liberationist perspective, of limiting the powers of the state. Same sex marriage was becoming the "stand in" for gay and lesbian inequalities in the popular discourse (reducing the focus on everyday issues like violence, discrimination, bullying, homelessness and suicide). Activists observed that the movement for marriage equality was a very middle-class concern, and very "gaystream" (gay mainstream). Some felt it mirrored the blandness and exclusiveness of the contemporary commercial gay scene and an inability to consider ideological alternatives or transform society. While some queer activists contested marriage, from a polyamory perspective, the general lack of interest it inspired in Left and queer quarters allowed conservative and neoliberal interests to set the agenda, leaving little ground for a radical voice in what was a critical issue, the state's regulation of identities.

Activists saw an emergent neoliberal sexual politics, particularly in the fields of "official" community governance and activist groups and their relationships with the state, "official" because of their relationship with the state and the virtual lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender constituency they invoke. The funding of some NGOs had changed the material reality of the lesbian and gay movement with career activism, acceptance of the limits of criticism with government and an over-determining role in community politics. The liberal workforce from earlier reforms in public and community sectors that I have mentioned in Chapters Three and Six, had a new neoliberal element with expertise in the promotion of individualising and privatising moral discourses. Some activists make strong statements about governance organisations. It is a part of their contestation. Their areas of action might be seen as fields of temptation to selective promises of citizenship, security and equality, this a narrowly defined legal one based on sameness with heterosexuals. But considering them all, I observe that gay and lesbian community NGOs vary between their types and with their counterparts in other Australian states in the penetration of and resistance to conservative and neoliberal policy agendas. Radical, collective, perhaps latent

normativities (anti-neoliberal and post-neoliberal) still influence their outcomes. Their persistence is perhaps part of that Australian tradition that Gibson (2013) evokes, class and colonial legacies that have had a 'muting' effect on neoliberal developments and produce enduring popular demands for spatial and economic equality and redistribution and ongoing contestations around cultural equality. The effect of the sameness discourse in lesbian and gay NGOs, identified by Richardson (2004, 2005), on the other hand is to promote particular notions of lesbian or gay and conceal the heterogeneity of a community and conceal differences like location, class, gender and ethnicity. The marginalisation of public domain-connected sociality and sex and its privatisation (particularly through mobile phone applications like Grinder) was changing ideas of identity and community, making the future difficult to predict.

Many of the developments in the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras (towards commodification, depoliticisation, collaboration with policing and control of access and political content) are an anathema to older gay and lesbian movement activists and have made it irrelevant to many queers and driven an increasing anti-neoliberal divergence, and bifurcation of gay and queer spaces. Mardi Gras is part of a 'political discourse of assimilation and equal entitlement' among gay and lesbian NGOs identified by Richardson (2005, p.524) that requires a style of governance that is able to recognise, and be recognised in, the mainstream and is acceptable in the political and social policy fields and with commercial interests. Yet for some Mardi Gras is still a space for contestation of community. Given the challenges and barriers, the participation of people with disability in the parade represents a huge personal investment and illustrates the affective dimension of motivations to collective action. Markedly, though, the younger activists were more hostile towards its organisation and did not have the ambivalence of older activists.

Conservative and neoliberal developments in the political environment threaten an ugly future of further neoliberal social and economic restructuring, growing social inequality and division, attacks on marginal groups and the funding of public services (with a growing role for the church), and challenges to the physical and financial viability of everyday life as well as activists' motivations and resources. There was an uncertain view of the future of sexual identity politics. Some hoped for greater ambivalence around categories, referring to variations of a post-homosexual queer like the one Altman (1972, 2011) had predicted. One activist saw a different kind of sexual politics

on the horizon, one that we did not yet know. The challenges for organising involved attracting new activists and keeping up collective enthusiasm, finding ways for a deeper conversation than social media encourages and promoting physical gatherings. The corrective for self-referential identity politics was a focus on external and achievable goals and to guard against destructive identity tactics.

One of the challenges for the queer movement was its middle-classness and the intersection of gender and sexuality with class and ethnicity, as issues which "official" lesbian and gay bureaucrats and NGOs have subordinated or ignored. Gay and lesbian equality politics posed challenges with the "official" gay movement having failed to bring any perspectives to key social questions around race, gender, class, imperialism or the environment. Its net effect was depoliticisation and demobilisation. Lesbian and gay politics needed to evolve, to resist homonormativisation and promote diversity, to accept that legal equality would leave anti-homosexual sentiment intact, more so in rural, regional and outer-metropolitan areas. The over-determination by governance groups of community politics needed to be contested. Finally the personal challenges for the future involved for some dealing with low income and a hard life and confronting the opportunity costs of long-term full-time activism, resisting regulation and self-regulation and for some, the struggle to remain happy and well.

Notes, chapter eight

1 Senate Inquiry into Same Sex Relationships (Equal Treatment in Commonwealth Law – General Law Reform) Bill, 2008

2 The Midnight Shift is a gay bar in Oxford St. Darlinghurst.

3 It's the sort of thing that Andy would dismiss as gay and lesbian celebrity advertising click-bait. Harley refers to this *Daily Mail Online* story (25/1/2012), by Mike Larkin, 'I'm gay by CHOICE': Sex and the City star Cynthia Nixon faces gay backlash after claiming she chooses to be homosexual.

4 It is a risk for any social movement. Maddison and Martin cite Maddison and Edgar (2008) describing many movements having 'paid a price' for their imbrication with the state in 'risking irrelevance through a loss of legitimacy, independence and vision in the eyes of current and potential members' (2010, P. 110).

5 Foucault suggests our goal should be 'not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are.' This involves imagining and making a subjectivity beyond the dilemma 'which is the simultaneous individualisation and totalisation of modern power structures' (1982, p. 785).

Chapter 9: In Memory of Now

I have enjoyed the challenge of bringing a critical ethnographic view to historical and contemporary developments in contemporary lesbian, gay, transgender and queer critical, radical and dissident activism, and to do this with new historical and contemporary research. This is an ethnography that would have not been possible without thousands of participants and those populating their accounts. Beyond the relational ethic, I wish to emphasise my respect for them. In this chapter I reflect on what has changed in activists' accounts over the last forty-five years and present a timeline of the key points of disjuncture, transformation, incipient developments and reconfigurations of social movement parts that feature in them.

9.1 Radical, critical and dissident activists – forty-five years of change

In this section I reflect on what has changed in activists' accounts. Across four and a half decades there have been changes in the types and fields of collective action and the collective normativities or politics of actors, including their ideations of gender, sexuality and community. Their relationship with the state over that time has been utterly transformed, and social and economic restructuring has changed their economic and social relations as growing social inequality impacts unequally on them and their resources.

9.1.1   Change in collective action and normativities

Not withstanding the trans-historical homosexual subjects and earlier gay rights and homophile movements evoked by gay liberationists and lesbian feminists, the idea of an essential homosexual identity was an incipient development. Smith et al. (2003) estimate those with gay or lesbian identities at 1.2 per cent of the adult Australian population. Given the effects of the normalisation of homosexuality, it is odd to imagine the point in the past at which there were none, or very few. I have described the early lesbian and gay movement as one that, given the distance from periphery to centre, was a small social movement that looked bigger from the outside. It would grow, attracting new members in its mobilisations and the social networks in which it was embedded.

Looking at lesbian and gay movement organising and action in 1978, through Melucci's lens of collective identity, has revealed a multiplex lesbian and gay movement and how its different parts responded variously to politicising and radicalising effects.

Involvement in the lesbian feminist and lesbian and gay movements gave members access to radical ideas relating to homosexual and gender oppression and liberation and to collective discussion. It deepened and broadened understandings of these, of ideological apparatuses and instruments, of strategies of state political and economic control and regulation and mechanisms of exclusion. The movements provided possibilities for empowerment, defiance, solidarity, mutual support, a sense of belonging and affirmations of sexual identity. All of this strengthened the collective identity of members. The capacity of the lesbian feminist and gay and lesbian movements to support members and redistribute resources and critical insights enables the movement's collective identity to be produced and personal and collective identity to interact in individual social actors. Melucci describes these as being held in tension. Collective identity was strong enough to endure in kinship and social networks where politics and collective normativities were contested. The social networks of the movements contributed to their persistence, through periods of abeyance and further mobilisation, and supported a sense of collective identity, politics and collective normativities that endured.

The gay and lesbian movement in Sydney had struggled against conservative, then Labor state governments and a renegade and anti-homosexual police force. The *78ers* were involved in a lesbian and gay movement that intersected with others: the women's and lesbian feminist movements, the student movement, progressive social movements, trade unions and radical Left parties[1] who battled with the same police force. The movement had a complex relationship with the emergent gay male community, that had also suffered at police hands, with its parts reconfiguring around male Left activists' mobilisations in that community.

The newly named Gay Solidarity Group organised movement responses throughout 1978 and had a significant role in political and social movement solidarity in the 1980s (providing a radical gay and lesbian focal point at demonstrations, rallies and protest marches). The account of the *Gay Liberation Quire*, a multiplex group itself, shows gay and lesbian relationships with the gay community, one populated by inner-city gay men, and suburban, outer-suburban and regional gay and lesbian social groups and through the 1980s, all sorts of interest groups and lesbian and gay equality groups and associations. The account also shows movement intersections and relationships with the parties of the Left and the progressive and international solidarity movements, and how

they were embedded in everyday life. Acknowledging the connections between different struggles, they gave voice to their four square gospel of socialism, feminism, gay liberation and ethnic pride (the latter a reference to cultural diversity and identity). To say the movement went into abeyance in the late 1980s conceals that abeyance is not, as I've argued, a unitary state. The multiplicity of movement parts means that its elements have periods of mobilisation and abeyance at different times and in response to different moments in their political, economic, social and cultural environments while exploiting different political and cultural resources. A strong sense of collective identity is more enduring.

In the contemporary moment an inner-city lesbian and gay community is very real to some interview participants (though it is seen by some as more of a virtual community, or as not meeting real and redistributive requirements of the notion of community[2]). Lesbian and gay scenes, around commercial venues are still visible, but under pressure from lock-out laws in Darlinghurst. Some activists saw, a declining scene with a decreasing sense of otherness and sophistication. Social networks of extant gay liberation and lesbian feminist movement members, including the 78ers, remain active in diverse political and cultural pursuits and available for mobilisation.

The contemporary inner-west queer community is diverse. It has diffuse political elements and an activist tendency and networks. Its complexity and normativities are all but invisible, though, to the older lesbians in central western Sydney I spent time with, not many kilometres away. Some of the queer activists I spoke to were involved in social networks and movements that intersected with the queer community – the transgender movement, intersex movement, disability movement, global sexual political groups and solidarity movements, the political parties of the Left and anarchist groupings. Some of these involved contestations around recognition and inclusion in queer collectivities and normativities. The countercultural milieu in the inner-west was also a broader milieu for many queers, one in which they felt comfortable. Very organised, and sailing often under the radar of authorities, its networks are collaborative, mutual and redistributive and in ways radical and dissident. Interview participants, as we have seen, organised very large protests against conservative governments and neoliberal social and economic policies that reached into every part of their lives, affecting their personal and collective resources. Local government regulation of the use of public spaces was limiting activists' options in organising

events and protests. With escalating policing of neighbourhoods, use of police sniffer dogs and control of people's movements there was a strong sense of increasing intrusion by the state. A neoliberal sexual politics had been expressed in a systematic elimination of beats by the State and local governments, in collaboration with gay and lesbian community governance groups. Interview participants were involved in defence of community, from over-development, gentrification, motorways, over-policing and controls on late night movement between venues (lock-out laws). Appropriation of public space was an important tactic. Activists produced actions and events in public, community and private spaces and these were also focussed internally on collective identity and mutual recognition, orchestrating moments and zones for celebration, lawlessness and non-commercial sociality. This was part of the 'latent pole' of collective action (Melucci 1994, p. 127) that produced the contested collective normativities and mutual recognition that could be transported to 'visible' action.

In this context there had been a significant shift and reconfiguration around activists' attitudes to Mardi Gras. The *78ers* expressed a strong ambivalence towards Mardi Gras - most saw value or significance in it, while expressing concerns about its commercialisation, spectacularisation, hyper-masculinism, depoliticisation, inaccessibility, disconnect with history or increasing contemporary irrelevance. Many of their comments were prescient of the direction of Mardi Gras and contemporary activist concerns about its collaboration with the state and police, its commodification of collective action, the securing of spaces, its drug and sex prohibitions and its control of access to events and the content of political expression (placards and banners). The noticeable shift and reconfiguration around Mardi Gras is that the ambivalence of older activists and 78ers is absent among younger activists who have a general antipathy towards it, increasing the anti-neoliberal divergence and bifurcation of gay and queer spaces. Queer events and parties are organised in opposition. Some, such as queers with disability used the parade as an act of self-inclusion and they confronted the same access problems year after year.

9.1.2 *Changes in research participants' ideations of gender, sexuality and community*
In the earlier and contemporary movements there are personal and collective dimensions to the way activists think about gender and sexuality. Social movements and collective identity allow for the spaces where these are lived, and ideas like resistance

and liberation and political normativities are contested. Being a radical faerie in the late 1970s, for example, is at once personal and also collective, with shared epistemologies, practices and historical and contemporary elements (such as effeminism, ecology and collective living). Terms that *78ers'* used to identify gender and sexuality were directly related to specific collectivities and subcultures and to sexual politics and groupings.

The response of a fractured lesbian and gay movement in 1978 in Sydney to police attacks on the 24th of June involved a temporary alliance of its distinct parts: lesbian separatists, radical feminists, socialist feminists, radical effeminists, radical faeries, socialist homosexuals, Left heterosexuals, bisexual and transgender people, and conservative and apolitical gay and bisexual men. Each part had distinct normativities, practices and epistemologies. Yet the immediate defence of all of those who had been arrested or otherwise badly affected and the solidarity of joint action, both personal and collective, reinforced the collective identity of those involved. It was cemented in everyday spaces of the lesbian feminist and gay and lesbian movement, with the caring, advocating, finding someone a room or another job, holding someone's hand that you've not long met while they faced court. The sense of collective identity was enduring for many, embedded for many years in social and family relationships. Sexual identity was also enduring. Changes in identifiers in respect to subculture or politics notwithstanding, almost all of the survey participants who were homosexual, gay or lesbian in 1978 identified the same way twenty years later. More, though, were using the identifier queer in 1998 and made comments about notions of gender fluidity and problems with essentialisms and categories around gender and sexuality.

Two decades later, the political normativities of the inner-west queer community is influenced by queer theory, anti-colonial theory, radical and Left politics, feminism and transgender critiques of transphobia and cisgender. As in the earlier movements there is a contested identity politics in these networks. Interview participants regarded their gender and sexuality in diverse fashions and multiple ways. While there were essential qualities to some, they were mainly regarded as deconstructible and contestable. Some identified themselves as heterosexual or bisexual, some as lesbian or gay, some were queer, some were not, and some were queer and gay or lesbian. As with earlier movement activists, identities were rendered in the relational dimension of community and particular groupings (such as transmen, polyamorists and fetish networks) and a bifurcation of queer and gay spaces. While some moved across these spaces as parts of

a whole, and others doubted whether a gay community really still existed, a geographical and redistributive queer community was very real to activists and its identity was political, not just sexual political, and its normativities and orientations were counter-systemic.

A neoliberal sexual politics was evident to many activists and was influencing the concerns of the "official" gay and lesbian community around respectability and claims to citizenship. The marginalisation of uncommodified sex and sociality in the public domain, once normative among homosexual and gay men, is now an awkward social problem. Cruising technologies, applications like Growler provide an alternative to sexualised spaces and negotiating sex. Where that will take collective identity and the idea of a lesbian and gay community as a place, is hard to predict. Some talked about challenges for the future of sexual identity politics, bringing an end to sexual categories and appealed for a greater ambivalence about gender. They acknowledged that people were slow to change, that it was still difficult terrain. One interviewee hoped, that surviving social movements might be able to keep a space open long enough for a new, post-gay, radical, sexual politics coming from somewhere else (in the world), one that we don't yet know.

9.1.3   *Change in social and economic relations*

The historic and contemporary data reflect a profound change in activists' relationships to the state and their social and economic relations. Despite high youth unemployment and an inflationary economy in 1978, many *78ers* were enjoying the consequences of the Whitlam federal government's reforms, access to higher education, public sector growth, funding of community organisations (including feminist community-based services) and a developing liberal workforce, as I've referred to it, in associated public policy and administration areas. By 1998 they were mostly highly-educated and most were in the highest occupational labour force segments (it was a mobility that did not vary with gender or childhood financial circumstances). Professionalisation and mobility set the direction and ground of gay and lesbian equality politics in the latter 1980s, with developments in state government funding of gay and lesbian community NGOs and the growth of the gay and lesbian community and its equality organisations.

Funding had changed the everyday life of the lesbian and gay movement with opportunities for career activism, acceptance of the limits in criticising government and

policy, and an over-determining role in community politics and the communities' relationships with government. NGOs could fail to promote positions on key social questions around gender, class, race, imperialism or the environment. The effect of a discourse of sameness with heterosexuals and the promotion of particular lesbian or gay subjectivities could conceal the heterogeneity of communities, understating their intersections with gender, class, ethnicity and disability (a dynamic identified by Richardson 2004). NGOs could also participate knowingly or unknowingly in the marginalisation or excision of gay and lesbian subjectivities that are problematic, awkward or dissident (processes identified also by Richardson 2005 and Duggan 2003). Migrating partners of local queers, public sex activists, injecting drug users, sex workers, queers with disability, queer polyamorists, older gays and lesbians, elder queers, radical lesbian feminists, dissenters and dissidents were among those activists identified as new outsiders at times across forty years. The relationship with government not only favoured certain notions of homosexuality it also required certain styles of governance acceptable to mainstream and commercial interests and the policy field (as per Richardson 2005).

The relative normalisation of homosexuality through the latter 1980s had resulted in a new gay and lesbian workforce in retail, community NGOs, the academy and the public sector. It did not come from the traditional, working class gay community occupations in the services and caring sectors. The conservative and neoliberal economic restructuring from this time was reflected in the age and material life and livelihood of contemporary research participants. All of the eight older participants (like the *78ers*) had higher education (most of it free and supported) and employment in high-skilled and professional employment (most in the community or public sector). They lived in single, family or small group households. The younger seven were studying, relying on income support, or on low paid unskilled work, doing community arts and performance work or selling their art. They all lived in collective settings. They were between nine and seventeen years of age in 1996, when a conservative Howard government was first elected (the next older participant was twenty-three). The differing effects on their personal trajectories, life experiences and resources were part of growing social inequality (that Pusey, 2010, refers to), with user-pays higher and vocational education, workforce casualisation and a crisis of development, gentrification[3] and a dearth of low-cost housing. As I have argued earlier, whether this restructuring has been a

conservative redevelopment of the state's service and welfare role, or a neoliberal challenge to it, as per Weller and O'Neill's (2014) concern, the effect is a transformation in the state's relationship with young people, and given time, ultimately everybody. Liberal social and economic developments affected not only the various relationships of parts of the lesbian and gay movement with the state, but the social and economic relations of individual activists and their cultural and material resources. Later conservative and neoliberal developments and social and economic restructuring have continued to figure collective action but have also fundamentally impacted on the habitus and the resources and abilities of individual activists.

Was the lesbian and gay movement foundational to lesbian and gay equality politics? Some activists saw it this way, as part of a general movement away from radical and critical ideals. The lesbian and gay movement certainly provided some of its personnel, as well as the conservative gay men it mobilised who were politicised but not radicalised. The data suggests a complex process, given that most *78ers* kept a critical view of the normalisation of lesbian and gay subjects within capitalist and patriarchal regimes. It was a multiplicitous reconfiguration of all the parts in their varying responses to their variously changed relationships with the state, some separating, some reduced in influence and some mobilising in new spaces. Some *78ers*, in their reflections on change, identified a new homonormativity and early developments in neoliberal lesbian and gay equality politics in lesbian and gay community governance groups.

Many contemporary activists, like gay liberationists, questioned the tendency to seek inclusion without any critique of the politics and processes that devalue people, as Richardson describes (2005, p. 532). Some had a Marxist inflection (like Agathangelou et al. 2008) that this involved a selectively made promise of privilege. It was a sexual politics that could take its place in a neoliberal multiculturalism, as Žižek describes it, one that accepts the supremacy of capitalism while concealing its homogenising and universalising presence with the pursuit of cultural difference and identity (1997, p. 46). Activists argued in various ways about the illusory nature of legal equalities that contained a disavowal of the inequality existing in the cultural domain and protected the perpetrators of anti-homosexual sentiment (and the purpose of this political protection). Some argued more simply that it could not render them as equal in the "real world", that

it left anti-homosexual sentiment intact, more so in rural, regional and outer-metropolitan areas.

The same-sex marriage campaign, from the early 2000s was regarded by most interview participants as a very middle-class concern, coming out of an "aspirational politics" that stresses sameness with heterosexuals. Critical and radical proscriptions of marriage and indeed pursuing "sameness" with heterosexuals were old, for instance the manifesto[4] which was adopted by the Gay Liberation Front in Sydney in 1972 and in feminist and lesbian feminist critiques of marriage. The socialist parties now supported marriage in an odd, contradictory and alienating tactic, the result of an abandonment of a Marxist critique of the family and decades of complex and reflexive understandings of gender and sexual oppression, promoting liberal rather than socialist freedoms. Radical queers tended to be uninterested or disdained the marriage equality campaign, except for polyamorists who sought to derail the debate and promoted non-monogamous marriage. Activists bemoaned the collective effort and resources that were wasted. It brought into sharp relief the relative disinterest in the "official" community to pressing issues like queer youth suicide, which is manifested at sustained and epidemic levels, and inequality and poverty. Indeed marriage was becoming the "abstract" of gay and lesbian inequality in the popular discourse. With a lack of critical interest, the conservatives and NGOs had set the agenda. The regulation of gender and sexuality by the state, which should have been a critical concern to queers, was happening without any broader critical dialogue. The outcomes were unsurprising then, that in a range of concerns there was no ground or space for a critical or radical voice.

Regarding the challenges they saw for the future of their activism, interview participants evoked a bleak picture of everyday life and the social, political and economic landscape. They foresaw governments on a continuing path of privatisation and reversal of earlier downwardly redistributive policies, earlier achievements of labour and progressive social movements. Indigenous, disability and social security policy and the defunding of feminist-based women's and family crisis services were mentioned. They also saw new forms of domination and control, including the greater role of religious orders in public services. Bernard feared the further re-imbrication of the church and the state. The future of advocacy was also daunting with a bullying culture in government that holds a poor view of civil society groups, where advocates are regarded as nuisances and met with counter-threats, rather than being seen as those who could help to make a positive

difference. The research was conducted at a particularly significant time, with opposition to the (then) Abbot government, with class antagonisms and a lot of dynamic movements evolving and growing. Neoliberal restructuring of higher education was impacting on a group with a traditional role in collective action and social change – students – who were dealing with increasing poverty of money and time. With neoliberalism intruding into every part of their daily lives, the refusal of the state and capitalism was becoming less viable. Some wanted, borrowing one interviewee's metaphor, to live "outside the tent" and had few expectations of being able to better their material conditions.

9.2 Continuity, disjuncture and the reconfiguration of movement parts

Apparent social movement continuity is dynamic and multiplicitous at the empirical level – the apparent continuity may conceal the reconfiguration of movement parts in response to social, political, cultural and economic change and to new forms of domination and incipient community and movement developments. Just as the apparent unity of social movements can conceal their multiplicity, apparent continuity may obfuscate important disjunctures. The continuities and key points or moments of disjuncture and transformation since 1972 that feature in the accounts of participants in this research are revisited below (and presented in a tabular form in Table 11).

The first key point is the radical-reformist split in CAMP NSW in 1972 with the formation of the Gay Liberation Front, which was part of an international phenomenon. The social networks in which the gay and lesbian movements were embedded expressed the collective ambition of the movements in making and contesting (counter) normativities, new ways of living, being and relating. They provided the spaces for contesting political and critical understandings of homosexual oppression, women's oppression and strategies for liberation.

The second key moment was the formation of the Lesbian Feminist movement. At the First National Homosexual Conference in 1975, lesbians moved quickly to organise separately and tensions were high around sexism in gay and lesbian movement settings.

With the International Gay Freedom Day events in June 1978 there was a disjunctural point, marking a new, second wave of radical and critical activism and a bigger younger movement. At the time seasoned activists saw it as another solidarity protest, drawing

on their collective repertoire of actions – a handful of activists that appealed to broader movement participation in organising and executing a day of solidarity events. But it became a transformational moment, for the first time the movement reached a critical mass in numbers.

The emerging gay male community was drawn into sharp relief by what it would later regard as "the first Gay Mardi Gras". It was a turning point in the new community's visibility, its relationship with the police and organised crime, its economy and commerce and its relationship with the lesbian and gay movements. It was a new domain in which some (gay Left, male) activists began to organise and collaborate – against anti-gay laws and police and policing of beats and commercial sex on premises venues –which had little appeal to radical and Left feminists, given the sexism and misogyny that was prevalent. The gay community grew in the 1980s and became more diverse. After law reform in 1984, there were no major mobilisations for several years, with smaller actions in defence of sex-on-premises venues and beats, until the late 1980s with the community's response to HIV/AIDS.

In the early 1980s, there was a proliferation of small activist groups across a range of liberationist and lesbian feminist concerns that remained embedded in movement networks, the *Gay Liberation Quire* being one.

The gay community grew in the 1980s and became more diverse. It was a community that endured the loss of thousands of its members in the 1980s and early 1990s to HIV/AIDS. In response the community produced activist groups that included radical and conservative movement activists, and later groups concerned with anti-gay violence and with lesbian and gay rights, which became the ground of gay and lesbian equality politics. It also created membership based organisations of people living with HIV/AIDS, and for a short time an activist group, *Act Up*. Federal and then state government funding of movement organisations was the key development, generating a new workforce (in the community and public sectors) and changing the material conditions and dynamics of the movement. The relationships of funded NGOs with their communities changed with their new, constraining relationship with the state. It positioned NGOs as having an over-determining influence on social policy and community politics, and there was a reconfiguration of radical movement elements around these developments.

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By the late 1980s the lesbian and gay movement was moving into abeyance. Its abeyance structures included its social and family networks, activism in intersecting areas (the Left, women's and other social movements), some gay and lesbian communities and governance groups, and the evolving queer community in the inner-west, the latter making its own spaces, culture and norms.

The rise of gay and lesbian equality politics was coincident with the emergence of the queer community (in its social networks was a developing activist tendency with many centres, more or less political in its parts and at times). They each represented divergent tendencies that were solidified in the bifurcation of formerly shared spaces. There were separations along binaries (respectively) with sameness with heterosexuals, recognition by the state and appeals to social inclusion and claims to citizenship on the one hand and difference with heterosexuals, ambivalence towards the state, refusals of recognition and inclusion, and anti-systemic orientations on the other. This divergence of normativities has also been rendered in the habitus of individuals over time and embodied (literally). This was reflected, for instance, in social networks like Wicked Women[5] in the late 1980s, or the HIV/AIDS activist group ACTUP in 1990.

There have been divergences around Mardi Gras. In 1998, *78ers* described strong positive and negative feelings about its personal significance and its direction (spectacularisation, commercialisation and engagement with the state, its hypermasculinism and so on). Many lesbian feminists stayed away from it through the 1980s and early 1990s. In recent years with control of political expression, dress and behaviour associated with participation in the parade, as a curated parade, and the securing and commercialisation of other events, there is little ambivalence and a radical and queer antipathy that has led to a further bifurcation of gay and queer spaces (for example, between Mardi Gras Fair Day and Mardi Gras Unfair Day).

Another point of disjuncture comes in the broader social contexts and milieus of movements. The gay and lesbian and lesbian feminist movements found their broader milieu in the Left, women's movement and counterculture. Contemporary queer activists in the inner-west find a broader context in the organised part of a countercultural milieu that has connections to the earlier countercultural movements and associations in collective living, dating back to inner-city squats of the 1980s.

Another key moment mentioned by participants was the federal Same Sex reforms of 2007 that were accepted in the gay community, despite the disadvantage and negative consequences for older people and those with disability. A mobilisation of older activists and progressive community organisations (such as disability and positive people's organisations) ran a campaign against the reforms and for no-disadvantage and other savings provisions. The marginalisation of older and disabled queers (and the activists involved) that was expressed openly in the community was also another key moment in gay and lesbian equality politics and their excisive effects.

The contemporary demand for marriage equality is another disjunctural moment in the development of gay and lesbian equality politics. Apart from the disruption caused by queer polyamory activists, there has been a queer antipathy which has silenced radical voices in what is the state's regulation of relationships. Queer and critical activists have been marginalised in the drive to citizenship, respectability and domestication in gay and lesbian equality politics, rendered in new collaborative relationships with the state. Dissident and awkward groups are excluded with the reconfiguration of the insides and outsides of the "official" gay and lesbian community, as an 'imagined' community [6], the gaystream of mainstream.

These key moments and points in developments have caused realignment, reorganisation and reconfiguration of social movements and their parts, and are drawn from participant's accounts. It is hard to know what the next developments in equality politics will bring (given the protected ground of key perpetrators of anti-homosexual sentiment). It is also hard to predict all the implications of neoliberal social policy and how both of these will figure the responses of critical, radical and dissident activists, and what new communities and political networks and post-neoliberal radical politics might develop into the future. The history of queer mobilisation finds a powerful resonance in the structural transformations and antagonisms of the present, posing a counterpoint and generative capacity for radical agency.

Table 11:Key disjunctures and associated reconfigurations

Emergent, Disjunctural or Transformational Moment	Reconfiguration of Movement Parts
Split in CAMP NSW with the formation of the Gay Liberation Front (1972)	Critical, radical and revolutionary homosexuals organise separately. CAMP becomes a reformist group with a religious part and its own Left.
Emergent gay (male) community (mid 1970s)	Tensions and bifurcations between the homosexual movement and the gay community (over sexism, anti-lesbian sentiment and anti-radicalism) and between gay men and lesbians
Formation of Lesbian Feminist Movement at the First National Homosexual Conference in 1975	Radical and socialist feminist lesbians organise separately. With tensions over sexism they begin to leave the homosexual movement. Radical feminists and socialist feminists debate the role of gay men, the Left and the working class in liberation.
Socialist Homosexuals, Sydney 1976, coming out of critical and feminist strands of gay liberation (later Socialist Lesbians and Male Homosexuals) and organising with national conferences in 1981 and 1983	A reconfiguration of gay liberation movement parts that makes a (counter-sexist) space for socialist lesbians and male homosexuals to organise within the lesbian and gay movement.
At a time when there are not many lesbians in the movement, a small group organises solidarity events on International Gay Freedom Day June 24 1978, a daytime protest of 500 and a night-time Mardi Gras that is routed by police, leads to a year of collective action and a second wave lesbian and gay movement in Sydney.	There are two sets of reconfigurations: A (temporary) alliance of lesbian separatists, radical feminists, socialist feminists, radical effeminists, radical faeries, socialist homosexuals, Left heterosexuals, bisexual and transgender people; and A new interaction between this movement and conservative and apolitical gay and bisexual men and the gay community.
Formation of the Gay Liberation Quire (1981) as a strategy to penetrate the gay male community: It brings its politics of play to the relationship.	The Quire presents a different relationship between the lesbian and gay movement and the gay male community in Surry Hills and Darlinghurst and the suburban and regional lesbian and gay groups.
Sydney Gay Mardi Gras incorporated (1984). The (seventh and later) Mardi Gras is in the hands of the gay community.	The parade has the look of the gay male community which produces it, with hypermasculinism and sexism, which produces tensions with lesbian feminists who stop participating in Mardi Gras for many years

Table 11: Key disjunctures and associated reconfigurations (continued)

Emergent, Disjunctural or Transformational Moment	Reconfiguration of Movement Parts
Homosexual law reform campaign (late 1970s, achieved 1984): after law reform there are no large mobilisations in the gay community for several years.	There are several reconfigurations: the campaign antagonises the split between lesbian feminists and the gay movement, and between lesbians/pro-feminist Left gay men and the gay (male) radicals organising in the gay community.
HIV/AIDS epidemic (from early 1980s), formation of AIDS Action Committee in 1983, foundation of AIDS Council of NSW (ACON) 1985, People Living with Aids Coalition (PLWA) 1988, Aids Coalition to Unleash Power (ACTUP) 1990	There is a reconfiguration of movement parts around government funded and activist organisations, and between HIV/AIDS provider organisations and organisations of people with HIV/AIDS.
Deradicalisation of the socialist political parties (from the mid 1980s) with an abandonment of Marxist understandings of the family and homosexual oppression and the embrace of liberal and equality politics.	There is a reconfiguration of activists' relationship with the socialist parties and the Left, the counterculture and fetish communities provide a broader milieu of queer.
Emergent queer community (late 1980s) and subsequent spatial bifurcation	With tensions around gay and lesbian equality politics, the queer community and its political networks diverge from the gay and lesbian community and movement. The separation is normative and spatial.
Marriage equality campaign (early 2000s)	There is a reconfiguration of critical, radical and dissident movement elements and divergence with gay and lesbian equality politics with queer disinterest in, antipathy to or sabotage of the same-sex marriage campaign.
Commonwealth Same Sex Reforms (2008) supported by community despite its heteronormativity, binary gender and negative effects on older and disabled people in the social security and aged care system, and other groups.	There is a reconfiguration of older gay and lesbian movement activists relationships around support for the reforms and a further divergence with gay and lesbian equality politics.

9.3 Afterword

I began with an account of a Reclaim the Streets (RTS) event, in Newtown, Enmore and Marrickville in September 2014. Wayne's placard, 'In Memory of Now', resonates with fond memories. Things changed very quickly. There have been further RTS events, targeting the NSW government, its Westconnex motorway and high-density urban

development policies, its lock-out laws and the intensification and extension of policing generally, and a growing violence against queers and transgender people in the area. Its organising group (affectionately known as Pie Club) continues to meet regularly. The lead banner is becoming recognisable in the media. 'Welcome* to Sydney', it says, '*conditions apply'. Another is, 'Be Excellent to Each Other' which always moves me. Meanwhile the gentrification of the area intensifies. Piercing stares and frowning with folded arms is the new police choreography, replacing more jovial community policing methods (we wonder who the frown consultant was). In the main streets, police with sniffer dogs patrol. In the parks police harass community members and larger groups and prosecute for the use of alcohol. Queers have a leadership and organising role within key local protests against a state government that appears bent on destroying personal and collective freedoms and resistance. The mood of activists I spoke to is bleak. Three of them have left Sydney, one is planning his exit soon and others press on. While there is continuity and new activists (and their social networks) become involved, the change in leadership and core activists has an impact on the reach and diversity of mobilisations, and the historical elements that are brought to collective action. Maintaining collective action's latent pole, its embeddedness in social networks is equally challenging. Yet the pop-up protest parties in Newtown keep popping-up and the radical lesbian and gay and queer community is still vibrant. While I concede there's every reason to be bleak about the prospects, I think activists have kept a civil space and collective identity alive, though they underestimate the strength of their political innovation. The first March-in-March protest, against the Abbot government, for example, opened up the radical and progressive end of a countrywide, dispersed and localised dissatisfaction with inequality and the illegitimacy of a conservative government, with neoliberalisation on its agenda, under the sway of powerful, vested and distant interests. It had the polity scratching its heads. Significantly it predated the new (global) wave of popular disenchantment that has also had government and wider interests wondering about its origins. It is a model for grassroots and multiplex organising on a large scale – centreless, overlapping social networks where the narratives are voiced variously in every place, coming out of local conditions, historical elements and community formations and solidarities. This new political sensibility depends on relationships, connections, dialogue, and collaborations in the everyday. The motivation to keep a space open for new possibilities or political developments remains strong. The prospects for winning on any of the issues these activists confront

are becoming increasingly elusive. Appropriately the June 2016 RTS was "Broke but not Broken".

Like participants I am concerned about the future. I am also concerned about what is happening to the past, not in the historiographical sense. I am troubled by the effect of what I have referred to as a neoliberal time compression (after Pusey 2010) with all economic uncertainty rendered into households, where there is no time left each day for reflection or remembering and where the past seems much longer ago than it is and less useful for knowing how to act in the present. There is a political imperative, then, to produce, and act on, the queer history of the present.

Notes, chapter nine

[1] These all involved extranational relationships.

[2] In rejecting the idea of a gay and lesbian community some also saw the constituencies claimed by governance groups as a virtual gay mainstream (or gaystream) that was part of a virtual mainstream, more like one of Benedict Anderson's 'imagined communities' (1991), given the claims to citizenship involved.

[3] A 'structural violence' in 'narratives of emergence and disappearance', as Manalansan (2005, p. 152) describes in respect of homonormative spatial reconfigurations and the displacement of young, poor, working-class queers and indigenous people.

[4] Carl Wittman's A Gay Manifesto (1970)

[5] There was also a magazine about lesbian erotica and fetish by the same name published from 1987.

[6] Anderson's (1991) term, as discussed in Section 8.1.2.

Appendices and images

Appendix 1: *78ers* **Social History Project – Survey questions**

Note: Open questions and 'other' options had space for responses.

1. Did you go to the International Gay Solidarity Day march on Saturday 24 June 1978 (the morning of the first Mardi Gras)? No/Yes

2. Did you go to the Forum at Paddington Town Hall that afternoon? No/Yes

3. Where were you that evening (before the Mardi Gras)? At a friend's house/ At home/ At a bar or venue/ At a restaurant/ Other

4. Did you join any part of the first Mardi Gras that night (between its beginning at Taylor Square and the next morning at Central and Darlinghurst police stations)? No/Yes

5. I did not join the Mardi Gras because (tick one or more) … I didn't approve/ I believed it was relatively trivial/ I was out of Sydney/ I hadn't come out/ It wasn't relative to me/ I was working/ Other. Go to question 26.

6. Which parts did you join? (tick one or more) Taylor Square/ Oxford St/ College St/ William St/ Darlingurst Rd (the Cross)/ Darlinghurst Police Station/ Central Police Station

7. I joined the first Mardi Gras because: (tick one or more) … I read about it in the paper/ I supported progressive social movements/ I saw posters, fliers/ I tagged along with a lover, friends/ I thought it would be fun/ I wanted to meet new people/ I was looking for sex/ I wanted to support gay, lesbian friend(s)/ I was politically active/ I was active in the gay and lesbian movement/ I'd had enough!/ It looked fun, from the side/ Other

8. I went to the first Mardi Gras: (tick one or more) … Alone/ With a crowd of acquaintances/ With a lover/ With close friends/ With political allies, friends

9. I wore special clothes … Yes/No

10 What were you wearing? (tick one or more) … Drag/ Make up/ Hippie gear/ Overalls/ Leather/ My regular clothes/ Other

11. I wore these clothes because …

12. Did you join the Mardi Gras at Taylor Square or on Oxford St? Yes/no

13. As the Mardi Gras moved down Oxford St did you: (tick one or more)… Chant/ March/ Chat with others/ Sing/ Come out of a bar/ Walk quietly/ Dance/ Talk to police

14. What else do you remember doing (on Oxford St)?

15. Did you move into William St. from College St.? Yes/No

16. Why? / Why not?

17. How did you feel as you were progressing up William St.?

18. Did you participate in the activities at Kings Cross? Yes/No

19. Did you first join the Mardi Gras in Kings Cross? Yes/No

20. What was the impact of its arrival there?

21. When the confrontation with the police started on Darlinghurst Rd, did you ...? (tick one or more) … Assault police/ Leave/ Help others to resist arrest/ Resist arrest/ Change your outfit/ Throw things at police/ Chant /Scream at police

22. What other things did you do?

23. During the first Mardi Gras did you? (tick one or more) … Make new friends/ Meet a new sexual partner/ Meet a new lover/ Go home with someone for sex/ None of these

24. During the first Mardi Gras were you: (tick one or more) Assaulted by police/ Grabbed by police and escaped/ Arrested/ Charged/ Convicted/ None of these

25. If you were charged did you use your own name? Yes/No

26. Did you go to the demonstration in front of Central Court in Liverpool St, the Monday following the Mardi Gras (June 26 1978)? Yes/No

27. During this protest were you: (tick one or more) … Assaulted by police/ Grabbed by police and escaped/ Arrested/ Charged/ Convicted/ None of these

28. Did you go to the demonstration that ended outside Darlinghurst Police Station on Saturday morning, July 15, 1978? Yes/No

29. During this protest were you: (tick one or more) … Assaulted by police/ Grabbed by police and escaped/ Arrested/ Charged/ Convicted/ None of these

30. Did you attend the Fourth National Homosexual Conference at Paddington Town Hall, 25-27 August 1978? Yes/No

31. Did you join the march from the Conference to protest the Right-To-Life anti-abortion rally in Hyde Park on Sunday 27 August? Yes/No

32. Why did you join this protest?

33. During this protest were you: (tick one or more) … Assaulted by police/ Grabbed by police and escaped/ Arrested/ Charged/ Convicted/ None of these

34. If you were you arrested, where were you when it happened? … Taylor Square/ Between Taylor Sq. and Hyde Park/ Hyde Park

35. If you were arrested at the first Mardi Gras, or during any of the protests following it in 1978, what were the consequences for you?

36. Did the events of 1978 have a significant influence on your life? Yes/No

37. Why?/ Why not?

38. In the six months following the first Mardi Gras (July to December 1978) did police officers: (tick one or more) … Harass you in a public place/ Harass you at a lesbian or gay venue/ Charge you with any 'offence' (other than one relating to a protest event)/ Harass you privately/ Search your house/ Interview or question you/ None of the above

39. Did you identify your gender in any of these ways in 1978? Transgender/ Male/ Female/ Other

40. How else did you describe your gender in 1978?

41. Did you apply any of these descriptors to yourself in 1978: (tick one or more) Asexual/ Bisexual/ Butch/ Camp/ Celibate/ Clone/ Confused sexuality/ Counterculture/ Drag queen/ Dyke/ Effeminate/ Fairy/ Femme/ Gay / Heterosexual/ Homosexual/ Homosexual male/ Leather person/ Lesbian/ Lesbian drag/ Poofter/ Queen/ Queer/ Transgendered/ Transsexual/ Transvestite/ Undecided/ Other

42. In 1978 were you active in a lesbian, gay, bisexual or trany political or social group? Yes/No

43. Which groups? Acceptance/ ADHOC (Sydney Uni.)/ Anggays/ Boomerangs/ CAMP/ Clover/ Fourth National Homosexual Conference organising collective/ Gay Solidarity Group/ Lesbian Feminist Collective/ MCC/ Pollynesians/ the Sydney Motor Cycle Club/ Other groups

44. In 1978 did you belong to a political party or organisation? Yes/No

45. Which one/s?

46. In 1978 were you active in another social movement? Yes/No

47. Which one/s?

48. In 1978 were you active in a religious organisation, church, sect?

49. Which one/s?

50. In 1978 did you identify your politics as (tick one or more) … Anarchist/ Apolitical/ Communist/ Conservative/ Effeminist/ Feminist/ Liberal/ Libertarian/ Marxist/ Radical feminist/ Separatist/ Social movement activist/ Socialist/ Socialist feminist/ Trade unionist

51. In 1978 did you go to lesbian or gay bars and discos? Never/ Rarely (several times a year)/ Occasionally (once a month)/ Regularly (every week)

52. In 1978 did you use sex venues? Not applicable, never/ Rarely (several times a year)/ Occasionally (once a month)/ Regularly (every week)

53. In 1978 did you use beats? Never/ Rarely (several times a year)/ Occasionally (once a month)/ Not applicable never/ Regularly (every week)

54. In 1978 did you go to women's or lesbian/gay movement dances, parties or concerts: Never/ Rarely (several times a year)/ Occasionally (once a month)/ Regularly (every week)

55. What kind of music did you like in 1978? (tick one or more) Classical/ Country and western/ Disco/ Glamrock/ Opera/ Pop/ Punk/ Rock/ Other

56. Who were your favourite performers?

57. Were you mainly in paid employment during 1978? Yes/No

58. What was your job/s?

59. Were you: … Receiving a pension/ Studying/ Retired/ Unemployed/ Parenting/ Other

60. If you were studying, were you studying at? … School/ Trades course/ University (humanities)/ University (sciences)/ Other

61. Would you describe your financial circumstances in 1978 as … Poor/ Comfortable/ Well off/ Other

Do you agree with any of these?

62. I would say that, at the time of the 1978 incidents, gay/lesbian politics was: … Boring/ My life/ Interesting/ One of several interests/ Very important/ Other

63. The lesbian/gay movement brought changes to my life. Yes/No

64. Why? / Why not?

65. The 1978 Mardi Gras was important to Sydney's gay/ lesbian/ bisexual/ transgender communities. Yes/No

66. Why? / Why not?

Some other questions about you

67. Where were you born? (town or suburb and state or overseas country

68. What is your ethnic/cultural background?

69. Would you describe your childhood situation as being? … Poor/ Comfortable/ Well off/ Other

70. What is your age, now?   years

71. Are you in paid employment at the moment? Yes/No

72. What kind of job/s?

73. Are you … Receiving a pension/ Studying/ Retired/ Unemployed/ Parenting/ Other

74. What level of education have you finished? (tick one or more) … Left school early/ Finished secondary school/ Did a trade qualification/ Completed an undergraduate degree/ Completed a postgraduate course/ Completed a master degree/ Completed a doctoral degree/ Other

75. Do you apply any of these descriptors to yourself now? (tick one or more) … Asexual/ Bear/ Bisexual/ Butch/ Camp/ Celibate/ Clone/ Confused sexuality/ Counterculture/ Drag queen/ Dyke/ Effeminate/ Fairy/ Femme/ Gay / Heterosexual/ Homosexual/ Homosexual male/ Leather dyke or queen/ Lesbian/ Lesbian drag/ Poofter/ Queen/ Queer/ Transgendered/ Transsexual/ Transvestite/ Undecided/ Other

76. Since 1978 have you participated in Mardi Gras events or activities (tick those that apply) Stonewall '79/ Stonewall '80/ Mardi Gras '81/ Mardi Gras '82/ Mardi Gras '83/ Mardi Gras '84/ Mardi Gras '85/ Mardi Gras '86/ Mardi Gras '87/ Mardi Gras '88/ Mardi Gras '89/ Mardi Gras '90/ Mardi Gras '92/ Mardi Gras '93/ Mardi Gras '94/ Mardi Gras '95/ Mardi Gras '96/ Mardi Gras '97

77. How much do you participate in Mardi Gras activities these day? Very much/ Somewhat/ Little/ Not at all

78. How enjoyable is the Lesbian and Gay Mardi Gras for you these day? Very enjoyable/ Somewhat enjoyable/ A little enjoyable/ Not enjoyable at all

79. How important do you believe Mardi Gras is these days? Very important/ Somewhat important/A little important/ Not important at all

80. How important is Mardi Gras to you these days? Very important/ Somewhat important/A little important/ Not important at all

81. How strongly do you identify with Mardi Gras these days? Very much/ Somewhat/ A little/ Not at all

82. How else would you describe your feelings about the contemporary Lesbian and Gay Mardi Gras and its events and activities?

83. Are there any other comments you would like to make?

Image 1: Reclaim the Streets, 2014 Enmore – the diverse crowd (one) (Photo: author)

Image 2: Reclaim the Streets, 2014 Enmore – the diverse crowd (two) (Photo: author)

Image 3: Reclaim the Streets, 2014 Cook Rd. Marrickville – intercourse (Photo: David Urquhart)

Image 4: Reclaim the Streets, 2014 Cook Rd. Marrickville – doing one's thing (Photo: David Urquhart)

Image 5: Reclaim the Streets, 2014 Cook Rd. Marrickville – being watched (Photo: David Urquhart)

Image 6: Gay Solidarity Group contingent in May Day march, 2/5/1982 (Photo: David Urquhart)

Image 7: Part of inner-west queer contingent, at March-in-March, Sydney 16/3/2014 (Photo: author)

Image 8: Gidget Goes Gay at Tamarama, photo: David Urquhart

Image 9: The Blue Mountains provided a popular place for Quire weekends away. Photos: David Urquhart

Image 10: The Quire reclines post-performance, photographer unknown.

Image 11: The Quire rocks at the Gay Embassy, outside Premier Wran's house, photo: David Urquhart.

Image 12: Quire member, the late Sister Cum Dancing (Colin Peet) faces off with Festival of Light supporters at the Equality Rally at NSW Parliament House, photo: David Urquhart.

Image 13: Jim Cameron MLC joins Festival of Light protestors at the Equality Rally, photo: David Urquhart.


Image 14: The Quire blends in on the steps of the Sydney Town Hall causing mayhem, protesting the Mary Whitehouse tour, photo: David Urquhart.

Image 15: 'Mob of drongos' at Darlinghurst Fair, photo: David Urquhart.

Image 16: The Quire appropriates the Strand Arcade for "Christmas" carols until it is moved on by security, photo: David Urquhart.

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