
Infrastructures of Intimacy

Queer (re)configurations of cultural space

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Statement of originality

This is to certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes. I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

Jan Philipp Filmer

June 13, 2020

Abstract

This thesis explores queer people's everyday encounters with forms of governance and social regulation in contemporary Sydney, Australia. It considers how queer people and communities (in which loose category I will incorporate all forms of non-heterosexual identity and culture) are impacted by recent policy decisions and debates pertaining to the regulation of queer party cultures through zoning laws; the formal recognition of non-heterosexual relationships through marriage; and sustained 'heteroactivist' campaigns against LGBTIQ-positive education programmes. While considering the regulatory effects of these policies and debates, it attends more centrally to how queer lives navigate forms and structures of power and 'make do' with the material, including spatial and social, resources available to them. To that end, this thesis utilises a mixed-methods approach, combining analysis of public discourse through policies, policy debate, and media coverage with qualitative interviews that incorporate cartographic mapping techniques. This blend of approaches enables an account of how the constraints of governance also animate the formation of new relations, places, communities, activisms, and politics.

Tracing what I call 'infrastructures of intimacy', I thus set out to map where and how ordinary queer lives are lived and sustained despite adverse circumstances. Instead of approaching governance exclusively as the means by which 'queer' bodies, desires, and intimacies are regulated, thinking with infrastructure in this way allows me to frame queer life in terms of a more dynamic and shifting socio-material arrangement. The singular 'gaybourhoods', for example, that have been historically and rhetorically important to understanding non-heterosexual lives and cultures are not necessarily more productive of queer sociality than the more dispersed queer spaces that have recently emerged in Sydney prompted, in part, by the 'Sydney lockout laws'. Similarly, the forms of collaborative politics and activism animated by the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey are not necessarily less meaningful than the more bounded solidarity of gay rights activism that produced Sydney's famous Mardi Gras, and emerging digital geographies of sex education are not necessarily less supportive than state-endorsed programs such as the recently notorious Safe Schools Coalition Australia. Focussing on the infrastructural, in other words, foregrounds how spaces and apparatuses (including institutions, technologies, and discourses) are used to sustain queer lives. Although the forms of power which may seek to contain such lives can be acknowledged in such an approach, my emphasis is not on exposing oppression or marginalisation, and in this respect my thesis is committed to what Eve Sedgwick calls a 'reparative' mode of analysis.

This central commitment is simultaneously theoretical and political. Although the research represented in this thesis initially set out to examine queer resistance to forms of heterosexual domination, it evolved, in dialogue with the objects and subjects of my research, into a critique of precisely this kind of binary thinking and the epistemological blind spots it creates. The infrastructural model put forward here resists queer theory's dominant framing of 'normal culture' as a regimenting and totalising arrangement in which queer spaces and lives figure as exemplars of resistance to 'the powers that be'. Such a binary logic, I argue, simultaneously disregards the dispersed infrastructures of contemporary queer life and neglects the multiple exclusions which operate in supposedly progressive 'queer spaces'. Further, this logic dismisses the ordinariness that is crucial to queer lives in practice, which do not consistently align with any political imperative to resist 'the normal'. Instead of positing transgression and assimilation as opposed choices, I argue that queer intimacies are better understood as pluralisations of the continually shifting cultural formation that is 'normal' life.

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Introduction

Gay culture is being a teenager when you're 30 because your teenage years were not yours to live.

— @introvertgay, 2 Sep 2017, 12:58 PM. Tweet.

Arriving in Sydney; or, Get Thee to a Big City

I first arrived in Sydney on a cold July morning in 2012 as an undergraduate exchange student from a small Liberal Arts College in a conservative and predominantly Catholic southern corner of the Netherlands. The first two people I met and befriended were Laura and Meg, my roommates in a backpacker hostel on George Street, opposite Central Station where I was staying for a couple of weeks while looking for a place to live. I was full of excitement but also apprehension as I had made a big promise to myself before I left for Australia. Having spent most of my adolescent years desperately hiding my queerness away, I promised myself that my six months in Sydney were going to be the beginning of a new life as an *openly* queer person. So, I came out to my hostel roommates within the first five minutes of us introducing ourselves to one another. I was blushing. Even more so after one of them tried to comfort and reassure me by saying, “it’s ok.”

I turned twenty-four three days after this arrival, and my new roommates generously offered to take me out for my birthday. We caught a bus to Oxford Street in the heart of Darlinghurst, Sydney’s main ‘gaybourhood’. I had, of course, already studied all the need-to-knows about queer Sydney and was anxious to explore Oxford Street. As we got off the bus, Meg approached a few people on the street to ask where we should go for a drink and a group of young men suggested “Midnight Shift,” one of Sydney’s oldest gay night clubs, “to get started.”

As we entered the club, my eager apprehension turned into awkward discomfort and I wanted to just walk away from the situation. I felt as if I had to know exactly how to navigate a gay bar, how to have fun, how to dance, what to drink, and how to meet someone. I pretended to be comfortable about my sexuality in front of Laura and Meg but, really, I knew very little about being gay and felt very uncomfortable about pretty much everything this new

situation involved. We bought drinks and stepped out onto the balcony overlooking Oxford Street where I nervously smoked a couple of cigarettes.

A few stiff drinks later, my nervousness began to ease. Laura and Meg engaged a group of remarkably friendly men in conversation. One of them caught my eye, smiled at me, and pulled me away to the bar for another drink. Soon after, we already found ourselves on the dance floor. What had started out as a very confronting experience quickly developed into the kind of night out I had so often pictured in my mind. I loved the camp music, being surrounded by an overwhelming crowd of gay men, and the attention from and flirtations with strangers. My intoxicated body quickly adjusted to the space of the club and I remember looking at myself in the bathroom mirror at some point during the night, smiling and thinking, “this world *does* exist and I’m part of it now.” I think this was the first time I had really felt a sense of queer joy—happiness not in spite of being gay but because of the prospect of an exciting, community-oriented life that I could actually see myself living. Back outside on the balcony for another cigarette, someone suggested we go to ARQ, another well-known gay club nearby. I was relieved that Laura and Meg decided to go home at this stage as I myself went along.

When I woke up the next morning, with no idea where I was in Sydney and barely remembering whose bed I was in, I was still drunk. The guy I had gone home with earlier that morning woke me with a cup of coffee and insisted on taking me out for a belated birthday breakfast before we said goodbye in the early afternoon. As I walked back to the hostel, I was overcome by a sense of freedom and possibility. Everything felt too good to be true, perhaps except for my increasingly bad headache, although that too seemed absolutely worth it.

Prior to this night out, I had fantasised endlessly about living in a place that affords the kind of life I had experienced in those twelve hours—not merely having queer sex but also being part of a queer community and living a version of the life I only knew from popular culture, like the television series *Queer as Folk* (2000-2005). Walking along King Street in Newtown on my way back towards Central Station, I was transfixed by the sight of two men walking toward me arm-in-arm. Their confidence and tender embrace moved me to tears as the life and culture introduced to me on screen felt tangible for the first time.

I grew up in a small town in north-western Germany with a population of approximately 25,000 people. Queer life, public displays of queer affection, and the relationships and intimacies I had been longing for when I came to Sydney seemed to have no designated places in which they could occur, at least no places I felt comfortable seeking out as a closeted queer. I knew of two infamous highway rest areas, which were cruising sites for gay men and could

only be accessed by car but the fear of being seen there by the wrong person, let alone the police, kept me away; although it did not sate my curiosity. Similarly, in school and among peers, being called or 'found out' to be a 'Schwuchtel' (faggot) was a constant cause of anxiety and self-discipline (see also Pascoe). Later, I learned that this was the case for most of those people who became my queer friends, irrespective of whether or not they grew up or were living in small towns or big cities.

The stereotyped divide between the urban and the rural, which underpins what Kath Weston calls the 'gay imaginary', instils in the gay subject the permanent desire to escape the surveillance of small-town life to the anonymous big city. "The gay imaginary," Weston writes, "is not just a dream of freedom to 'be gay' that requires an urban location elsewhere but a symbolic space that configures gayness itself by elaborating an opposition between rural and urban life" (274). The opposition between urban and rural sexual imaginaries produces a sexual geography captured, for example, in Michael Warner's assertion that "the sexual culture of New York City serves people around the world, even if only as the distant reference point of queer kids growing up in North Carolina or Idaho, who know that *somewhere* things are different" (*Normal* 190). The sexual culture I anticipated to find in Sydney was certainly a big part of what animated my own 'gay migration'. Weston points out, however, that disappointment often awaits those who arrive in alienating queer urban spaces, as they find themselves having little in common with other 'gay people', unable to afford the high entrance fees at gay events, or insulted by condescension from older queers. "For people on the bottom of hierarchies of class, gender, age, and race relations," Weston notes, "knowledge of where to find a gay neighborhood did not guarantee identification with 'other gay people'" (270).

Writing about contemporary Australia, author Benjamin Law recalls: "I attended a school where—as in most Australian schools, I'd venture—being gay was one of the worst things you could be" ("Moral Panic" 2). This experience and my own invoke a series of now commonplace tropes and publicly familiar scenarios: the bullied non-heterosexual or gender non-conforming kid at school; conservative activism aimed at thwarting attempts to make school communities and school education more LGBTQI-positive (which I will discuss in chapter three); or the sentimental "What would you tell your younger self" segment on *RuPaul's Drag Race* (2009-present) in which drag queens offer their younger selves advice on how to sustain themselves through the difficulties of growing up queer in hegemonically heterosexual cultures. All of these, and the amassed experiences of my friends and the participants in my research for this dissertation, confirm the description of many queer

people's experiences offered by Twitter user Introvert Gay cited in my epigraph: "Gay culture is being a teenager when you're 30 because your teenage years were not yours to live."¹

Towards the end of the night of my twenty-fourth birthday, it seemed to me, I let go of my often-tormenting fear and self-discipline for the first time in my life and, indeed, began to reclaim something I felt robbed of as a teenager. My feelings of that night, in hindsight, might be characterised, to speak with Pierre Bourdieu, as "a sort of dream of social flying;" it felt like I was "defy[ing] the gravity of the social field" (370). Despite the intensity of this feeling, however, I was actually just living a life engaged with the gravity of the social field in new ways.

Midnight Shift, as it happens, was one of the casualties of the 2014 'Sydney lockout laws', which I discuss in the second chapter of this dissertation. Starting as a men's disco in 1980, it had become Sydney's oldest gay bar by the time it closed in October 2017, having failed to maintain sufficient revenue in a stagnating, overregulated night-time economy (Jones). I have more complicated thoughts and feelings about such bars and clubs now that analysis of what happened to Oxford Street following the lockout laws and interviews with participants in this research have given me new perspectives on the kinds of culture, but also the forms of exclusion, they afford, and I explore these in more detail in chapters two and four. Nevertheless, it remains significant that, like many others before and around me, when I first arrived in Sydney, I found friends, community, sex, and my first ever boyfriend in the bars along Oxford Street. As such, that street changed my life.

Thinking with infrastructure

I am recounting this anecdote about my arrival in Sydney as my point of entry to queer public culture not to allow a self-indulgent, emotive account of personal experience but to open space for the argument that follows. Drawing on Meaghan Morris' reflections on the usefulness of anecdotes, I understand this account of arriving in 'the big city' to be, first and foremost, referential. This it to say that my anecdote serves as an allegory, to paraphrase Morris, "of a model of the way the world can be said to be working" (7). Anecdotes, she suggests, need not be true stories as long as they are discursively functional. Although my anecdote is true to all intents and purposes, I am, of course, not exempt from what Ien Ang describes as the process by which "people remember—and therefore construct—the past in ways that reflect their present need for meaning" (28). Anecdotes also can make explicit what Donna Haraway discusses as the situatedness of all knowledge claims, allowing us "to become answerable for

¹ This Tweet has since gone 'viral' (currently at 14.3K Retweets and 65.9K Likes) and featured in multiple articles (see e.g. McNamara).

what we learn how to see” (“Situated Knowledges” 583). The meaning and function of this anecdote, in this context, alludes not to an arbitrary, personal history but to the conditions of possibility for queer life in contemporary Australia, afforded by and entangled in cultural space.

In what follows, I want to explore the ways in which queer life is afforded by legal, social, spatial, and symbolic infrastructures. While I offer a more detailed account of the evolution of my research in chapter one, it seems useful here to point out that the development of this thesis has proceeded through three distinct but related iterations before arriving at what I now call *infrastructures of intimacy* as a model for analysing the arrangement and experience of sexual lives in contemporary Sydney, Australia. At the outset, this research in its proposal stage was framed as an examination of heterosexual domination and queer resistance. In its current form, however, it draws on and further extends critiques of precisely the kind of dichotomous thinking that sustains a definite queer/straight binary. I level such critiques in service of what I, via Eve Sedgwick, will call a reparative analysis of forms of the governance of sexuality, threading a reconceptualisation of both queerness and normativity through recent scenes of political debate. When I speak of forms of governance throughout this thesis, I refer to the operations of government at several levels including at the level of the nation-state, of state governments, and city councils. As I will show in chapter three, the operations of government at these different levels overlap to create a complex infrastructure of citizenship, which I define not only in relation to strictly governmental operations but also as the lived experience of how a range of physical and metaphorical boundaries affirm, or not, various aspects of social and cultural life, including some bodies and desires more or rather than others.

Originally, in fact, this thesis was imagined in relation to a very different set of ideas about infrastructure and queer life. I proposed to consider the ways in which domestic architecture affords some forms of relational life more than others and may hence be understood as a technology of subjectivity. Sexuality and forms and practices of intimate life more generally, I argued in my thesis proposal, are not reflections of innate, fixed properties of bodies but might be considered, in Michel Foucault’s words, as “the set of effects produced in bodies, behaviours, and social relations by a certain deployment deriving from a complex political technology” (*History* 127). Indeed, Foucault’s account of “a whole technology of control” involving schooling, public hygiene, and the medicalisation and administration of the population more generally also includes what he refers to as “the politics of housing” (*History* 126). Within the first year of research, however, this thesis had developed into an exploration of how queer people encounter and are shaped by technologies of power as they manifest in

forms of governance and sexual citizenship, although it still included a chapter on how architecture, not unlike urban planning or the law more generally, operates “within a system of power relations to perpetuate or transmit social values” (Lico 31). What these two earlier iterations of my thesis have in common, then, is an interest in how sexuality is mediated by, among other things, the law, urban planning, domestic architecture, and social norms.

Looking back at these earlier conceptualisations of this research as I worked towards a final method and plan for the empirical dimension of my project, it seems important to recall that I was primarily interested in uncovering the *regulatory effects* of such mediation and thus in exploring more or less covert forms of social domination. Such appeals to social domination, Bruno Latour cautions, run the risk of *using* power without carefully (by which he means empirically) *explaining* it (ANT 85). It is tempting, in other words, to resort to abstract concepts such as power and domination to explain social inequalities without considering the multiplicity of objects, relations, and dispersed effects they indirectly claim to describe (Latour "Critique"). I will extend this argument in my first chapter to not only account for how my own empirical research challenged and shifted my theoretical framework but also to mount a critique of queer theory's dominant certainty about the regimenting force of normativity.

In its final form, this thesis builds on those earlier ideas but is guided more directly by the concerns, representations, and experiences offered by a group of fifteen people who generously participated in this research and who I introduce in more detail shortly. What I offer by attending to *infrastructures of intimacy* is best described, in Sedgwick's terms, as a 'reparative' reading of queer life in contemporary Sydney, meaning one that is less interested in exposing disciplinary structures than in identifying the various scenes, communities, discourses, affects, relationships, and places that queer people and communities draw on to sustain themselves (150). As Sedgwick argues in her critique of 'paranoid' reading, the reparative mode is characterised by the shift away from a primary focus on regulatory effects of governance and normativity in favour of a more complex and dispersed model of queer life, and it is my contention that this can be accessed and accounted for through the concept of infrastructure.

To put this briefly, thinking with infrastructure is productive, firstly, in order to account for the various institutions, spaces and forces in relation to which queer life is constituted and experienced and, secondly, to enable critiques of queer theory's fixation with the “'regimenting' normalisation” (Wiegman and Wilson 10) of the “ideologies and institutions” of heterosexual culture (Berlant and Warner 553). Problematically, I argue, models of queer culture, which posit transgression of and assimilation to 'the normal' as oppositional choices

not only underemphasise the dynamic nature of norms and normative arrangements in everyday queer lives but also fail queer people whose lives cannot sustain a permanent orientation of antinormativity toward the hegemonic ideologies and institutions shaping intimate life.

In building my queer infrastructural model, I have been inspired by Laurent Berlant and Michael Warner's influential essay "Sex in Public", which I read as an invitation to conceive of the various scenes, communities, practices, cultural forms, and social relations that sustain queer cultures in terms of an infrastructure, though they choose the term 'publics' rather than 'infrastructure' to describe such networks of relations between people, places, and things and, moreover, starkly distinguish between publics and (queer) counterpublics (558). The 'counter' in this formulation signifies that queer publics are being conceived as publics opposed to the public proper in order to stress that "queer culture constitutes itself in many ways other than through the official publics of opinion culture and the state, or through the privatized forms normally associated with sexuality" (558). I return to the *dynamics* (rather than mere opposition) between publics and counterpublics in more detail in chapter three, where I discuss how the boundaries of the normative social order—the public proper—are regulated and contested via, for example, public debate, media coverage, politics, or school education. Queer world-making, Berlant and Warner suggest, is characterised by "inventiveness" as it yields "kinds of intimacy that bear no necessary relation to domestic space, to kinship, to the couple form, to property, or to the nation" (558). Queer culture and its shared knowledges are articulated, instead, "in mobile sites of drag, youth culture, music, dance, parades, flaunting, and cruising" (561). Because these sites are "so fragile and ephemeral," it is argued, they are not immediately recognisable as world-making and therefore frequently trivialised or dismissed as mere "lifestyle" (561).

I will draw on Berlant and Warner's model of queer culture insofar as it describes a spatially and materially dispersed and heterogeneous network, and align this also with Christopher Castiglia's itemisation of queer culture through "varieties of spaces—zones, havens, spheres, habitations, property, architecture" (156). Importantly, however, my queer infrastructural model differs from Berlant and Warner's queer counterpublics with regard to its orientation toward the normal. While Berlant and Warner clearly and repeatedly acknowledge the contingency and heterogeneity of queer worlds and realities, the orientation of their broader argument is a case in point for what Robyn Wiegman and Elizabeth Wilson identify as queer theory's allegiance to, and indeed fixation with, the idea that the public is categorically organised against queers who, by implication, ought to resist, disrupt, and subvert

the normal. Where “Sex in Public” positions queer culture in opposition to a totalising, static “normal culture,” (556) my queer infrastructural model is guided instead by Heather Love’s analysis of everyday queer intimacy as a pluralisation of the normal rather than as its antithesis (“Ordinary” 91), which I take as more enabling for an analysis of the lived experiences of my ‘queer’ participants. I further elaborate this critique of queer theory’s tendency to turn “the relationality ... of normativity ... into unforgiving rules and regulations” in chapter one (Wiegman and Wilson 18). For these reasons, I will use Berlant and Warner’s queer counterpublics as a starting point for my argument but build my theoretical framework thereafter, and in the remainder of this section, on analyses of the social as more specifically infrastructural in character.

But why ‘infrastructure’? According to human geographer Barney Warf, the term infrastructure describes “the vast network that makes possible the movement of people, goods, and information over time and space” (259). More specifically, for such an account, infrastructure’s primary referents are physical and organisational structures needed to facilitate such necessary services as transport, communication, power supply, water management, and waste processing. The development of modern cities, it is thus clear, relies on infrastructures and their ability to connect distant places, to afford forms of production, and to rapidly and regularly circulate not only bodies, commodities and things (or non-human objects) but also knowledges and affordances. As such, Warf stresses, infrastructures “exert a huge influence over economic and social activity” and are hence distinctly political (259). The effects of where roads go as well as where they do not, for instance, attest to the social and political consequences of infrastructure and its impact on how social relationships and differences, including inequalities, manifest spatially. In what he identifies as an “infrastructural turn,” geographer Ash Amin observes “a new genre of thinking that narrates the social life of a city through its material infrastructure” (137). Of course, thinking about cities in terms of the relationship between the material and the social was never a new idea for disciplines such as engineering, systems science, urban design, and architecture. The infrastructural turn in social science writing, however, departs from these disciplines, according to Amin, in that it tends to conceive of the cultural and the material as “hyphenated” (137). This is to say, “both the social and the technological are imagined as hybrids of human and nonhuman association” (137-38). Infrastructure figures in such accounts as a “sociotechnical assemblage” and is used to argue that urban social life is no longer reducible to human agency alone but characterised by the “liveliness” of the city as a socio-technical arrangement (138).

I could, for example, reconsider my opening anecdote alongside what Amin describes as an “anthropology of infrastructure,” which I understand to involve a careful examination of the socio-material arrangement of urban life “that foregrounds the urban backstage to reveal the sociality of roads, pipes, cables, broadband, code and classification” (Amin 139). Although pipes and cables may not directly feature in my anecdote about a night out in gay Sydney, they are of course required, under the surface of both the story and the experience—for example, to play loud, camp music for hours on end, or for me to wash my hands in that bathroom. My concluding remark about how Oxford Street ‘changed my life’ can exemplify the distinct sociality of certain urban locations also in the way it is afforded by particular socio-material arrangements. While such arrangements may not commonly be associated with intimate life, or come to the surface in many stories about intimate life, my anecdote and my thesis as a whole suggest that drawing out this connection might be analytically productive. This does not mean that I will devote extensive time to writing about the material distribution of roads, pipes, cables, or broadband in Sydney, although such arrangements, alongside such regulatory regimes as licensing and zoning, do come to the fore when seeking to understand differences and similarities between the experiences of some of my participants. I will, however, also spend time discussing party cultures, neighbourhoods, public debate, schools and school curricula, the internet, political campaigns, and queer community venues and events as, effectively, infrastructural elements that shape our social lives. This is to say that our lives take place in complex environments and, taking up Latour’s injunction cited above, in order to *explain* power rather than to *use* it “as shorthand” (ANT 85), I aim to pay careful attention to their socio-material arrangement.

Catherine Nash and Andrew Gorman-Murray draw on the Deleuzeian concept of ‘assemblage’ to suggest that the (sexual) orientation of certain urban locations may indeed be accounted for, to use Amin’s earlier expression, by foregrounding the taken-for-granted urban backstage. In order to analyse how bodies, material objects, relations, and affects assemble to constitute (or not) queer presence, a focus on the material complexity of the city as a socio-material arrangement may be productive. For such an analysis, Nash and Gorman-Murray offer up a rich inventory of items for consideration including “capital, gentrification, histories, bus routes, cell phones, apps, law, subjects, coffee culture, rents, new media, community centres, newsletters, organic food, alternative music, or goth sensibilities” (“Assemblage” 1526). I draw on and extend this inventory throughout this thesis. And while ‘assemblage’ is another way of talking about what I am interested in here, I prefer ‘infrastructure’ because of its commitment to material connections between things. Assemblage thinking also flattens out the differences

between the constitutive parts of what I conceive as cultural infrastructures, making them equally important or unimportant. I am particularly concerned here about the flattening out of differences between people whose lived experiences of forms of governance and social regulation are inflected by their different social positions and identities, which give them very different kinds of access to queer infrastructures.

Thinking through the idea of infrastructure necessarily foregrounds relationality that includes distributions of people, communities, and practices as well as a network of material objects and locations. In this sense it cuts through the space/place dichotomy as it is often debated by both geographers and social/cultural theorists (see e.g. Massey). To build a model of queer intimate life as afforded and limited (i.e. as constituted) by infrastructures is to acknowledge, to paraphrase Ara Wilson, that “infrastructures are involved in social relations and, in many cases, shape the conditions for relational life” (247). The entanglement of infrastructures in the social often disappears from view because they are, according to Susan Star, “by definition invisible, part[s] of the background for other kinds of work” (380), echoing Amin’s points about the taken-for-granted urban backstage. The problem of teasing out infrastructural effects also reminds me of Sara Ahmed’s phenomenological account of how one “becomes straight” (*Phenomenology* 85). That is, it may be possible to think of sexuality as an experience in infrastructural terms, along the lines of Ahmed’s conception of sexual orientation as “an effect of how objects gather to clear a *ground*, how objects are arranged to create a *background*” (87; emphasis added). The infrastructure of heterosexuality, to paraphrase Ahmed, would thus involve specific “values, capital, aspirations, projects, and styles” (86) but also material objects such as pieces of furniture, photographs, family trees, or fondue sets, which are on display to “make visible a fantasy of a good life” (90). This array of objects constitutes heterosexuality as a field—as “a space that gives ground to, or even grounds, heterosexual action” (87)—and aligns bodies with particular social and cultural relations, including particular anticipated futures. In reference to her own family home, Ahmed offers one of her many referential anecdotes to illustrate this point, representing the habitual familial return to the family table as a significant social tableau: “Each time we gather in this way [at the kitchen table],” she writes, “as if the arrangement is securing more than our place” (88).

(Re)configurations

While the heterosexual infrastructure I am extrapolating from Ahmed’s argument “shapes what bodies can do” (*Phenomenology* 91), *queer* bodies and desires also act on its arrangement

to “[bring] other objects closer ... that would not be allowed ‘near’ by straight ways of orienting the body” (92). This can be immediately related to Kath Weston’s argument that “‘discovering’ the gay imaginary depends upon access to print, television, and other media” (259). Reflecting on her own adolescent experience of raiding a local college library for books on homosexuality, Weston points out that “getting beyond the family dictionary” requires a queer desire to act on the object-arrangement of heterosexual culture by, for instance, ‘bringing closer’ the resources offered by “facilities such as libraries, bookstores, and movie theaters that disseminate gay-related materials” (259). It seems a valid supposition that accessing such resources relied more on their availability through physical proximity in the late 1970s, before the internet and new media emerged to afford easier access to a wider array of cultural materials, including such resources for a gay imaginary. More recently, Gorman-Murray and Nash note that the internet and new media are “implicated in contemporary transformations in LGBT and queer urban landscapes in the Global North” (“Digital Technologies” 399). As I discuss in chapter three, *young* queer people in particular draw on the virtual extensions of their ordinary lives to forge same-sex friendships, practise ‘coming out’, learn about and experience same-sex intimacy, and to find and form sexual knowledges, including knowledge about how to live as part of gay communities (see e.g. Hillier and Harrison).

Early attitudes toward the internet often presumed, as Ben Aslinger shows, that life online “could overcome the tyranny of geography” by allowing individuals and groups to engage with and experience cultural space in new ways (113). In chapter four, I will discuss some of the limitations of such techno-utopian discourses with reference to the online experiences, of community and other resources for queer life, recounted by the participants in my research. Their stories attest that, while sometimes offering “new forms of queer cultural flows” (Aslinger 113), the internet and related technologies cannot overcome racialised, gendered, sexualised, and classed cultural hierarchies and inequalities. Instead, in their own ways, available online networks of communication seem as likely as offline ones to sustain and reinforce inequalities. While this recognition would be generally unsurprising for my participants, it can serve to remind us that infrastructures afford or limit, rather than determine either their uses or the cultural fields in which they may be taken up. This is a significant recognition given the dominant tendency within queer theory to align some infrastructures with or against queer life.

Turning to Ahmed’s queer phenomenology again, if non-heterosexuals are hailed by and feel the force of the “straightening devices” of heterosexuality as a matter of everyday

experience “and even feel ... on the surface of the skin” the interpellations of heterosexual culture, they do not necessarily “turn around” (*Phenomenology* 107). Infrastructures, I will suggest, may support some forms of intimacy more than others. Yet at the same time, queer bodies and desires may simultaneously bring closer *other* (non-heterosexual) objects and just as frequently, to repurpose Wilson’s argument about queer intimacy, they may *betray* infrastructure’s “official intentions ... by a plurality of uses” (259). An example of this can be found in the well-documented ways that early-twentieth century gay life forged, as George Chauncey puts it, “a gay world in the streets” (179; see also Bech). Gay life, in this sense, betrayed the official intentions of parks and streets because they afforded a level of privacy, which men who lived with their families or in shared accommodation could only find in public. It is precisely their ostensible purpose—to offer respite from the noise and commotion of city life—which made city parks in New York and elsewhere the most popular and secure meeting places for gay men to gather with friends and to find sex. Wandering as a form of respite provided a pretext for men who actually wandered in search of sex with other men. “Cruising parks and streets,” Chauncey observes, “provided many young men and newcomers to the city with a point of entry into the rest of the gay world,” large parts of which were hidden to ward off hostile intrusions (180).

Such uses for parks recall Foucault’s argument about what he calls ‘heterotopias’. An explicit critique of the idea of ‘utopia’—“the real space of society ... perfected, or else ... turned upside down” (“Other Spaces” 17)—heterotopias actually exist within the world and describe spatial formations in which things are ordered otherwise as “a sort of counter-emplacements, a sort of effectively realized utopias” (17). Marking out spaces in which normalised forms of social organisation are suspended to some degree, such as parks in which different social priorities are in operation, heterotopias draw attention to how the rest of the world is organised. As such, Foucault suggests, heterotopias “juxtapose in a single real place several spaces, several emplacements that are in themselves incompatible” (19). So, while some parks may afford cruising, any such practices are also mediated by other intersecting cultural formations, including institutional forces like police surveillance, more dispersed social forces like the risk of homophobic violence, and local practices like insider-knowledge about where men cruise.

Men cruising parks and streets indicates the malleability and contingency of some cultural spaces and the practices they afford, which is a critical aspect of my queer infrastructural model and its intention to resist queer theory’s dominant rendering of ‘normal culture’ as a regimenting and totalising arrangement. My argument is thus not that queer bodies

and desires reconfigure a marginalising and exclusionary heterosexual public to create progressive and liberating queer spaces. This type of binary thinking produces blind spots in our knowledge about sexuality and space and, moreover, neglects the multiple exclusions that operate in supposedly progressive queer spaces given the ways sexuality is inflected by gender, race, and class. Assumptions about 'spatial' singularity disregard the fact that any space may be (re)configured for various uses, even if it might lend itself more to some practices, bodies, and desires than to others. In this context, the subtitle of this thesis, 'queer (re)configurations of cultural space', points to the necessary contingency of infrastructure: while infrastructure may lend itself to some orientations more than others, it is, in turn, contingent on how it is used or acted on, contingent on how it is arranged or rearranged, including by non-heterosexual bodies and desires. In comparison to the encyclopaedic definition of infrastructure offered earlier by Warf, my infrastructural model is not only interested in the official intentions of a given arrangement but also in the inadvertent forms of intimacy it might afford.

My analysis will also seek to avoid essentialising assumptions that any given infrastructure is either queer or straight. In an example that ties this discussion back to my opening anecdote, as well as to questions of historical continuity and discontinuity between infrastructural forms, Kane Race offers an analysis of the "*infrastructures of intimacy in gay life*" ("Pragmatism" 496) focusing on what he calls "material and technological objects and devices" (498) exemplified by geo-social applications, which are predominantly used to arrange sexual encounters between men. Race infers that a focus on infrastructure must draw attention to the complexity of bodies, desires, objects, and environments involved in such erotic encounters and concludes that digital devices facilitate "novel ways of arranging sex, intimacy and sexual community" at a time when discourses about love, family, marriage, and monogamy dominate public discourse of gay life (508). Although in other respects productive and insightful, this argument is also an example of what Wiegman and Wilson call an 'antinormative stance'. They write: "Our hypothesis is this: antinormative stances project stability and immobility onto normativity. In so doing, they generate much of the political tyranny they claim belongs (over there) to regimes of normativity" (13). In Race's analysis, marriage and monogamy are contrasted with what he understands as more interestingly new forms of intimacy afforded by applications such as Grindr, notwithstanding that these applications are also used by people *looking for* monogamy, marriage, or indeed by married monogamists seeking a third sexual partner, casual hook-ups, or friendship. Monogamy and marriage, I want to stress in advance of my discussion of the Australian postal survey on marriage equality in

chapter three, may also be differently or newly arranged in their everyday engagement with other infrastructures of intimacy.

An infrastructural approach, I argue, should allow us to appreciate that hegemonic forms of intimate life such as monogamy and marriage might yield a plurality of intimacies that betray the official intentions of the couple form, which is itself part of a network of cultural infrastructure. The infrastructural, in other words, may render more contingent and malleable those forms of intimacy, which queer theory tends to construct as regimenting and restrictive. As such, my thesis also responds to Wilson's call to study "conditioning contexts for social relations in ways that can concretize the operations of such abstract systems of power as neoliberalism, imperialism, or homophobia" (A. Wilson 249). My more specific focus here is on the concrete operations and effects of governance and normativity in the specific cases of the Sydney lockout laws and the Australian postal survey on marriage equality. Approaching these 'formations' in terms of cultural infrastructure rather than as examples of social regulation, urban purification, or queer normalisation, makes more visible their multiple dynamics and contingent effects.

The first chapter provides a critical discussion of how queer theory conceives of the forces of normativity and suggests that the infrastructure of everyday queer life offers a constructive context for attending to the concrete operations of the social and for problematising queer theory's allegiance to antinormativity. Thinking with infrastructure, I argue at length there, affords a reparative reading of the conditioning context for queer social relations because the infrastructural focuses on how queer life is sustained rather than on exposing the abstract forces which may seek to contain it.

The second chapter offers an analysis of what is commonly referred to as the Sydney lockout laws introduced in 2014 by the New South Wales (NSW) state government in an attempt to reduce 'alcohol-fuelled' night-time violence. Largely lifted since January 2020, these lockout laws imposed restrictions on alcohol consumption and opening hours across the inner city, including Oxford Street, subjecting bars and nightclubs to debilitating conditions of operation. Reflecting on discussions of the lockout's impact on queer party cultures, this chapter considers the changing geography of queer life in the contemporary Australian city. Here, I reject conceptualisations of urban space as a dichotomised arrangement of 'queer' and 'straight' spaces and explore the increasingly dispersed nature of queer infrastructures for drinking and party cultures, leisure, and pleasure variously detached from neighbourhoods, social spaces, or venues, which are designated or visibly marked as queer.

Chapter three analyses in detail the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey, a national opinion poll conducted between September and November of 2017 to gauge public support for the legalisation of same-sex marriage, which saw the emergence of the Yes and the No campaign, arguing their respective case for and against marriage equality. I show that the ‘heteroactivist’ No campaign sought to resume debate about the recently notorious Safe Schools Coalition Australia’s (SSCA or Safe Schools hereafter) LGBTI sex education and anti-bullying programme, claiming that ‘radical’ sex education would become ‘compulsory’ in Australian schools if same-sex marriage is legalised. The Yes campaign, by contrast, relied on themes such as ‘love’, ‘fairness’, and ‘sameness’, which has been characterised as a ‘firmly assimilationist’ approach. Such a characterisation is reflective of the queer political imperative to resist (rather than assimilate into) ‘normal’ culture, which relies on an understanding of marriage as a static, regimenting cultural form rather than an infrastructural arrangement itself, which may enable different kinds of intimacy. Such conceptualisations of marriage risk obscuring the various reasons why people get married, reducing the messiness of empirical lives to a tension between assimilationist and transgressive impulses within queer communities.

While my discussion of the queer encounter with the lockout laws and marriage clarifies the productivity of thinking with infrastructure, my final chapter focuses on what I have called *queer cartography*, a mapping exercise I developed for the interviews I conducted for this research. The maps elicited by this queer cartography chart the spaces and places that constitute the participants’ infrastructures of the everyday in which their lives and relations occur. While these infrastructures certainly include queer bars, nightclubs, and neighbourhoods, they also feature everyday spaces beyond queer scenes, which are not connected to overt queer identities, such as homes, workplaces, gyms, grocery stores, sports clubs, bushwalks, beaches, dating apps, social media platforms, and cars. The infrastructural here allows me to explore queer people’s complex creations of space at a particular point in their lives.

As I have already indicated above, the argument sketched here and unfolded in the following thesis has been shaped by the interests, concerns, and experiences shared with me by a small group of members of Sydney’s queer communities who generously participated in this research. While I draw on textual and discourse analysis in accounting for the debates surrounding the lockout laws and the postal survey, my research also included fifteen semi-structured interviews with members of Sydney’s ‘queer’ communities between October 2017 and February 2018. I obtained ethics approval to conduct these interviews from the University of Sydney’s Human Research Ethics Committee (project number 2017/633) and have, in

compliance with the committee's procedures, kept the participants' identities anonymous by using pseudonyms in the interview transcriptions.

As I use the term here, *queer* groups the different identifications of these participants not in order to make claims about the political views or other cultural practices with which they identify but instead to emphasise the internal diversity of queer communities, which are frequently flattened out by invocations of a singular 'gay community'. Whenever I quote from interviewees speaking for themselves, I use the specific term or terms with which they self-identify. I am aware that the word 'queer' is reserved by some to signify politics and practices that seek to subvert normativities or to destabilise sexuality or gender identity categories. I am not using it in this way myself and will critically discuss queer theory's allegiance to this usage in chapter one. In fact, my larger argument in this thesis resists framing queer life as an essentially oppositional struggle vis-à-vis 'the normal', instead understanding queer life as a pluralisation of 'normal' life (which can be destabilising in its own right). To avoid reifying the term queer as an identity category, I will at other times use the term 'non-heterosexuals' to be purposefully general, or terms like 'gay' or 'lesbian', as well as acronyms, such as LGBT, where my argument pertains specifically to certain identities or where I need to engage with the chosen terminologies of other scholars or commentators, or my interviewees. Given that no label would be satisfactory to capture the diversity of identifications among my participants or within the debates around these terms, I have opted not to try and resolve this problem by choosing a single term as correct for all the people and situations. Instead, I opt to 'stay with the trouble' (Haraway *Trouble*) raised by this terminological complexity as well as by trying to represent ongoing empirical lives (over abstract theoretical considerations). Thus, I will alternate in what follows between whichever of these terms seems most appropriate at any given point in the argument. The exception to this will be in chapter four, where I will consider this problem through the prioritisation of the concept of 'queer' in the infrastructures that sustain 'queer' ordinary lives in contemporary Sydney, although even in this sense a range of terms and categories are routinely blended or blurred together.

My decision to use the term 'queer' when referring to my interviewees, rather than 'gay and lesbian' or any acronym, also reflects aspects of their own identifications. About half of them used terms other than 'gay' or 'lesbian' to describe their sexual orientation and all of them understood themselves to be addressed by my call for research participants for a project on 'Queer Homes'. Specifically, these participants label their sexual orientations as gay (4), lesbian (4), bisexual/queer (2), lesbian/gay/queer (1), queer (2), pan-/bisexual/sexually queer (1), and 'gay lady' (1). With respect to gender, the same participants identify as male (4), female

(3), cisgendered female (1), woman (1), cisgender woman (1), femme (1), female/femme (1), gender-fluid (1), genderqueer (1), and agender/trans masculine (1). Except for one who lived interstate at the time, all of these participants lived in Sydney's inner-western suburbs, a point that is particularly significant for chapter two. While it was not part of my initial research design, the geographic specificity of the people who responded to my recruitment notices, posted to queer community online forums and a public Facebook group, is not insignificant. The inner-western suburbs of Sydney spread southwest from what Gorman-Murray and Nash refer to as "the locus of Newtown" ("Neighborhoods" 624). This area, which roughly coincides with the 'Inner West' local government area, is partly characterised by "LGBTQ commercial, residential, and service concentration" and is, compared to the inner eastern 'gay village' of Darlinghurst, which has long been associated with gay men, "more 'mixed'" and "broadly inclusive of lesbian, bisexuals, trans and other sexual and gender minorities, along with gay men" (629). Both the inner-west and inner-east regions of Sydney "present a 'gentrifying' geographic: middle-class, educated, high(er) income, youthful, somewhat ethnically 'mixed', and with a combination of single and family homes" (630). The participants in my research reflect these demographics. They specified their ages as 28-29 (3), 30-34 (3), 35-39 (3), 40-44 (4), 45-47 (2) and understood themselves as white-Australian (7), Caucasian (1), Anglo-Irish Australian (1), Greek-Australian (1), Lebanese-Australian (1), Pākehā (European New Zealander), (1), Chinese (2), and European (1). All of them had completed Year 12, the final year of compulsory secondary education in Australia, or had equivalent qualifications from overseas countries. Thirteen were either currently enrolled in or had completed undergraduate studies at university or vocational courses at TAFE (technical and further education) institutions. Six were either currently enrolled in or had completed postgraduate university degrees. Importantly, therefore, my assessment of how queer lives are sustained in this thesis has to acknowledge that, after factoring in class, age, ethnic background, and race, the people I have interviewed represent a socially rather comfortable sample that lives in Sydney with far less difficulty than might be the case for other queers. In chapter four, I will eventually discuss this relative comfort as itself an infrastructural affordance.

The ability to (re)configure infrastructural fragments such as streets, parks, tables, zoning laws, the couple form, marriage, or the family is often a function of an infrastructure itself, namely the infrastructure of a person's social position and what Ahmed refers to as its "effects [on] how subjects can and cannot inhabit social norms and ideals" (*Emotion* 153). The relative ease with which the people who participated in this research are involved in actively creating the conditions for their lives depends on how they are positioned within social

structures of class, race, gender, and sexuality, and where they are materially situated within overlapping infrastructural maps, the most important of which represent the city of Sydney, and Sydney's assembled queer communities. The extent to which these participants felt they could draw on the resources afforded by either is not reducible to an opposition between queer and straight, or between normative and antinormative. "Maintaining an active positive of 'transgression'" toward 'the normal', to cite Ahmed, "may not be physically, socially or materially possible for some individuals and groups given their ongoing and unfinished commitments and histories" (*Emotion* 153). Using the example of what my participants understand as their 'queer families' to clarify this point, some such families may wish to be precisely not 'just like other families', while others wish to emphasise their likeness to normative images of families in general, for strategic reasons, or indeed as matters of survival, or even as a source of personal joy. In all cases, however, these orientations are less about individual choice than a matter of what is afforded by their everyday access to infrastructure.

The Queer Ordinary

In short, it is a question of orienting ourselves to a conception of power which replaces the privilege of the law with the viewpoint of the objective, the privilege of prohibition with the viewpoint of tactical efficacy, the privilege of sovereignty with the analysis of a multiple and mobile field of force relations, wherein far-reaching, but never completely stable, effects of domination are produced (102).

— MICHEL FOUCAULT, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I*

Reparation ... stays local, gives up on hypervigilance for attentiveness; instead of powerful reductions, it prefers acts of noticing, being affected, taking joy, and making whole (237-38).

— HEATHER LOVE, "Truth and Consequences: On Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading"

What I thought this thesis would be about

This chapter offers a more detailed account of the evolution of this research than did the introduction, not in order to anecdotally reiterate my own position in relation to the thesis but in order to outline one of its major analytic trajectories. I want here to trace my own shift, to use Eve Sedgwick's terms, from a *paranoid* epistemological practice oriented toward exposing structures and forms of oppression, to a *reparative* practice attending to the inventive nature of what I will call the *queer ordinary*. The point here is that everyday life bears a potential for change, though change is not conceived in terms of resistance to or subversion of a regimenting normativity but in terms of the inventiveness of the everyday—in terms of the 'poetics' of the everyday. 'Poetics', Michel de Certeau reminds us, is "from the Greek *poiein* 'to create, invent, generate'" (205). To set the scene for tracing the shift away from a paranoid epistemological practice, I draw on de Certeau's larger argument on *the practice of everyday life*, which I understand to reflect a preference for what Sedgwick later calls *reparative reading*. De Certeau is interested in analyses of "the dispersed, tactical, and makeshift creativity of groups and individuals already caught in the nets of discipline" over analyses of "the violence of order" (xiv-xv) or, to speak with Sedgwick, over analyses which "rely on a single, overarching narrative: exposing and problematizing hidden violences in the genealogy of the modern liberal subject" (Sedgwick 139).

I will return to the distinction between paranoid and reparative reading below, as a path towards what I will discuss across this thesis as ‘the queer ordinary’. I intend this phrase, ‘the queer ordinary’, to operate at two different levels of analysis throughout this text. On the one hand, the queer ordinary names the everyday life of non-heterosexuals, their daily routines and relations of ‘private’ as well as ‘public’ life, without claiming that these two spheres can be distinguished from each other quite that neatly. On the other hand, examining everyday queer life offers an opportunity to further extend the critiques of queer theory’s allegiance to antinormativity I raised in the introduction. The following chapters will consider what this allegiance is bound to assume and to foreclose in analyses of the queer encounter with, for example, zoning laws, marriage law, and education policy. In this chapter, however, I want to frame my later discussions of these more specific subjects by elaborating on these two levels of analysis.

The everyday, to elaborate in more detail its meaning and significance throughout this thesis, can be seen in the repetitiveness of the ticking of the clock, the evening news, in getting hungry every few hours, in working ‘9-to-5’ from Monday to Friday, in the rhythm of birth and death. While the everyday is relentless and constant, Ben Highmore argues, it is also “punctuated by interruptions and irruptions: a knock on the door, a stubbed toe, an argument, an unexpected present, a broken glass, a tear, a desperate embrace” (*Ordinary Lives* 1). As a field of experience and affect, the everyday is thus “constantly in flux: I was calm but now I am anxious; I was happy but now I am sad; I was daydreaming but now I am just bored, I was frustrated but now I am indifferent” (1). I want to draw attention to the fissures of the everyday, the unexpected and the contingent in what may appear to be but a series of ordinary, complacent, familiar, or boring events and practices. Where novelty figures as a positive value, ordinariness “is often denigrated and felt to be of lowly status” (*Ordinary Lives* 6). In the second half of this chapter, I show that a fascination with the novel and unconventional is also a dominant tendency of some queer theory and scholarship, which does not leave enough room for conventional sexual lives and the practices and relations through which most people live their day-to-day. The privileging of and (over)investment in the extraordinary, to paraphrase Highmore, tends to disregard that “the ordinary is never set in stone: ordinariness is a process (like habit) where things (practices, feelings, conditions and so on) pass from unusual to usual, from irregular to regular, and can move the other way (what was an ordinary part of my life, is no more)” (*Ordinary Lives* 6). This echoes Raymond Williams’ influential argument that *culture is ordinary* and, as such, a process of “active debate and amendment under the pressures of experience, contact, and discovery [involving both] the slow learning of shapes, purposes, and

meanings [and] the making of new observations, comparisons, and meanings” (“Culture” 2-3). Williams acknowledges processes of reflection, description, and contestation as fundamental aspects of the everyday, seeing the ‘creativity’ involved in “adopting and adapting the narrations and feelings available to us” as central to our day-to-day existence (Highmore *Ordinary Lives* 7). “There are,” Williams insists, “no ‘ordinary’ activities, if by ‘ordinary’ we mean the absence of creative interpretation and effort” (*Revolution* 37). Such a focus on the everyday, I argue, is also useful for an analysis of how, practically, queer people sustain their lives in the encounter with larger structures of power, and I will return to this idea again in the last section of this chapter.

As the introduction already indicated, when I first envisaged this research project, I was inspired by Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner’s “Sex in Public”, which remains one of my queer theoretical touchstones for this argument. In using their argument concerning queer counterpublics as a springboard for my own account of infrastructures, I also take up this essay as exemplifying a tendency to posit queer culture as antithetical to a regimenting normal culture, signified from the outset by the ‘counter’ in their use of the term ‘counterpublic’. I will consider this essay more closely here in order to justify that reading and my critique of queer theory’s tendency to contrast normal culture and queer cultures. To substantiate this argument, I will contrast Berlant and Warner’s now canonical essay with Sedgwick’s strategy of reparative reading, flagged above. Sedgwick’s conception of the reparative seeks to unsettle queer theory’s reductive vision of the world as normatively organised against queer life, and also seeks to avoid privileging prohibitive and marginalising cultural forces over the various ways in which queer lives are sustained in a culture that seeks to obstruct their sustenance (Sedgwick 150-51). In making this opposition, I also draw for support in the second half of this chapter on not only de Certeau’s account of the creative and inventive nature of everyday life (de Certeau xi), but also Michel Foucault’s influential understanding of modern power as a force that is both prohibitive and generative (Foucault *History* 136), and more recent critiques of the queer theoretical tendency to construct norms as fixed social facts (Love “Ordinary” 77; Wiegman and Wilson 16).

Berlant and Warner argue that heterosexual culture achieves its unwavering sense of rightness and cultural intelligibility through ideologies and institutions of intimacy, such as the couple form, generational narratives, reproduction, education, or the law (553). Queer culture, by contrast, they see as dependent on more mobile, fragile, and ephemeral sites, such as dance clubs, parades, drag shows, or cruising sites (561). In “Sex in Public”, Berlant and Warner set out to advance what they refer to as “the radical aspirations of queer culture

building” (548) that would reconfigure intimacy no longer with reference to the heterosexual couple and, as such, divorced from the confines of “normal culture” and “normal life” (556). The “hegemonic cluster” that is heterosexual culture, they argue, is still so forceful that “social membership and a relation to the future” are felt to be contingent on “identification with the heterosexual life narrative” (557). What sustains the dominance of the heterosexual life narrative is not just heterosexual sex but an extensive infrastructure of intimate life including, for example, discourses of romance and sentimentality, marriage and family law, domestic architecture, zoning laws, and politics (562). Queer culture, they contend, has no such “institutional matrix” (562). It does matter that Berlant and Warner wrote “Sex in Public” in 1998, and that they could not be expected to envisage some of the social and cultural transformations impacting queer lives. But Kane Race’s analysis of the affordances of digital devices is once more an example for how we might extend the ideas put forward by Berlant and Warner into contemporary gay culture and its continuously changing infrastructural inventory. As Race points out, “online hook-up devices can only really be understood with reference to preceding infrastructures and environments that have shaped gay sexual practices and desires historically” (“Pragmatism” 499).

Importantly, for Berlant and Warner, queer culture building, or what they also call “world-making,” is not about seeking recognition or destigmatisation of queer bodies and desires but rather about infrastructures which provide the ground for the elaboration of “criminal intimacies” and stranger-sociability (558). The queer project Berlant and Warner imagine and advocate thus finds expression in dispersed practices, identities, scenes, and geographies that concretise in the form of “queer counterpublics” (558). In comparison to the hegemonic public, counterpublics are not constituted through institutional matrices involving the state, public opinion, or privatised forms of intimate and sexual life but develop their own forms, relations, and narratives of intimacy. The latter are particularly important to Berlant and Warner’s ideas about “making a queer world,” as I discussed above, through forms of intimacy defined against “domestic space, to kinship, to the couple form, to property, or to the nation” (558). While the years that have passed since 1998 might, once again, mean that Berlant and Warner cannot be expected to have anticipated the precise forms or effects of social and cultural transformations in the representation and institutional recognition of queer lives, their subsequent work on norms and the normal, and on activism and hegemony, have hardly resiled from these claims.

In this context it bears repeating that the research questions I had formulated six months into the research for this thesis were very clearly aligned with the queer project

Berlant and Warner imagine. During my first of three required annual research presentations on my thesis, I introduced my aims by asking: *How are bodies oriented through their relations to objects, structures, norms, and practices?* How and to what effect, I wanted to know, does the hegemonic cluster that is heterosexuality actually mediate a person's orientation toward the world and, specifically, toward other people and forms of intimate life? I also asked: *What subjectivities, relationships, families, and forms of intimacy might different kinds of architecture produce?* I had set out, at this time, to think more about the forms of intimacy that what Berlant and Warner call "the architecture of queer space" (551) might yield in the concrete, with space here including but no longer limited to the architecture of the domestic that I had first imagined I would study. These questions were clearly animated by a tendency, which I see reflected in Berlant and Warner's work, to prioritise *transgressive* subjectivities, relationships, and forms of intimacy over more conventional sexual lives as objects of analysis.

As it posits queer life and heterosexual culture in oppositional terms, "Sex in Public" invites its readers to envisage alternative, radical, and subversive forms of "affective, erotic, and personal living" (562) that oppose and actively resist "normal intimacy" (559). Berlant and Warner's brief account of a public performance of erotic vomiting toward the end of their essay, for example, reads as standing in for the 'criminal' intimacies they hail throughout, intimacies that are disinterested in heteronormative logics of reproduction, futurity, and privacy. Writing about the role of publics and counterpublics elsewhere, Warner presumes that "ordinary people [would] not want to be mistaken for the kind of person who would ... be present in this kind of [counterpublic] scene," in which such a performance may be more commonplace ("Publics" 86). I want to problematise the tendency to relegate more conventional sexual lives to the unchanging, static, or restrictive realm of 'normal' culture and, as such, wish to add to the larger field in which Berlant and Warner are working a different kind of emphasis pertaining not only to the nature of norms (which I understand to be more relational) but also to the ordinary affects (for example, comfort) and forms of social, cultural, and economic capital, which a permanent orientation towards antinormativity forecloses on. I do not want to represent transgression and assimilation as oppositional *choices* but instead to see them as functions of possibility, privilege, personal histories, and social context. The invocation of this performance of erotic vomiting invites us to ask who or what counts as 'ordinary' in this imagined opposition. Considered practically, it also invites us to perceive overlaps between publics and counterpublics, as people might stumble into this performance space—"a garden-variety leather bar" (564)—under various circumstances that might involve

ostensibly more ‘ordinary people’ drawing as much or as little value from the performance as do Berlant and Warner.

“Sex in Public” continues to help determine my objects of analysis for this thesis to the extent that it introduced me to the idea of “sex as it is mediated by publics” (547) and, thus, to a way of thinking about queer life as it relates to and is afforded by *infrastructures* in the sense elaborated in the introduction. Berlant and Warner provide a diverse inventory of cultural forms, practices, and sites, all of which index social worlds and allow for the concretisation of publics and counterpublics including, for instance, pornographic cinema, lap dancing, queer scenes, national culture, domestic architecture, zoning laws, novels, romance, and sex clubs. I have taken up this inventory in designing my research questions, shaped also by Ara Wilson’s invitation to think in terms of “how law, policy, and popular media in liberal Anglo settler societies distribute resources according to evaluations of worthy and unworthy forms of intimacy” (251). In the chapters that follow, I draw on and extend these inspirational analyses of queer life by considering such distribution of resources and its complex effects with regards to zoning legislation, marriage law, and school curricula. At one level, therefore, my conception of infrastructure is as the social life of policy, but always with primary reference to how such policies figure and are negotiated in people’s everyday lives. I examine infrastructures of the everyday in more detail in chapter four, but there is still more to be gained at this point from exploring my response to Berlant and Warner’s argument.

Critical habits

When I read “Sex in Public” for the first time, shortly after the beginning of my PhD candidature, I saw clear parallels between Berlant and Warner’s case study of the zoning law introduced to ‘clean up’ New York City in 1995 and Sydney’s lockout laws, introduced in late 2014. Both of these laws have been widely discussed as disproportionately affecting queer publics (Delany; Warner *Normal*; Race “Sexuality of the Night”; *Gay Science*). I provide a more detailed account of these laws in the next chapter but offer a brief comparison here to point to the larger argument I want to make, after which I will briefly outline the Australian marriage equality debate and Safe Schools controversy, both of which I discuss in chapter three. These three examples, or case studies, are selected both for their temporal proximity and because they relate to one another more or less directly through the visibility of queer practices, bodies, and desires in public domains. The ongoing management and contestation of the lockout laws coincided with debates about the same-sex marriage postal survey and about ‘radical’ sex and gender education programmes also with regard to their implications for queer

infrastructures. Bringing these different instances of governance together for my argument in this thesis also unsurprisingly reflects the concerns of those people who participated in this research while these were pressing public issues. I conducted the semi-structured interviews that feature in this thesis before, during, and after the period in which the postal survey was conducted and while the lockout laws were in force and their effects being publicly debated.

According to Marilyn Adler Papayanis, Mayor Rudy Giuliani's zoning law, which New York City began to enforce in 1998, was in fact a campaign to geographically restrict sex-oriented businesses in New York City and, as such, operated to "reproduce the social values of the majority"—or, in other words, to domesticate and sanitise a supposedly unruly urban landscape (341). The Sydney lockout laws, introduced by the New South Wales (NSW) Government in 2014, were ostensibly similar in terms of the effects they had and continue to have on inner-city queer social spaces. These laws were introduced to restrict alcohol consumption and required venues in what was newly defined as the 'Sydney CBD Entertainment Precinct' to refuse entry to patrons after 1:30 a.m. While a range of inner-city venues serving alcohol, such as pubs, bars, dance venues, and restaurants were very directly affected, areas outside of the designated Entertainment Precinct also changed significantly in the wake of the lockout laws by attracting revellers now displaced from that precinct. The inner-western Sydney suburb of Newtown, widely identified as a queer hub (see e.g. Gorman-Murray and Nash), for instance, recorded a marked increase in homophobic and transphobic violence following the introduction of these laws, with media coverage suggesting queer Sydneysiders no longer feel safe in this area, especially on weekend nights (Aubusson). As with the zoning laws in New York City, the lockout laws in Sydney were thus seen to disproportionately affect queer communities who already have limited publicly accessible infrastructures directly addressing their needs.

Such arguments about the disadvantages imposed by the lockout laws might be adapted to discuss the impact of the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey as well as the defunding of the Safe Schools programme. This set of debates is more overtly interested in queer life and its relations to a heterosexual life construed as normatively mainstream, concerned with impacting same-sex couples and LGBTQI-positive school education respectively. In fact, these 'events' all might be understood to support Wilson's account of how the distribution of rights and resources is determined via laws, policies, and popular media, based on evaluations of worthy and unworthy bodies and desires (A. Wilson 251). Denying non-heterosexuals access to the marriage institution could be considered to diminish their potential opportunities to formalise relationships but also, for example, to secure hospital visitation rights and medical

power of attorney. It is important to acknowledge, however, that Berlant and Warner do not conceive of all infrastructural forms as enabling institutions for queer life in the same terms. Marriage, exemplarily, does not accord with their political interpretation of 'queer world-making' but stands rather as an artefact of that normal culture, which, they argue, diminishes the radical potential of queer existence. The treatment of queer people, communities, and families in these events indicates that heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals are differentiated in considerations of the development, maintenance, and policing of public infrastructure, and, as Berlant and Warner would argue, not equally considered in the generic public sphere and its institutions and assessments of public good and interest. However, although it involves the representation (or not) of queer bodies and desires relative to public spheres and institutions, access to the infrastructures of 'normal' culture is at odds with Berlant and Warner's preferred model of queer resistance (to the normal).

An account of the effects of (in)directly discriminatory or marginalising public policy and anti-queer discourses, which is primarily informed by statistical data pertaining, for example, to the closure of queer venues in areas affected by zoning laws, to instances of homo- or transphobia, to queer people's mental health, or to queer youth suicide draws a grim picture. Indeed, following Berlant and Warner's logic, governmental interventions into public space such as zoning laws, which erode queer public sexual cultures will progressively diminish the expectations and potential for queer life and politics. Initially, then, I sought justification for my own research in their predictions of "diminished expectations" and an "attenuated capacity for political community" effected by the queer encounter with forms of power and/or governance (552). As such, my epistemological practice was propelled by what Sedgwick calls a "hermeneutics of suspicion" (138). This is to say, I was engaging the common critical practice of exposing systemic oppressions as they manifest, specifically, in the marginalising effects of scenes of public policy and debate. Such an epistemological practice, Sedgwick suggests, "sets a thief ... to catch a thief" (126-27). As a critical habit, it is limited in what it can do beyond the mere exposure of negative effects: "For someone to have an unmystified, angry view of large genuinely systemic oppression," Sedgwick points out, "does not intrinsically or necessarily enjoin that person to any specific train of epistemological or narrative consequences" (124).

I want to complicate the idea that policy or law determine people's life choices by suggesting that the distribution of resources is clearly more complex when understood as infrastructural in character. Zoning laws may limit the possibilities of some aspects or versions of queer life in Sydney, but although my research was designed to capture this limitation, my

interviews more generally produced another kind of story, one which led me to ask how our research can be attuned to capturing where and how queer lives are *sustained*. It matters here that I was reading Sedgwick's argument for a distinction between paranoid and reparative modes of inquiry alongside my first interviews. It was thus crucially this argument that helped reorient my project beyond identifying systemic oppression or, as she puts it, beyond a focus on "exposing and problematizing hidden violences in the genealogy of the modern liberal subject" (139). Sedgwick advocates *reparative* reading as a way of attending to "the many ways selves and communities succeed in extracting *sustenance* from the objects of a culture – even of a culture whose avowed desire has often been not to sustain them" (150-51; emphasis added).

There are, of course, good reasons for the paranoid tendencies in queer theory. As Sedgwick herself acknowledges, paranoid reading is so common in queer studies because "paranoia reflects the repression of same-sex desire" (126). Paranoid stances have a clear objective. Paranoia has served as a tool for illuminating homophobia and heterosexism and thus become central in anti-homophobic thinking and theory. This influence, however, has bred default habits of thought. Like Heather Love, I come to queer theory as a latecomer, "who picks up paranoid habits of mind as critical tools or weapons but is detached from the living contexts in which these frameworks were articulated" ("Paranoid" 236). Kadji Amin reminds us that queer theory was intended to carry "into scholarship the political charge and current urgency of sexual politics" (177) characteristic of the Reagan era (1981-1989) and, as such, animated by an administration that failed to respond to the AIDS crisis, by the resulting resurgence of increasingly violent homophobia, by new forms of blatant and provocative activism, and by the emergence of feminist sex-radicalism—an urgency that was, as Love notes, "never intended to age" and which continues to be reflected in the critical habits within fields such as feminist, gender, and queer studies (qtd. in K. Amin 177).

My research was partly designed to ask interviewees to reflect on the impacts of the lockout laws. Alongside questions designed to elicit their stories about going out in Sydney before and after the lockout laws, I asked these participants to draw maps capturing the spatiality of their everyday lives. I expected that these maps might generate concrete evidence of how such laws restrict possibilities for queer people and communities, in line with the protests made by queer organisations and businesses discussed in chapter two. However, given that the invitation to map an ordinary life necessarily prioritises what is positively done, rather than either what might be done or what is presumed as ideal 'queer' practice, the visual method I devised (and discuss in detail in chapter four) turned out to be inherently reparative.

This method necessarily attends to people's ordinary lived realities, including their relationships, routines, and responsibilities, as well as the emotional attachments these involve. This does not necessarily produce any idealisation of ordinary lives as both good and bad relationships to people and/or communities are represented by the maps these participants sketched, alongside go-to places, safe spaces, and daily routines. By attending to the everyday, these maps connect queer people's lived experiences with larger socio-political changes taking place before and at the time of writing.

In the chapters that follow, I will draw on both transcriptions of the verbal components of these interviews and these hand-drawn maps to argue that an account of queer people's lived experiences, which is primarily interested in exposing forms and instances of regulation, oppression, or crisis, categorically fails to account for the ways in which queer people are actively involved in creating the conditions for their lives. This includes what we might conceptualise as *tactical responses* to public policy, to which I will return shortly. These interview texts and maps together illustrate that even evidently restrictive policies like the lockout laws often only figure quite marginally in the day-to-day lives of queer people and, where they do, they might in fact reinforce a sense of community and political potential rather than diminish it. The initial aims of my own research were, in fact, also part of a politics mobilised by the lockout laws, complicating Berlant and Warner's suggestion that governmental interventions of this kind progressively diminish the expectations and potential for queer life and politics. In fact, declarations pertaining to 'the dissipation of gay life', 'endangered territory', or 'endangered identity', tend to mobilise such a politics. In another example, Robert Reynolds provides an insightful account of the response to anti-gay violence around Oxford Street in the summer of 2007/8 which, he argues, "morphed into a re-expression of solidarity and reaffirmation of gay community and identity" at a time when modes of gay existence and their dominant territory, Oxford Street, were suffering attrition (88).

In this context I will also make use of Wilson's argument that "normative discourse is not the only route by which power realizes its intimate reach" (A. Wilson 252). This suggests that infrastructures of intimate life do not exist as "timeless features of the landscape" (257) and that, as I have argued, the "official intentions [of infrastructures] can be betrayed by a plurality of uses" (259). Wilson makes these arguments in relation to what she calls queer uses of bathrooms and the repurposing of public spaces like cinemas for sexual transactions. I think we can extend her arguments to the ways in which queer people might relate to the city and the limitations imposed on this relation by the lockout laws, to the institution of marriage and

the forms of intimacy it is designed to accommodate, as well as to the ways in which queer youth in particular create counterpublic digital sexual cultures. While my object of analysis in this thesis continues to be what I described above, drawing on Berlant and Warner, as the queer encounter with forms of power and/or governance, I want to speak specifically of the queer encounter with governance because power is too abstract and dispersed to offer the kind of concrete facilitation we can call infrastructure and thus, importantly, can seek to create or manage to concrete ends.

The queer ordinary: a contradiction in terms?

As I briefly outlined at the beginning of this chapter, the queer ordinary operates at two different levels of analysis throughout my argument. It names the everyday life of non-heterosexuals, prompting a reparative approach to analysing the queer encounter with forms of governance. And it demands a closer examination of everyday negotiations of governmental policies and debates, which in turn provokes a reconsideration of queer theory's allegiance to antinormativity. The above discussion contextualises my understanding of the queer ordinary as a move away from queer culture understood in opposition to the everyday dimensions of heterosexual culture, such as marriage, monogamy, domestic cohabitation, or reproduction. Berlant and Warner's version of queer life as definitively radical, ephemeral, and antinormative cannot account for the everyday lives represented by the non-heterosexual people I have interviewed, and it seems, to say the least, politically counterproductive to simply position these people as 'not queer enough'. I came to these realisations across the course of my research and, largely, in response to my participants' verbal and visual representations, which shifted my focus towards the ordinariness of queer people's quotidian existence and the day-to-day ways in which queer lives are lived. In this I am also siding with Biddy Martin's critique of queer theory's antinormative imperative—its "radical anti-normativity"—which, she writes, "throws out a lot of babies with a lot of bathwater" (70). Constructions of queerness as radical antinormativity, Martin argues, evoke

an existence without limit, without bodies or psyches, and certainly without mothers ... An enormous fear of ordinariness or normalcy results in superficial accounts of the complex imbrication of sexuality with other aspects of social and psychic life, and in far too little attention to the dilemmas of the average people that we also are (70).

My analysis also does not demand that sexuality itself be central to the lived experiences of non-heterosexuals.

The tendency of queer theory and scholarship to prioritise the novel and unconventional, as Stevi Jackson observes, is characteristic of much work in the study of sexuality since the 1970s. As Jackson writes, “questioning heterosexual hegemony and championing those it excludes has led to a focus on sexual diversity, on *sexualities* (plural) and a fascination with novel and potentially subversive lifestyles and practices” (34). Across this period of the emergence of queer scholarship, feminist concerns with gender oppression have also shaped the field, frequently orienting it toward attention to “the most coercive, exploitative and violent aspects of contemporary sexuality” (Jackson 34). However, as Martin’s critique evidences, these epistemological priorities have not gone uncontested. I draw across this thesis on the work of a number of scholars who have critically and particularly reflected on queer theory’s primary commitment to antinormativity. My argument extends their reflections by providing new material examples of how these polarised priorities dominating the study of sexuality—diversity and transgression on the one hand and systemic oppression and violence on the other—do not leave enough room for analyses of what Jackson describes as “the ongoing negotiation of everyday, mundane, conventional sexual lives [and] the ordinary day-to-day patterns of sexual relations through/in which most people live their lives” (34).

The rhetoric of antinormativity tends to create a political imperative, which renders transgression central to queer culture building. This rhetoric marks gays and lesbians as what Jack (Judith) Halberstam describes as “heroic norm-resisters ... always somewhat at odds with respectability, decency and domesticity” (“Anti-Social” 143). As Foucault argues in *The History of Sexuality, Volume I*, however, the belief that sexual minorities emerge from and resist predominantly repressive regimes is historically inaccurate or, at best, incomplete. What Foucault calls the ‘repressive hypothesis’—the idea that sexuality is restrained via legal and social prohibitions—is but one discourse which operates “within a general economy of discourses on sex in modern societies since the seventeenth century” (*History* 11). Without denying the existence of specific scenes of sexual repression, Foucault observes a discursive “dissemination and implantation of polymorphous sexualities” (12) facilitating the emergence of “a world of perversion” in the modern age (40). Foucault uses this observation to propose his famous alternative model of power as it manifests, for example, in medico-sexual regimes. This is “a power bent on generating forces, making them grow, and ordering them, rather than one dedicated to impeding them, making them submit, or destroying them” (136). Power, in this micro-relational sense, is not only a negative, prohibitive force but also positive. Its generative forces may be seen in the intensifying, modern discourses, which name, categorise, evaluate, and indeed *produce* sexuality. According to this argument, “Sexuality must not be

thought of as a kind of natural given which power tries to hold in check, or as an obscure domain which knowledge tries gradually to uncover” (105). Rather, sexuality names “a [fundamentally] historical construct” (105).

However well known the theoretical principle, the consequences of Foucault’s argument for analysis of everyday lives might still be under-appreciated. As Lawrence Grossberg writes in *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, “power never quite accomplishes everything it might like to everywhere, and there is always the possibility of changing the structures and organization of power” (29). This is to say that *relations of power* cannot be accounted for by reductive power-resistance dichotomies in which, as Grossberg puts it, resistance “is always and only a response that at best limits rather than shapes power itself” (29). With this in mind, I consider such governmental scenes as zoning laws, marriage law, and education policy not just as examples of the sustained oppression of queer bodies and desires, although there may be specific instances where that is an effect, but also, importantly, in terms of how they productively figure in the day-to-day of people’s lives.

My thesis is thus concerned with one of cultural studies’ “problem-spaces” or problematics, namely that of the relations between agency and resistance (Grossberg 49-51). Grossberg argues that “this problematic explicitly refuses to assume a simple opposition between domination and subordination [as it] emphasizes people’s ability to bend the resources they are given to their own needs and desires” (50). Grossberg’s characterisation of this problematic recalls de Certeau’s earlier reflections on the inventiveness of the everyday in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. While de Certeau’s text grew out of a study of popular culture and such everyday activities as cooking, I take his arguments to also apply to forms of governance—and his chapter on walking in the city seems to concretely justify this use. A focus on the everyday offers, to deploy de Certeau’s terms, critical insights into the tactical negotiations in which queer people engage to sustain their lives in ways they come to find necessary and, specifically, insights into how people encounter and navigate structures of power as they manifest in laws, institutions, and the state. Since everyday life refers to the day-to-day routines, practices, and negotiations of queer people, the *infrastructure* of the everyday describes a dispersed inventory of resources, relations, places, and attachments. So, when I speak about infrastructures of intimacy in this thesis, I am not only referring to policies and laws directly pertaining to intimate lives but, importantly, also to the various resources people draw on in their day-to-day lives to sustain the kind of life they come to find necessary. A sense of belonging, validation, and comfort is gained across dispersed geographies in spite of queer people’s legal and/or institutional marginalisation in specific cases. Everyday life not

only signifies habitual daily routines but, in this sense, also the processes by which people are actively involved in the ongoing production of their lives.

'Making do', to paraphrase de Certeau, describes the process by which people adapt or adjust to a given environment, finding "ways of using the constraining order" in a manner that "establishes within it a degree of *plurality*" (30). De Certeau exemplifies this argument with reference to how the city conceived by city planners and cartographers may be used by 'the walker' who makes "choices among the signifiers of the spatial 'language' or by displacing them through the use he makes of them. He condemns certain places to inertia or disappearance and composes with others spatial 'turns of phrase' that are 'rare', 'accidental' or 'illegitimate'" (98-99). The infrastructure of the city, to rephrase this with my chosen terms of analysis, is encountered in ways that frequently betray official intentions for use and movement (A. Wilson 259). This is an argument that can be usefully juxtaposed to those critiques of antinormativity characteristic of queer theory, and I will, for example, intersect this with Love's argument about queerness as *pluralising* the normal. Importantly, power does not only manifest in the form of laws, institutions, or the state but also takes effect, as Grossberg argues, "where people live their daily lives, and in the spaces where these fields intersect" (29). Such apparatuses as zoning laws, marriage law, and education policy ought not to be considered as instances of governance in and of themselves but only as they are materially experienced and negotiated by people in their day-to-day lives. This is also echoed in Highmore's account of de Certeau's writing on the everyday, where he notes that *The Practice of Everyday Life* "[starts] out from the position that the everyday presents an obstacle (and a residue) to systemic forms of government and domination" (*Everyday* 149).

An analysis of the impact of public policy, I argue, should account for what de Certeau calls the "tactical ... makeshift creativity of groups or individuals already caught in the nets of 'discipline'" (xiv-xv), caught in the nets of forms of governance, which may limit the possibilities of queer life. Laws and policies in practice are not zero-sum events in which, for example, whatever is gained by property owners, government officials, or heterosexuals is inevitably lost by non-heterosexual people. A perspective that prioritises the everyday thus offers a way of looking beyond the negative effects of such policies toward what they might also *make possible*: political community, new geographies of queer space(s), solidarity and care, conflict, and potential for change. The queer ordinary as the everyday life of non-heterosexuals then provides the context for a reparative analysis of queer encounters with forms of governance, attuned to capturing where and how queer lives are actually lived, including how they are sustained despite sometimes adverse circumstances. Instead of approaching policy as a site

where identities, practices, and forms of intimate life are regulated, I explore the conditions of possibility for queer relational life in terms of a much more dynamic and shifting set of agents 'intra-acting' (Barad) to produce conditions and contexts for various forms of queer living in contemporary Sydney.

A closer examination of queer everyday encounters with and negotiations of policies and the debates that accompany them complicates the relationship between forms of governance and queer life, which is easily conceived of in terms of power and resistance. It thus also offers an opportunity to critically examine queer theory's antinormativity paradigm. The queer ordinary, I contend, is *not* a contradiction in terms if queerness is understood as a *pluralisation* of the 'ordinary' rather than its antithesis. In pairing up *queer* and *ordinary*, I also want to explore the question Robyn Wiegman and Elizabeth Wilson ask in their introduction to a special issue of *differences* on the centrality of antinormativity to the dominant rhetoric of queer theory. "What might queer theory do," they ask, "if its allegiance to antinormativity was rendered less secure" (1)? Implicitly, this question invites a form of queer theorising that is not primarily committed to what they call queer theory's "antinormative imperative" (11). With this in mind, I also draw on Love's reflections on how to access "the ordinariness of homosexuality and of scholarship" in her discussion of Sharon Marcus' work on female same-sex intimacies in Victorian England ("Ordinary" 91). Marcus, instead of focusing on experiences of shame, secrecy, or oppression in analysing these intimacies—a focus she identifies as queer studies' "deviance paradigm" (266)—proposes the method of 'just reading'. Love summarises this approach as a form of "seeing what is represented in literature and the historical record rather than what is absent, hidden, or repressed" ("Ordinary" 92). This approach is clearly aligned with the reparative critique of paranoid reading. Forms of scholarship that tend to focus on instances of repression, invisibility, or absence, Marcus writes, have "led theorists, historians, and literary critics alike to downplay or refuse the equally powerful ways that same-sex bonds have been acknowledged by the bourgeois public sphere" (13).

Through the lens of queer theory's antinormativity paradigm, queer cultures, identities, and practices are commonly understood as relatively homogenous to the extent that they can be brought together as a figure opposed to the common objects of sustained queer critique: heteronormativity, homonormativity, monogamy, marriage, the nuclear family, and domesticity. Such a critical focus, which dismisses forms of normativity in queer people's lived experience as emulations of heterosexual culture leaves little room for a more careful examination of why and how queer people attach to what they may consider to be good lives for themselves (see also G. Brown "Homonormativity"). I translate Marcus's practice of 'just

reading' into my own research, via Love's account, as a commitment to seeing and taking seriously the many ways in which queer lives ordinarily manifest in contemporary Sydney. 'Just reading', in other words, resists what Jackson calls "the lure of the novel and unconventional" in order to "give higher priority to what goes on within less glamorous, more routine and normative sexual lives" (35).

I also want to more closely consider, as a consequence, the appeal of the antinormative imperative, or what Jackson refers to as "the lure of the novel and unconventional" for scholarship, which prioritises the realities of more ordinary, normative sexual lives (35). Similarly, Wiegman and Wilson express doubts about the consequences of succumbing to "the allure of moving *against*" and its critical, field-defining currency in queer theory (11). Foucault's overall argument against a dichotomous understanding of power and repression is again relevant here, suggesting that "what sustains our eagerness to speak of sex in terms of repression is doubtless this opportunity to speak out against the powers that be" (*History* 7). If it is the case, as Foucault also argues, that "there are no societies which do not regulate sex, and thus all societies create the hope of escaping from such regulations" (*Interviews* 101), the repressive hypothesis, like antinormativity, nevertheless relies on a dichotomous understanding of power, normativity, and the law as inherently and always already straight—an understanding of power for which all the regulation sits on the side of the heterosexual norm, and all the escape on the side of homosexuality or queer sex. This dichotomy dismisses Foucault's important lesson that forms of resistance are "never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (*History* 95). For Wiegman and Wilson, queer theorists in the dominant antinormative mode themselves construct normativity as stable, immobile, and repressive (13). In other words, the rhetoric of antinormativity can obscure complex dynamics of power and itself create what Berlant and Warner call a restrictive and coercive normal culture, which queer people ought to resist, unsettle, subvert, or disavow.

The character and authority of social norms or the idea of the 'normal' in relation to sex and sexuality is a definitive concern for queer theory. In this context, Love's work in particular provides an enabling set of reflections on what queer theory might gain from sociological studies of deviance from the 1960s and 1970s, stressing the productive potential of understanding norms and the normal as dynamic formations and queer bodies and desires as their pluralisation. Love observes that in these earlier studies—before 'queer theory'—homosexuality, alongside other forms of social marginality, figures as part of the normal rather than as its antithesis. Love notes that 'normal' sexual behaviour in these studies describes any and all practices which are "perceptible, meaningful, structured, and present" as opposed to

behaviour which is “random, illegible, meaningless, and sick” (“Ordinary” 77). Post-war scholars of sexuality characterised homosexual life “as a social phenomenon, a structured and meaningful set of practices and organized communities” and as such as integral to social life (76). In fact, Love observes that deviance “plays as great a part as conformity in the constitution and reproduction of the social world” (79). Neither conformity nor deviance are fixed categories but are continuously (re)defined in relation to one another, echoing Foucault’s reflections on the relationship between the limit and transgression as mutually constitutive:

The limit and transgression depend on each other for whatever density of being they possess: a limit could not exist if it were absolutely uncrossable and, reciprocally, transgression would be pointless if it merely crossed a limit composed of illusions and shadows (“Transgression” 35).

The normal, in other words, is a dynamic formation continuously pluralised and thus reconfigured by queer bodies and desires. There is something enabling about Love’s account of the normal and how it changes from within. Most straightforwardly, if we look at same-sex marriage using the antinormativity frame, it might appear, as Berlant and Warner would expect, to be an emulation of heterosexual culture that performatively reiterates its ‘normality’ as the effect of, to repurpose Judith Butler’s account of the production of ‘natural sexes’, “a set of repeated acts within a highly regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being” (*Gender Trouble* 45). Same-sex marriage, by this logic, would only function to affirm the ‘naturalness’ and ‘normality’ of heterosexuality—in a way similar to how “the repeated stylization of the body” performatively produces the social fiction of a ‘natural’ gender binary (45). Whereas, if we think of queer people getting married as a *pluralisation* of the normal, then we can consider in more intimate or everyday detail what that pluralisation—the process of “adopting and adapting the narrations [of intimate life] available to us” (*Highmore Ordinary* 7)—might look like and how it might be experienced, instead of foreclosing such analysis by dismissing its object as unproductive assimilation.

While ‘normal’ in this positive sense is inclusive of and indeed shaped by sexual deviance in sociological scholarship of the post-war period, Warner along with other queer theorists frames ‘queer’ to signify “resistance to regimes of the normal” from the early 1990s, arguing that its appeal lies in the rejection of a “logic of toleration” and the “political interest-representation” of much gay and lesbian activism (*Queer Planet* xxvi). In *The Trouble With Normal*, written in the late 1990s, Warner considers, in turn, the appeal of the normal captured by the popularity of the ideas put forward by then-editor of *The New Republic* magazine, Andrew Sullivan, in his manifesto on *the politics of homosexuality*, which, Warner notes, “turns

out to have been the most influential gay essay of the '90s" (*Normal* 52). Sullivan's reflections on "the trouble with gay radicalism" frame sexuality as cultural subversion in conflict with the wish of "the vast majority of gay people" for integration into society as it is rather than resistance to its normalising regimes: "For most gay people—the closet cases and barflies, the construction workers and investment bankers, the computer programmers and parents—a 'queer' identity is precisely what they want to avoid" (Sullivan). Warner also contends that "nearly everyone ... wants to be normal," yet he notes that "people didn't [always] sweat much over being normal," or abnormal for that matter (*Normal* 53). To account for this desire to be seen as 'just like the rest', Warner points to the spread and increased availability of statistics, such as census data, opinion polls, psychological surveys, or clinical tests in the nineteenth century, and their impact on why we attach to normality. "Under the conditions of mass culture," he notes, people "are constantly bombarded by images of statistical populations and their norms, continually invited to make an implicit comparison between themselves and the mass of other bodies" and to evaluate the validity of their own sex lives accordingly (*Normal* 53-54). This also echoes the central argument in "Sex in Public," that intimacy is publicly mediated via "mediator[s] and metaphor[s] of national existence," such as the family form and the couple, 'the statistical majority', education and the law, generational narratives, or domestic architecture—mediators which bestow onto heterosexuality "a tacit sense of rightness and normalcy" (554).

In *Normality: A Critical Genealogy*, Peter Cryle and Elizabeth Stephens observe that "the word 'normal' often suggests something more than simply conformity to a standard or a type: it also implies what is correct or good" (1). The normal, in other words, involves what Warner also refers to as evaluative (rather than a statistical) norms, which affirm the 'rightness' of and/or bestow value onto a given practice, body, or identity (*Normal* 56). To normalise—to affirm some practices, bodies, identities and not others—Georges Canguilhem argues in *The Normal and the Pathological*, is "to impose a requirement on an existence" (Canguilhem 243). I understand Warner's work to reference the same idea—the imposition of a requirement on an existence—when he endorses 'resistance to the *regimes* of the normal', resistance to the regimenting, restrictive, or coercive nature of heteronormativity. The effects of evaluative norms and their impositions, Cryle and Stephens note, have featured much recent scholarship, particularly in queer and gender studies, race studies, and critical disability studies. "The majority of such work," they write, "focuses on practices of normativity and normalization, on the compulsory imposition of the normal, drawing attention to the way these serve to reinforce existing cultural systems of privilege and power" (2). David Halperin, for example,

suggests that “‘queer’ ... acquires its meaning from its oppositional relation to the norm” (Halperin 61-62) and Annamarie Jagose notes more recently that, “These days it almost goes without saying that queer is conventionally understood to mean ‘antinormative’” (Jagose 26). Indeed, Jagose contends, “antinormativity stands, mostly unchallenged, as queer theory’s privileged figure for the political” (27). The special issue of *differences* on the centrality of antinormativity to the dominant rhetoric of queer theory already discussed in this chapter contributes to this work but also departs from it in important ways.

What this brief sketch of discourses on the normal aims to show here is that queer theory is a key space for such discourses, which comes to stand for a continuous troubling of the normal. Indeed, as Cryle and Stephens observe, queer theory articulates “some of the most severe critiques of the normal” across the different disciplines where work on norms, normality, and normativity is being done (6). This thesis departs from that dominant queer critique of the normal. Instead, I argue that a model of contemporary queer existence, which dismisses ordinary sexual lives as complicit in a regimenting normal culture, forecloses more careful analyses of why and/or how queer people attach to certain ways of life, identities, forms of intimacy, relationships, or institutions in the first place. Further, such a dismissal also forecloses analyses of how these cultural forms may be shaped in their proximity to queer bodies and desires.

A queer political imperative to resist heteronormativity not only relies on a reductive understanding of norms but also fails to appreciate that transgression—as opposed to what queer theory might call assimilatory ordinariness—as a way of being in the world is not simply *chosen* at will by queer people. Sexuality is not a distinct sphere of a person’s life but enmeshed with other non-sexual areas and aspects of sociality and, as such, located squarely within the demands and possibilities of the everyday. This is to say that the way in which people live sexual lives is less a matter of *choice* than an affordance of everyday infrastructures or, to speak again with Ahmed, a function of what is “psychically, socially or materially possible for some individuals and groups” (*Emotion* 153). This dominant model of queer life as a relation of transgression and/or resistance to normal culture is not something to which all queer subjects have equal access. Being a transgressive queer, in other words, is not something people simply choose at will but a matter of social, material, and affective possibilities. Jackson also makes this argument by emphasising “the importance of locating sexuality within the everyday, as part of the fabric of routine day-to-day social life” (35).

Models of queer culture that posit transgression from and assimilation to ‘the normal’ as oppositional choices not only deprive norms and/or normative arrangements of everyday

lives of their dynamic nature but also fail queer people whose lives cannot sustain a permanent orientation of antinormativity toward the hegemonic ideologies and institutions of intimate life. Instead of understanding queer life to be at odds with 'normal' life or culture, we might look more closely at how queerness may operate when it is thought of to be within the purview of the normal. Throughout the following chapters, I provide concrete examples of what the day-to-day lives of non-heterosexuals may teach us about the queer encounter with governance. At the same time, these examples also allow me to consider the ways in which queer bodies and desires may be understood to pluralise the dynamic and constantly shifting formation that is 'heteronormative' culture.

Death of the Gaybourhood?

What happens when a person who is lesbian-identified finally reaches the big city? In imagination she has become convinced that there must be other lesbians 'out there' (269).

In the months following her arrival, the city will almost inevitably present her with situations that force a reevaluation of whether she is indeed part of a collectivity called 'gay people' (270).

—KATH WESTON, "Get Thee to a Big City: Sexual Imaginary and the Great Gay Migration"

Oxford Street

This chapter will consider multiple perspectives on the relationship between queer culture and the spatial infrastructures it utilises. To this end, I will initially take a step back from my arguments about the queer ordinary and about the importance of understanding infrastructures of intimacy without presuming incommensurate queer and straight infrastructures and thus endorsing a simplistic queer-straight dichotomy. I will instead begin by elaborating the impact of zoning and licensing restrictions on queer life in Sydney, as understood by the mainstream media, representatives of businesses reliant on the 'night-time economy', and queer community activists. As I have already indicated, the regulatory intervention into urban space that is commonly referred to as the 'Sydney lockout laws' was the starting point for my research, and this was initially the case because, as I was considering suitable case studies to explore the encounter between queer culture and forms of governance, various stakeholders opposing the lockout laws were gaining public traction for a narrative about how these laws were decimating the vibrant nightlife of Sydney's famous 'gaybourhood', Oxford Street.

The term 'gaybourhood' or, more formally, the 'gay neighbourhood', describes a distinct geographical focal point which is more or less visibly marked as queer, frequented and to a large extent inhabited by non-heterosexuals, and home to queer-friendly and many queer-owned businesses (see e.g. Ghaziani *Gayborhood 2*). Gaybourhoods are also variously referred to as 'gay ghettos', 'gay meccas', 'gay villages', or 'gay districts' signifying different

understandings of the spatiality of queer life and its relation to the public proper. “Collectively,” Michael Brown suggests, these terms “describe the territoriality of gay-male (and to a lesser extent lesbian, trans*, bisexual and queer) sexuality within the cities across the global north and elsewhere” (457). The emergence of such neighbourhoods was first noted in urban studies scholarship in the 1980s when, for example, Martin Levine set out to analyse “the validity of ‘gay ghetto’ as a sociological construct” following the claims made by non-heterosexuals “that there exist within major cities ‘gay ghettos’, neighborhoods housing large numbers of homosexual men and women as well as homosexual gathering places where homosexual behaviour is generally accepted” (363). Around the same time, Barbara Weightman noted that “Although psychologists and sociologists have studied the gay community extensively, they have devoted only minimum attention to spatial characteristics” (106). Subsequent research on the relationship between sex and the city, Phil Hubbard notes, considered not only the lives of gays and lesbians but also those “of a more diverse range of urban dwellers,” addressed the gendering of urban space, and offered analyses of transgendered spaces (*Cities and Sexualities* 10; for an overview, see Binnie and Valentine). A common theme across these literatures, Hubbard suggests, “is that the materialities of the city encourage sexual encounters” (10).

While the city may be a place of bodily contact, erotic imagery, and pleasure-seeking, the prevalence of this theme is also a result of urban studies research focusing on sites and contexts that afford sexual encounters. Other work on sexualities within geography, in Australasia in particular, has turned attention to sexuality in other spaces, including to the heteronormativity of the family home, the gendered dynamics of domestic labour, to specifically gay and lesbian homes, to suburbs, cities, and rural spaces, virtual spaces, as well as to tourism, and the military (see e.g. Johnston and Longhurst). While I discuss the tendency to focus on sexual identities and practices over more mundane aspects of queer everyday life as well as over and/or at the expense of gender, race, and class identities in the final section of this chapter, I will also show how specific assumptions about the role of sexuality in where and how queer people live and socialise are built-in features of research designs in sexuality and space literatures.

The study of ‘queer’ spaces within the city, the focus of this chapter, has not gone uncontested. Gavin Brown, for instance, points to a focus in urban studies literatures on “the spaces created by gay men” as well as on “those ‘homonormative’ gay male identities that are lived through the commercial gay centres of major cities” (“Urban Sexualities” 1215). This leads to further empirical and analytical slippages, which are that the study of (urban) sexual

geographies stops short of attending in equal measure to the spatiality of other non-heterosexual lives and, relatedly, that not enough attention is paid to how spaces and places bring different identities together—how sexualities are inflected by other identities—and how these intersections (re)produce forms of exclusion and social hierarchies in supposedly open and inclusive queer spaces (Oswin "Critical Geographies" 93; see also Caluya "Rice Steamer"; "Scene of Racism"; Bao). Indeed, as Hubbard notes in a recent reflection on 'why space (still) matters', research about the spaces of sexuality remains limited in terms of the subjects it (re)centres and ought instead to "embrace a messier and more varied reality" of sexual lives and spatial formations ("Geography" 4). Further, studies of 'queer' spaces in urban environments tend to rest on a binary opposition of gay/straight spaces, confining queer presence to dedicated queer spaces, such as gay bars, clubs, scenes, saunas, or Pride parades (see e.g. Visser). Dissatisfied with dichotomising discourses and categories, Lynda Johnston observes, "queer geographers ... have turned to fluid, unstable, and ambiguous conceptualizations of sexualities," (810) noting the limitations of reified understandings of sexualised spaces, such as the gaybourhood, and calling for "more fluid, ambiguous and contingently sexualized spatialities such as circuits and fields" (Knopp 49)—a call my queer infrastructural model responds to as well. As Kath Browne and Leela Bakshi also note, the study of urban sexualities ought to engage as well with "socialising beyond the scene" and the "complex and nuanced creations of space" (190), which I frame as queer everyday infrastructures throughout this thesis and which I discuss here and in greater detail in my fourth chapter on 'queer cartography'.

As an infrastructure for queer life, to paraphrase Amin Ghaziani, gaybourhoods enable non-heterosexuals "to find one another for friendship and fellowship, sex, dating, and love [and] stand guard against an entrenched problem of history and ancestry—they help to answer the question, who are my people?—and they offer a renewed sense of roots" as well as a sense of safety and political community (*Gayborhood* 2). Any definition of 'gaybourhood', however, is prone to being outdated or incomplete as soon as it has been formulated because, as Micky Lauria and Lawrence Knopp suggest, gaybourhoods are "a spatial response to a historically specific form of oppression" (152) and as such contingent on a complex set of factors and conditions, including the social approval of homosexuality, sexual and gender rights, or the presence of homophobic violence, as well as the ways in which non-heterosexuals are able to 'make do' with such forces in their day-to-day lives, none of which are fixed attributes of any given cultural space. In this chapter, I want to centrally consider the

resonance today of Sydney's gaybourhood, Oxford Street, prompted by discourses about its demise in the face of urban governance.

Oxford Street adjoins Sydney's Central District Business (CBD) in the city's inner east. The majority of nightlife, leisure, and commercial venues, such as clubs, cafes, sex shops, and other retail businesses are concentrated along a 700-meter stretch of Oxford Street between College Street and Taylor Square. Sydney's gaybourhood also has queer-friendly health and social services and extends into the surrounding suburbs of Darlinghurst, Paddington, Potts Point, and Surry Hills where many non-heterosexuals live (Nash and Gorman-Murray "Gay Village" 88). Hosting the annual Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade, Oxford Street is the symbolic heartland of Sydney's LGBT communities, which started to see a concentration of non-heterosexual residents and, according to historian Garry Wotherspoon, "to develop commercial venues catering for a camp clientele" in the late 1960s (161). Oxford Street, to explain why such a concentration materialised in the first place, was close to the existing nightlife in Kings Cross, had many unused buildings, offered cheaper rents than Kings Cross, was home to old Turkish Baths that attracted a homosexual clientele, had many wine bars and a number of bars with less restrictive licensing arrangements, and was close to a number of popular cruising grounds like Hyde Park, Green Park, or the Domain (Wotherspoon 161-65).

The closure of several long-standing gay venues, the presence of straight nightlife in the gaybourhood, as well as reports of increased homophobic street violence inspired growing concern about the demise of Oxford Street "as a gay village" from the early 2000s (Nash and Gorman-Murray "Gay Village" 88; Reynolds). At the same time, and surely one of the factors both inspiring and complicating such concerns, the nearly neighbouring suburb of Newtown emerged and developed as an alternative LGBT neighbourhood, centred on King Street. The emergence of multiple apparent hubs for LGBT culture complicates the idea of the gaybourhood insofar as it at least signifies a dispersal and expansion of queer urban infrastructures. This is not to say that Oxford Street has not undergone significant changes since the late 1980s and, in fact, one of the circumstances that facilitated LGBT activities in Newtown was the way, Wotherspoon notes, "the glory days of the 'gay golden mile', as Oxford Street was known from the late 1980s, led to rapidly increasing rent" (268). Processes of gentrification animated the dispersal of non-heterosexuals into other inner-western suburbs of the city, also including Enmore, Erskineville, Darlington, Chippendale, Alexandria, Waterloo, Leichhardt, Stanmore and Summer Hill.

All these suburbs have seen increases in their gay and lesbian populations and these changes in demographics have impacted on local lifestyles. Gay and lesbian households now blend into these

neighbourhoods, sitting alongside the young heterosexual families and older residents (Wotherspoon 267).

Many of those moving into Sydney's inner-western suburbs were lesbians who, as Catherine Nash and Andrew Gorman-Murray point out, were not served in the same way as gay men by the venues and services around Oxford Street, but also because lesbians often had more limited financial means and so they, and the services aimed at them, were priced out of that residential and commercial housing market:

This contributed to the development of a discrete lesbian residential and service neighbourhood during the 1980s in the inner west suburb of Leichhardt. Women's health services, lesbian counseling services, women's refuges, women's and lesbians' social and business clubs, and lesbian residents began to congregate. The suburb eventually earned the moniker 'Dykehardt' ("Gay Village" 95).

As some of the participants in this research note and, at times, regret, Oxford Street remains until this day a 'gay' cultural infrastructure, which largely caters to the leisure of white, middle-class gay men (see chapter four)—unless the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras is on. Newtown and the Inner West, by contrast, are understood as 'queer' in that they provide "a home for a broader demographic of sexual and gender minorities, including lesbians, queer women, and trans people" (Nash and Gorman-Murray "Gay Village" 97).²

In this chapter, I revisit the way discourses about the demise of the gaybourhood, exemplarily those inspired by the lockout laws, serve as a "reaffirmation of gay community and identity from those individuals and groups deeply committed to established gay life" (Reynolds 88). While I raised this commitment in chapter one, this chapter considers the impact of the lockout laws on the integrity of Oxford Street already understood to be waning under the pressures of gentrification, of the changing preferences and demands of diverse queer communities, and also due to broader changing social contexts. These include shifting dominant attitudes toward non-heterosexuals (see e.g. Seidman; Weeks), the impact of digital

² In a more recent quantitative analysis of spatial aggregation within and segregation between female and male same-sex couples (SSC) in Melbourne and Sydney, Xavier Goldie shows that "distinctly male and female SSC 'areas' are clearly identifiable," (Goldie 1402), with "female SSCs ... concentrated in the suburbs to the immediate west of the CBD" and "male SSCs ... concentrated in a roughly north-south corridor to the immediate east of the CBD" (1405). This spatial distribution coincides with Nash and Gorman-Murray's observations and is sustained, Goldie argues, by "a persistent critical mass of male and female SSCs" who share enduring attachments to queer social networks, spaces, and practices (1411). While largely confirming these spatial aggregation and segregation patterns, the most recent study on the prevalence of adult gay men and lesbian women in each Australian postcode also pointed to the emergence in recent years of "new 'gayborhoods' and 'lesborhoods,'" (Callander et al. 11) such as Sydney's inner-western suburb of Erskineville for gay men, and Bumberrah and Johnsonville, two regional communities in the state of Victoria, with the highest prevalence of lesbian women (Callander et al. 8).

technologies on the cultural resources utilised by LGBT individuals and groups, such as the changed dynamics of socialising and sex-seeking they afford (see e.g. Race "Pragmatism"; Renninger), and the ways poor traffic and urban planning in inner-city Sydney obstructed the success of proliferating small retail businesses in the gaybourhood (see e.g. Reynolds; Ruting).

At this point, I should introduce these 'lockout laws' in more detail. All I have said thus far is that they were established in 2014 with the public aim of curbing 'alcohol-fuelled' violence in inner-city Sydney, placing new limits on alcohol consumption in licensed venues and requiring such venues in a specific inner-city area to refuse entrance to patrons after 1:30 a.m. and cease the sale of alcoholic drinks from 3 a.m. From the outset, they also reduced 'take away' or home delivery sales of alcohol in a slightly expanded radius encompassing the inner-city Sydney suburbs surrounding the designated entertainment precinct (*Liquor Amendment Bill 2014*). In the next section, I will consider how these laws evolved over time until they were largely lifted in January of 2020. I will also consider the apparent effectiveness of their declared intent, which was to help manage unruly and, at times, violent party cultures by subjecting licensed premises in what were identified as the most at-risk inner-city areas to strict conditions of operation. As I have already indicated, as they forced bars and clubs to close, queer community responses initially framed the lockouts laws as a political intervention consistent with the aim of creating a sexually purified urban landscape in line with Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner's critique of new zoning regulations passed by the New York City Council in 1995 (551-52). This queer community protest against the lockout laws in Sydney understood them as working to purify the urban landscape by privileging family outings, daytime consumerism, work, and residential living over other forms of urban culture; including, specifically, queer party cultures and queer-oriented businesses.

I will discuss Berlant and Warner's argument more fully in the second half of this chapter, but I raise it again here as a framing device to consider what they mean by describing this New York zoning law as an example of 'sex in public'. Also the essay's title, this phrase does not centrally refer to public sex acts or practices, although the allusion is intentional and is linked to kinds of activities understood to be enabled by a 'gaybourhood'. What 'sex in public' focuses on instead is the ways in which sexual lives are "publicly mediated" (553). Such zoning legislation figures as a 'scene' of sex in public because it illustrates how non-normative intimacies are removed from the urban landscape—the public sphere proper—via political campaigns to zone out pornography and sexually explicit imagery. Of course, given that the "Sex in Public" essay was written in the 1990s, both the effects of this zoning legislation, and the queer material practices it can be seen to limit, differ from any comparable practices in

the twenty-first century. Developments in both media and entertainment, impelled by both the ongoing expansion of online cultures but also decreasing stigma around homosexuality and many associated cultural practices, mean non-heterosexual people today are less reliant on specialised physical spaces for many activities. Indeed, a 'gaybourhood' like Oxford Street and its immediate surrounds has seen many associated changes in the decades since its appearance, including the dramatic reductions in the businesses colloquially referred to as 'sex shops', the reduction of the number and exclusivity of gay and lesbian clubs and bars, and a notable decrease in at least some forms of homophobic violence. Nevertheless, the overlap between Berlant and Warner's argument and queer or queer-allied activism against the lockout laws indicate how these logics of thinking about queer life as precarious and marginalised continue to inform queer work today (see e.g. Reclaim the Streets; Race "Sexuality of the Night"; "Nightlife").

The lockout laws offer a useful opportunity for analysis of the changing geography of queer life in contemporary Australian cities. Before returning to the question of how such an analysis might proceed, I want to critically examine the reasons the New South Wales (NSW) state government presented to justify its intervention into Sydney's nightlife. While its erosive effects on the night-time economy and, disproportionately, on queer party cultures is undeniable, I will also, nevertheless, resist news media and scholarly predictions of the demise or displacement of Oxford Street and its surrounds. Such predictions frequently invoke the lockout laws as a key driver of Oxford Street's demise, but I will argue that the extensive cultural changes unfolding in gaybourhoods today are better understood in terms of growth and driven by the more complex set of factors impacting on and produced as queer urban cultures that I referred to above. New digital infrastructures, greater public acceptance of LGBT people and relationships, gentrification, and the increased internal diversity of queer communities all feature importantly in the narratives about contemporary queer life in Sydney offered by my interview participants, which I discuss in chapter four. To substantiate my account of the lockout laws and their impact, I will draw on media coverage and sexuality and space literatures emerging from several disciplines.

Devising and contesting the Sydney 'lockout laws'

The Sydney lockout laws initially seem tailor-made for a discussion of what Berlant and Warner call the "sexual purification" of urban space (552). Although, in light of my own empirical research, I now find such an argument overestimates the impact of the lockout laws, understanding the response to these laws, including in Sydney's queer community, is an

important step in my overall argument. It is worth noting as well that Berlant and Warner's claims concerning widespread closures of queer-oriented bars and sex clubs have been disputed, with other commentators pointing out that many of New York City's best-known establishments remained open despite the government cracking down on public sexual cultures (see e.g. Castiglia 157) and that bars hosting sex parties were more likely to "retreat and become more of an underground culture," given that many "live beyond the law already" (Taylor qtd. in Kendall 64; 66). In this section, I therefore aim to consider the introduction of the lockout laws in more detail, including their declared intention to reduce an identified problem with hetero-masculine violence in inner-city Sydney's nightlife, and overview the characterisation of their impact by various stakeholders, including within Sydney's queer community.

Late one night in early January 2014, 18-year-old Daniel Christie was killed by a single punch from a drunk assailant in an unprovoked attack in Kings Cross, an inner-city area two kilometres east of Sydney's Central Business District (CBD). The attack occurred only metres from the site where, in December 2012, 18-year-old Thomas Kelly was also killed by what is popularly known as either a 'king hit' or a 'one-punch' attack. Christie and Kelly are not the first victims of such violent attacks by perpetrators under the influence of alcohol. According to Monash University's Department of Forensic Medicine, one-punches in mostly alcohol-fuelled bashings claimed 28 lives between 2000 and 2012 in NSW (the state in which Sydney is the capital city) alone (Dow). Then NSW Attorney General Greg Smith said in a statement at the time that "these incidents have focused community attention on alcohol-related violence, and the government will be working with police to make our streets safer" (qtd. in Needham and Smith). As public furore grew, then Premier of NSW Barry O'Farrell announced reforms to the NSW *Liquor Act 2007* in an attempt to curb alcohol-related violence. On 5 February 2014, the NSW Parliament assented to the *Liquor Amendment Bill 2014*, commonly referred to as the 'Sydney lockout laws', restricting alcohol sales and consumption and venue opening hours, in what was defined as the Sydney CBD Entertainment Precinct, in an attempt to mitigate the problem identified as 'alcohol-fuelled violence' (Nicholls).

Following their introduction, the lockout laws inspired an ongoing public debate about how the government should respond to and manage alcohol-fuelled violence. The understanding of the relation between alcohol and violence apparent in the lockout laws is itself problematic, as I will consider below, but even taking that at face value, the state government's attempt to manage violence by way of regulating alcohol consumption and access to party spaces merits closer analysis. The lockout laws restricted late-night opening

hours and alcohol consumption in the inner city 'CBD Entertainment Precinct' (Figure 1), newly defined in order to specify the geographical reach of this legislation. This inner-city precinct includes parts of Surry Hills, Darlinghurst, The Rocks, Kings Cross, and Cockle Bay. Pubs, bars, nightclubs, licensed karaoke bars, and other late-night venues in these areas, if hosting more than 60 people, were (1) required to refuse new guests entry after 1.30 a.m. and (2) banned from selling alcoholic drinks after 3 a.m. In addition, 'bottle shops', hotels, and clubs within a wider set of suburbs radiating out from this precinct were required to stop selling takeaway alcohol at 10 p.m. Small bars hosting no more than 60 people, restaurants, and most tourism accommodation establishments, such as large city hotels, were exempt from these regulations, and venues licensed to stay open past 3 a.m. could do so without serving alcohol (*Liquor Amendment Bill 2014*).

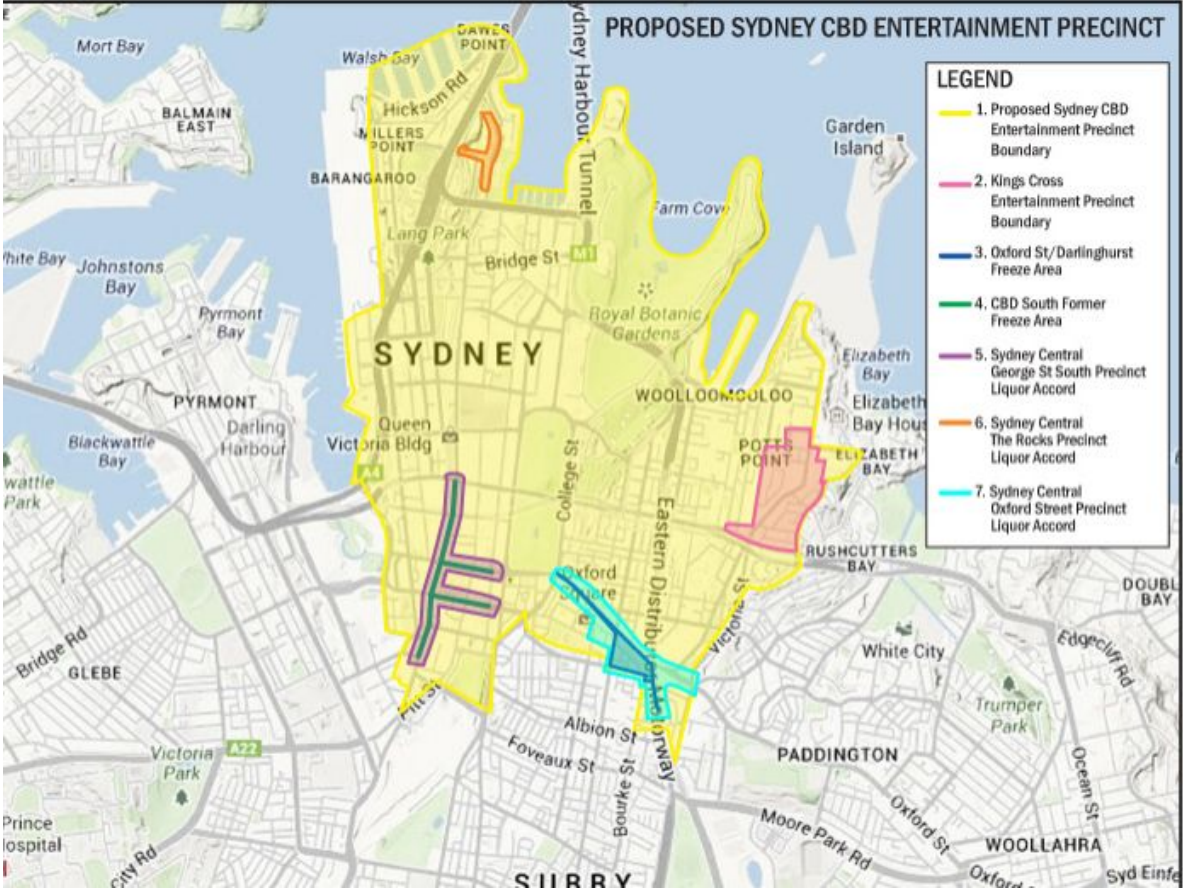


Figure 1: "New Sydney CBD Entertainment Precinct." ABC News, 21 Jan 2014, www.abc.net.au/news/2014-01-21/the-new-sydney-cbd-precinct/5211066?nw=0

An independent review assessing the legislation's effectiveness in September 2016 largely supported the positive effect of these laws, pointing, among other statistics, to 45 per cent and 20.3 per cent reductions in non-domestic assaults in Kings Cross and the CBD respectively (Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research). These statistics themselves are not

uncontroversial, with the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research noting, for example, that the NSW government misleadingly did not account for the fact that assaults were already declining since 2008 in quantifying the lockout laws' impact on night-time violence (in *Keep Sydney Open* 6). Recognising that these statistics came at a cost for businesses, workers, musicians, and other entertainers, the review nevertheless recommended a half-hour increase in both the lockout and the last-drinks time for "genuine entertainment venues" (qtd. in Quilter). In December 2016, following these recommendations, the NSW government announced a half-hour relaxation of both limits for 'live entertainment venues' and extended take-away alcohol and home delivery sales by one hour to 11 p.m. (Nicholls and Robertson). Another of Oxford Street's iconic gay nightclubs, Stonewall, for example, was successful in obtaining this extension because of the drag shows and other live performances it hosts most nights (Jonscher).

While members of the NSW government considered further relaxing the lockout laws in 2018, it took until September 2019 for action to be taken on this. Announcing "it's time to enhance Sydney's nightlife," the new NSW Premier, Gladys Berejiklian, noted the negative impact of the lockout laws on businesses and that Sydney's current nightlife culture was not reflecting its reputation as "Australia's only global city" (qtd. in Gorrey "Nightlife"). Citing concerns about the notorious area of Kings Cross by the police, medical practitioners, and doctors, Berejiklian announced in November 2019 that the lockout laws are to be substantially relaxed across the Entertainment Precinct, with the exception of Kings Cross, by January 2020 (Smith). Since January 14, the 1:30 a.m. lockout has been lifted, the last drinks period has been extended to 3:30 a.m., and bottle shops can stay open until midnight from Monday to Saturday and until 11 p.m. on Sundays. While the lockout laws remain in place in Kings Cross, this is to be reviewed in 12 months (Raper).

According to the government's official narrative of crisis and response, the initial 1.30 a.m. lockouts and the 3 a.m. 'last drinks' rules were only part of its crackdown on alcohol-fuelled violence and anti-social behaviour (NSW Government). They were, however, the principle visible action taken by the government in response to public protest and extensive media coverage of that protest after Christie's death. It was generally reported that these laws were effective relative to the intended aims of having fewer people out at night in the designated Precinct given restricted opening hours, and people also being less drunk when socialising in this Precinct. In addition to limiting hours of admission and sales of alcohol, the amendment prohibited sale of drinks designed to be consumed rapidly, or containing more than 30 millilitres of alcoholic spirits, and limited the number of drinks any one person could

buy in a single purchase after midnight (*Liquor Amendment Bill 2014*). The frequency of violent and aggressive behaviour in and around night-time venues in the Entertainment Precinct reportedly decreased, as did reports of violence in and around night-time venues in that area (Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research).

One consequence of these laws was that, over the months and years following their institution, increasing numbers of venues in Kings Cross, along Oxford Street in Darlinghurst, and in other parts of the inner city were forced to close their doors not just at 1.30 a.m. but permanently (Khoury). Among the most popular late-night districts, Oxford Street and Kings Cross, Sydney's red-light and late-night entertainment district, make up a large part of Sydney's night-time economy, catering not only to younger people and drinking cultures but connecting different areas of the city via a variety of retail, food, live music, and entertainment businesses. Despite the generally positive responses to the lockout laws in the media following their enactment, unsurprisingly, many Sydneysiders also expressed frustration and anger at the erosion of long-established forms of nightlife culture and the jobs attached to it.

In a representative newspaper story, Daisy Dumas from *The Sydney Morning Herald* interviewed both proponents and opponents of the lockout laws. One resident in the inner-city suburb of Surry Hills advocated for the lockout laws, suggesting that "a modest reduction in trading hours leads to large reductions in violence and antisocial behaviour." Inner-city nightlife, he argued, used to be "aggressive, drunk and unsafe" and is much more "civilised" since the introduction of the lockout laws (qtd. in Dumas "Lockout Laws"). However, Elmar Trefz, urban researcher and digital strategist, questioned the effects of the laws, suggesting that "Sydney is now a less social city—there is less impromptu, random networking and fewer casual exchanges of thoughts and ideas with friends. You either have to do it at home, or make sure everything is organised beforehand" (qtd. in Dumas "Lockout Laws"). Sydney's nightlife, as Trefz described it, used to feel vibrant due to its unpredictability; unexpected encounters, and random interactions and exchanges with strangers. The introduction of the lockout laws and the need to carefully plan where and with whom to spend a night out, diminished that vibrancy. For Elizabeth Farrelly from the *Sydney Morning Herald*, too, socialising at night means moving around,

checking out this underground dive, that gay bar or the new cabaret. You change groups, bar hop, split and reconnect, play it by ear. The two core ingredients are density and alcohol. It's about disinhibition and critical mass ... I'm not pro-alcohol or pro-violence. But good cities need nightlife and this involves risk (Farrelly).

In addition to the fact that official crime statistics indicate alcohol-related assaults at licensed premises dropped by 40 per cent in 2014 (Bagshaw), accounts by health experts, too, were used to represent a clear positive impact of these laws in the first six months (Carter). A spokesman for then Minister for Hospitality, Troy Grant, pointed to anecdotal evidence showing “encouraging decreases” in emergency department presentations and alcohol-related violence (qtd. in Koziol "Drinks Laws").³ Tony Grabs, head of trauma at St Vincent’s Hospital, was recorded as describing “a fairly dramatic change in some of the presentations at [St Vincent’s] hospital” especially on Friday and Saturday night (qtd. in Carter). Claiming other emergency rooms across the city had also experienced a decline in alcohol-related injuries, Grabs supported the idea of rolling out the lockout laws across NSW. Alcohol, he argued, not only results in violent behaviour in and around bars and nightclubs but is also a major cause of road trauma, pedestrian trauma, and domestic violence (Carter).

While many residents welcomed the inner city area’s “transformation from late-night hot-spot to long-term residential living” many other locals wanted to see Sydney’s nightlife ‘unlocked’ (Bagshaw). Ron Creevey, owner of Kings Cross nightclub X Studio was unimpressed by any statistical evidence as to the lockouts laws’ effectiveness: “Of course crime has been reduced; there is no one here, it is completely dead” (qtd. in Bagshaw). Kings Cross nightclub owner John Ibrahim made a similar point in calling the lockout laws “the dickhead relocation project,” saying, “all that’s happened is you have everyone going to the casino at 1.30am and taking all the drama there. So now you have this new generation of morons who are not only going out looking for somewhere to drink, they’re gambling too.” (qtd. in Silmalis and Harris). This highlights the key but controversial fact that, although it clearly could have been designated part of Sydney’s Entertainment Precinct, one of the city’s largest licensed venues, and Sydney’s only casino, Star City in Pyrmont (see Figure 1), was exempt from the lockout laws. In fact, in the wake of the lockout laws, ‘the drama’ moved not only to the casino but to other areas of the city. Newtown, Redfern, and Double Bay, for instance, saw increased late-night trading, causing residents there to raise concerns about increased anti-social behaviour. According to Kate Aubusson, the bashing of transgender woman Stephanie McCarthy at a Newtown pub in June 2015, for instance, “alarmed the local LGBTI community, who say they have felt increasingly unsafe since Sydney’s lockout laws transformed nightlife in the suburb” (Aubusson).

³ Hospitality, here, refers to businesses offering food, drink, or accommodation like hotels, bars, and restaurants.

Although technically part of the inner city, violence towards members of minority groups going out in the “‘alternative’ queer area” (Gorman-Murray and Nash 622) along Newtown’s King Street did not immediately generate the same degree of governmental outrage as was forthcoming in the response to the Entertainment Precinct deaths. According to Farrelly, unless the drama unfolds in the inner city, where “the bourgeoisie hang,” the government did not seem to care. Farrelly’s direct concern was about where alcohol-fuelled violence was not being addressed: “No one put western Sydney on [a] curfew” when Raynor Manalad was killed with a one-punch at a Rooty Hill house party. Violence, she criticised, “is fine out there [in the Western Suburbs]. Expected” (Farrelly). In a related response, Micheal Guven, owner of a popular pizza and kebab store in Kings Cross, argued that rather than locking down entire areas of the city, we should be teaching young people about responsible drinking (Carter). Small Bars Association spokesman Martin O’Sullivan said he, too, understood that the laws were put in place to “protect citizens,” but pointed to the NSW government’s failure to recognise the different environments that small bars and other entertainment venues are trying to offer (qtd. in Silmalis and Harris). Late-night venues like, for instance, Oxford Art Factory, were also significantly affected by the lockout laws, even if they never had any problems with violence or other issues with police. A venue like Oxford Art Factory, its owner Mark Gerber argued, “can actually eradicate some of the problems that people have got with over-drinking and binge drinking where the objective is purely just to get drunk” (qtd. in Carter). Nathan Farrell, manager of Newtown live music venue The Basement also complained about having “been painted with the same brush” as those venues where over-drinking and anti-social behaviour are the norm (qtd. in Silmalis and Harris).

Some Kings Cross and Oxford Street bar owners reported declines in trade of up to 40 per cent and were forced to cut opening hours, lay off staff or to close permanently (Koziol "Drinks Laws"). According to Neville Jackson, manager of the 24-hours Taylor Square Newsagency, “there are less people coming out to Darlinghurst now, full stop. [The lockout laws] basically kicked us right in the backside” (qtd. in Koziol "Drinks Laws"). Like Jackson and many others quoted in coverage at this time, Gerber believed the lockout laws were driven more by the NSW government’s desire to be seen to be doing something than by a genuine effort at engaging with the problems of anti-social behaviour and violence (for a further argument along these lines, see *Race Gay Science* 40). As a consequence of this form of urban governance, from this perspective, leisure venues, which are important sites of public sociability for already marginal populations, were threatened or wiped off the map by the lockout laws:

There's a whole lot of good things that go on here in this whole Surry Hills and Darlinghurst area, and I think the lockout was almost like a chemotherapy, not dealing with the cancer that was actually the problem. Those cancers were in certain areas of the city. I think there are areas of the city that are very good and we should have looked at that and studied that more before we did this (Gerber qtd. in Carter).

Dissent over the lockout laws grew more visible over time. Thousands of protesters expressed their dissatisfaction with these laws during public protests to 'Keep Sydney Open' (KSO) in February and then October 2016, with additional protests to 'Reclaim the Streets' in March 2016 and to 'Keep Newtown Weird and Safe', in response to increased homophobic and transphobic violence in Sydney's inner west in April 2016 (see e.g. Race "Sexuality of the Night"). The large turnout at these protests, with some reports estimating that 15,000 people attended the first KSO protest in February (see e.g. McMahan), showed that people felt a strong sense of loss or anger in response to the changes spurred by the lockout laws and that the threat of such loss (whether of profit, jobs, culture, or sociability) produced forms of solidarity not only within but also across different groups and communities. Each of these protests accused the NSW government of "restricting personal liberties, destroying Sydney's nightlife and threatening businesses and jobs in the music and hospitality industries" (McMahan).

These protests have also had a long community afterlife. Notably, the KSO movement became so popular that the campaign decided to form its own political party in January 2018 and stood candidates at the State and Federal elections in 2019. The director of the Keep Sydney Open Party, Tyson Koh, stated in an interview that "turning [KSO] into a political party is a declaration that alternative culture matters. We're not ashamed for wanting to express ourselves at any time, night or day" (qtd. in Bayly). Koh was being interviewed for the August 2018 issue of the LGBT magazine *Out* as one of 'Sydney's Queer Rebels', for a story about the city's "draconian" lockout laws alongside three other 'scene personalities' (Bayly). Introducing his interviewees, journalist Zac Bayly declared that "a queen without a scene [is] pissed off, proactive, and ready as ever to party." This remark indicates that 'a queen'—'a queer'—is framed as someone involved in specific scenes and clearly invested in and always in need of a queer party. This was reiterated by queer stylist and editor Kurt Johnson, interviewed for the same story, who said that "the lockout laws have left many people from oppressed subcultures with no safe space to socialize" (qtd. in Bayly). I quote from these interviews here in order to illustrate how the impact of the lockout laws on queer life was framed by queer community activists and to point out what this tells us about people's assumptions about the appropriate form and spatiality of queer life. Sociality and a sense of

safety, Johnson stressed, can only be provided by the kinds of spaces and forms of urban culture stifled by the lockout laws. Framed in relation to the formation of the KSO party, these interviews as a whole support arguments by scholars, like Kane Race, that *queer* party cultures, as distinct from parties in general, are ‘alternative’ cultures situated outside the dominant culture of the public proper.

To contextualise what ‘party’ does and does not mean in these accounts of queer culture, I want to return to the official justification for the lockout laws. After Christie’s death in February 2014, the NSW government was under pressure to respond to the ‘alcohol-fuelled violence’ that within one year had killed two young men in the same way and place. Ironically, however, the laws introduced would have prevented neither Kelly nor Christie’s death as they were killed on the street and within the opening hours still allowed under the lockout. When interviewed on the matter in the days after Christie’s death, O’Farrell had acknowledged that “1am lockouts and 3am shut-outs ... would have had no impact” on the bashings of these particular young men, both of which occurred early in the evening (Farrelly). It thus seemed to many local activists that the lockout laws introduced less than a month after this statement were not only devised and introduced in hasty response to an unfocused media-generated panic but also failed to address the causes of such incidents. As a response to the cultural circumstances from which the deaths of Christie and Kelly followed, these laws avoided any close engagement with the complex relationships between violence, masculinity and alcohol in Australia by only addressing public violence and public alcohol consumption within a given geographical precinct and neglecting more complex ties between alcohol, violence, *and* masculinity beyond this geographical focal point.

A clear association between alcohol and male (or more properly ‘hetero-masculine’) violence has emerged and been sustained across medical research, the media, public discourse, and policy proposals. For example, of the 90 lives claimed by one-punch assaults in Australia since 2000, as Pilgrim, Gerostamoulos, and Drummer show, alcohol was involved in almost three quarters of these cases. Of the 63 cases in which toxicology reports were available, 53 involved the use of alcohol or other drugs (Pilgrim et al. 130). Discussing this finding, the authors draw on previous studies to stress that

males binge drink more often than females ... are almost twice as likely to meet the criteria for alcohol dependence [and that] this excessive alcohol consumption ... causes profound disinhibition leading to increased aggression, ultimately increasing the risk of a physical assault taking place (130).

These findings, however, are not accompanied by an interrogation of *why* this might be the case. They represent the problem manifest in the deaths of those young men as alcohol-fuelled violence rather than cultures of hetero-masculine violence. In a similar vein, the underlying premise of the lockout laws' representation of violence and aggression is that it is, first and foremost, fuelled by alcohol (and other drugs). Here, I want to draw on political scientist Carol Bacchi's 'What's the Problem Represented to be?' (WPR) approach which, she writes, "is a resource, or tool, intended to facilitate critical interrogation of public policies" (21). The WPR approach submits policies to critical scrutiny by discerning how the problems they seek to address are represented in the first place. We might think of this as the semiotics of policy to emphasise the meaning-making processes involved in processes of governance. The focus on representation is crucial because it holds policies up to scrutiny regarding whether they are the best effort to solve a particular problem or, rather, meaning-making texts that *produce* problems and thereby affect what does and what does not get done as well as how people live their lives.

In January 2014, Australian sociologist and masculinity theorist Raewyn Connell wrote a short article in response to the announcement of the lockout laws, taking issue with the ways in which men's violence in Australia is said to be 'fuelled' by alcohol, produced by mass media, or blamed on 'the male brain', testosterone, genetics, or 'criminal types.' Violence, she insists, cannot be explained with reference to one particular type of human being any more than by images of extreme violence, body-contact sports, or action movies. While these genres make up a large part of popular entertainment and feed "young men narratives about how men get excitement, success and respect through confrontation," these representations do not produce male violence ("King Hits"). Rather, as Stephen Tomsen suggests, "much antisocial and criminal behaviour [functions] as a social resource for the attainment and protection of masculine identities" (283). Connell describes masculine identities as learned patterns, and violence, too, as learned. In the form of one-punch attacks, violence tends to happen in zones of exception and often in the presence of an audience like, for instance, in Sydney's Kings Cross at night. "If we want to know why some young men get into zones of exception, confrontations and episodes of violence," Connell proposes, "we might ask what else is happening in their lives" ("King Hits"). What sort of models of positive relations with men and women does our society provide? Do we give them secure and worthwhile jobs as well as occasions for creativity, care, and community life? Engaging with questions like these might facilitate engaging with, rather than simply confronting, night-time violence.

Leaving aside the fact that the lockout laws, in this sense, are an insufficient response to anti-social and violent behaviour, they are also a case in point for the NSW government's differential responses to different forms and sites of violence. As Connell argues, "if we are concerned with men's violence in Australia, the half-hidden epidemics of family violence, sexual harassment, and rape are much wider problems than street bashings by strangers" ("King Hits"). The Australian Institute of Criminology, for example, reported in 2008 that there were 260 homicide incidents between 2006 and 2007, with 185 male and 81 female victims. 22 per cent of these were intimate-partner homicides, where partners include "spouse, separated spouse, divorced spouse, de facto, ex-de facto, extramarital lover, former extramarital lover, boyfriend, former boyfriend, girlfriend, former girlfriend, homosexual relationship, and former homosexual relationship" (Dearden and Jones 2). While two-thirds of male homicide victims took place outside the family, the most significant risks of homicide for women were inside the family with nearly three-quarters killed by intimate partners or family members often following a history of domestic violence (Dearden and Jones 10; 15). More recently, the 2012 Personal Safety Survey conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, for instance, showed that 17 per cent of women aged 18 years and over experienced partner violence and 41 per cent experienced any incident of physical assault or threat since the age of 15. By comparison, 5.3 per cent of men aged 18 years and over experienced partner violence and 49 per cent experienced physical violence ("Safety 2012"). In 2016, the same survey found that the proportion of women aged 18 years and over who experienced partner violence increased from 17 per cent to 23 per cent and, for men, from 5.3 per cent to 7.8 per cent ("Safety 2016").

The lockout laws propose to do something about alcohol-fuelled violence without addressing the equally well-established relationship between that violence and some normative models of masculinity. The KSO, Keep Newtown Weird and Safe, and Reclaim the Streets movements, in turn, mount an opposition between queer party cultures and the category of 'alcohol-fuelled violence' that intrinsically calls for displacing alcohol from the centre of that problem. Although intoxication might make some people more prone to violence and aggression, the category of 'alcohol-fuelled violence' is a simplification of that problem. Mounting a theoretical as well as sociological argument against the lockout laws, Race stressed the "constitutive omissions of the category of 'alcohol-related violence'," calling instead for an "analysis [that] would investigate the attraction of 'liminal experience' that may prompt violence on the part of certain participants," centrally those whose "gendered identities have not been well equipped to handle difference" ("Sexuality of the Night" 105). For the queer

community activists that joined the Keep Sydney Open campaign in significant numbers, the lockout laws disproportionality affected forms of urban culture that are developed and sustained through 'queer party' practices, the preservation of which was clearly not a concern that informed the drafting of the lockout laws. Moreover, given that these laws do not actually address the issue of night-time violence, the negative impacts on queer party cultures in Sydney's 'gaybourhood' were felt to be particularly unjust.

The significance of the gay dance party

Reflecting on the lockout laws in October 2018, when one of the above-mentioned proposals to roll them back was being considered by the government, Koh reiterated that "maintaining lockout laws [along Oxford Street] has absolutely no justification" (qtd. in Molloy). While acknowledging the tragic violent incidents of 2014, Koh characterised punishing the majority for the actions of a few as "unfair" and "a policy failure" (qtd. in Molloy). Similarly, the Reclaim the Streets (RTS) collective, in their submission to the abovementioned review of the lockout laws, emphasised the "injustice of a curfew affecting responsible adults," citing, in particular, the importance for queer people of "the connections formed in public spaces like bars and nightclubs ... needed to counter the effects of systemic discrimination" (Reclaim the Streets). RTS further stressed that "the lockout laws hit queers disproportionately because they cover the inner-city areas where that critical community was built [noting that] the queer community outside the lockout precinct also took a hit," with revellers from a different demographic crowding the streets, bars, and nightclubs along Newtown's King Street (Reclaim the Streets). These are the grounds for the parallel that might be made between the Sydney lockout laws and Berlant and Warner's case study of the 1995 zoning laws in New York City. Queer publics or, to use Berlant and Warner's terminology, 'queer world-making projects' are particularly vulnerable to this type of governance (Berlant and Warner 558; see also Delany 167-69; Papayanis; Hubbs).

According to Marilyn Adler Papayanis, the 1995 New York zoning law on which Berlant and Warner focus "marks the culmination of ... Giuliani's campaign ... to restrict sex-oriented businesses in New York City to a small number of relatively isolated nonresidential neighborhoods," most of which are on the West Side waterfront (341). This new zoning law required that adult businesses only operate in non-residential neighbourhoods and at least 500 feet from any other such establishments as well as from schools, day-care centres, or houses of worship (Warner *Normal* 157-59; Delany 167-68) and impacted many of the principal venues in which men met other men in Greenwich Village as well as the already very limited number

of businesses catering to queer women like video rental clubs and the Clit Club in the Meatpacking District (Kendall 66). In arguing that the consequences of this rezoning of businesses catering to queers, and gay men in particular, are social isolation and a diminished potential for queer political community, Berlant and Warner note that “the sexual purification of New York will fall unequally on those who already have fewest publicly accessible resources” (552). By regulating its economic conditions, the zoning law effectively restricted counterpublic sexual culture.

The 2014 Sydney lockout laws did impact inner-city queer social spaces in ways that align with this account. 176 venues closed following their introduction including, for instance, The Midnight Shift, the famous gay nightclub I mentioned visiting in my introduction, and which had been an Oxford Street stalwart for almost forty years (A. Taylor). At the same time, areas outside of the CBD Entertainment Precinct were changed significantly as they began to attract revellers from new demographics. The protesters who rallied to ‘Keep Newtown Weird and Safe’ were not only responding to reports of increases in homophobic and transphobic violence since the introduction of the lockout laws. They were also rallying to keep Newtown aligned with the community, commercial and leisure interests of a melting pot of “countercultural types” including artists, musicians, and queers (Gorman-Murray and Waitt 2861). Like the zoning laws in New York, the lockout laws disproportionately affected those who already have limited publicly accessible resources. While the lockout laws contributed to the closure of many venues, however, I consider them as part of a more complex set of factors changing the infrastructure of the gaybourhood. To speak of a sexual purification in the case of the Sydney lockout laws would be to assume that non-heterosexual lives are only lived in a gay enclave. I thus want to focus more specifically on the queer project—queer world-making—that Berlant and Warner advocate and its underlying understanding of how the city relates to queer culture. In this context, I want to offer a critique of their framework via Steve Pile and Michel Keith, addressing the limitations of their thinking about queer cultures in terms of resistance to heterosexual domination. From the public debate about the lockout laws, I am specifically interested in the arguments put forward by *opponents* of this legislation who consider its disproportionate impact on queer party cultures and the implicit assumptions inherent in their arguments about the specific and specialised spatiality of queer life, including the centrality of the gaybourhood but also the idea of the scene as requiring certain spaces (a specific kind of infrastructure). Queer culture, simply put, is not about going to the pub to have a drink with your friends. Instead, it is about going to a space that is clearly intended for you and that will sustain your visibility and affirmation. Queer scenes, this is to say, are

imagined to demand a dedicated infrastructure—a separate world or, to speak with Berlant and Warner, spaces which combine to form “the architecture of queer space in a homophobic environment” (551).

Recalling his own experience of participating in the first KSO rally in early 2016, Race characterises the atmosphere and energy as follows: “People placed bodies onto streets to rage against the disappearance of something that was hard to pin down, but widely and viscerally registered: a sense of access to the transformative possibilities of recreational space” (“Nightlife” 103). Echoing Berlant and Warner’s account of queer counterpublics as well as Foucault’s understanding of heterotopia, Race suggests that nightlife—and the gay dance party in particular—provides opportunities for unexpected encounters, exchanges, experiences, and intimacies to occur. “The best nights,” he writes, “make new things possible” (103) when dancefloors, music, alcohol, and drugs “move you beyond yourself, and introduce new ways of experiencing yourself and others” (104). This certainly seems to neatly align with my own introductory anecdote about a transformative first experience of The Midnight Shift. In this vein, the infrastructure of the gay dance party suspends the dominant organisation of the social presumed to normatively govern how people live alongside one another (“Nightlife” 103). Because of the dynamism and volatility of partying, Race conceives it as a scene of “‘context collapse’—where worlds and bodies, the public and the private, the social and the sexual, all unpredictably collide” (“Nightlife” 104). While such collision of social worlds may create unwanted exposure for partygoers who choose not to disclose their sexual identity in other contexts of their lives, collisions of this kind may also afford liberating occasions of self-disclosure, understanding, and care, as well as friendship, intimacy, and fun. Berlant and Warner emphasise the social and political significance of scenes such as the gay dance party when they write that “respectable gays [owe] their success, their way of living, their political rights and their very identities [to the] public sexual culture they now despise” (563). Echoing these observations, Race suggests that dance parties have contributed to “wide-scale transformations in the conditions of everyday life—transformations of great political and material significance” (*Gay Science* 29).

For Race, “the emergence of contemporary gay identity” cannot be understood “without considering the history of parties” (“Party Animals” 35). Because of their historical exclusion from key institutions of private life, including marriage and normative models of family or kinship relations, gays and lesbians, by this account, necessarily made use of alternative spaces to find and meet each other to pursue an array of social ties and sexual encounters. Bars and nightclubs, Race argues, “have played a special role as agents of gay

socialisation” (“Party Animals” 36). Sydneysider Iggy Nor invokes a similar story in protesting the lockout laws, describing gay precincts and bars as “neutral places to meet” that provide a sense of belonging for those who feel they do not belong elsewhere (qtd. in Koziol “Future”). For Race, urban gay subcultures are sources of “collective identity” (“Party Animals” 36), which is why cities—including such iconic examples as Berlin, San Francisco, New York, and Sydney—feature as safe havens for queer sociability in the queer imagination. Sociologist Henning Bech takes this idea further by suggesting that the city is not only a principle site of queer practices and sociability but, in fact, generative of them: “the city is not merely a stage on which pre-existing, preconstructed sexuality is displayed and acted out; it is also a space where sexuality is generated” (118). The “special blend of closeness and distance, crowd and flickering, surface and gaze, freedom and danger ... anonymity and the absence of immediate social control” produces a particular form of existence (Bech 141). A conjunction of stranger sociability and erotic attraction offer a context that facilitates a specific version of identity and community formation. It is this particular account of gay sociability that seems most affected by the lockout laws, and I want to foreground two conditions of this sociability that both hinge on a figure of escape—the eroticisation of urban sociality and intoxication.

Regarding the first condition, the idea that cities are eroticised in this sense—that they intensify desire and encourage sexual encounters—is, as I have noted, a recurring theme in sexuality and space literatures. It has also given rise to what Kath Weston alludes to in the epigraph to this chapter, namely an imagined urban/rural binary sustaining the notion that the countryside is unchangingly conservative, while the city promises sexual freedom (Weston 274). Movement to urban centres is stereotypically framed in terms of an escape from more narrowly heteronormative contexts on the one hand, and a search for sexual partners, pleasures, and community on the other. Yet as Weston notes, and I discuss in more detail in the final section of this chapter, queer people’s experiences of actual gaybourhoods in actual cities are much more complex and uneven. Here, I want to acknowledge that while my project is largely focussing on queer *urban* cultures and life in the city, I am also drawing on some of the work that has been done to explore suburban and rural queer cultures (see e.g. Wienke and Hill; Gorman-Murray and Waitt). Regarding the second condition, alcohol and drugs, too, “may be used to escape cognitive awareness of” heteronormative norms around sexual identity and practices which, in fact, also prevail in urban contexts (Race “Party Animals” 37). Rather than necessarily implying a loss of control, intoxication may function as a strategy deliberately employed to mediate shame and stigma around homosexual identities and practices. However, intoxication not only provides an escape from normative orders in this

way. It may also animate affective exchanges in the form of “playful participation and socio-sexual interaction” among strangers and thereby play a part in the development of more or less stable gay friendship networks (“Party Animals” 38). Bars, nightclubs, music, dance, a critical mass, alcohol, and drugs may be understood as “contingent players within particular sociocultural assemblages,” providing the conditions through which non-heterosexuals individually and communally may “attempt certain transformations or escapes” (“Party Animals” 36-37).

Andrew Holleran’s 1978 novel *Dancer from the Dance* depicts such a culture of nightlife sociability in the 1970s New York gay club scene that facilitates what Berlant and Warner describe as the alternative or “counter” modes of intimacy required for queer world making (558). Dancing, Race suggests, “features [in the novel] as a means of elaborating social bonds that suspend the couple form, perhaps indefinitely” (“Party Animals” 38). The dance floor, in other words, may feature as an orientation device that affords interactions and affective exchanges that might otherwise be more difficult to achieve.

Now of all the bonds between homosexual friends, none was greater than that between friends who danced together. The friend you danced with, when you had no lover, was the most important person in your life; and for people who went without lovers for years, that was all they had. It was a continuing bond (Holleran 111-12).

The space of the gay nightclub, Sean Slavin also argues, “produces and is produced by complex social and cultural relations” (266). For Slavin, it is the capacity of such a space “to create a sense of an affective tribe,” irrespective of the heterogeneity of the crowd, “that affords the greatest social pleasure and ... sexual frisson” (282). I am here reminded of what Foucault calls “the homosexual mode of life,” (“Friendship” 136) which he characterises as “A way of life ... shared among individuals of different age, status, and social activity [which] can yield intense relations not resembling those that are institutionalised” (“Friendship” 138). While the relationship between a man and a woman of noticeably different ages may be facilitated by the marriage institution, Foucault argues, gay people depend on spaces that facilitate the elaboration of “still formless” social and sexual relationships (136). I want to ask, then, what happens to a culture elaborated around party practices when it gets caught up in frameworks designed for their regulation?

Historically, practices and sites of sexual sociability involving alcohol and drugs have been subjected to both surveillance and intervention by authorities. In *Gay New York* (1994), for instance, George Chauncey illustrates how liquor legislation—for which the lockout laws are a contemporary example—enabled the state to regulate public sociability. Since gay people

have for a long time come together in public and semi-public venues where people meet to drink, alcoholic beverage control laws significantly affected urban gay sociality in the 1930s in New York. After Prohibition (1920-1933), the relatively short-term nationwide ban to import, transport, or produce alcohol was lifted, the so-called State Liquor Authority (SLA) was established.⁴ The SLA was given the authority to license the supply and consumption of alcohol. Although the mechanism of the licence did not specifically prohibit bars from serving homosexuals or other social 'deviants', bar owners were made responsible to ensure acceptable sociability or risked losing their licence. It was clear, Chauncey argues, that the presence of any deviant figures like lesbians and gay men, gamblers, or prostitutes sufficed to lead to a revocation of licence. In fact, numerous legal instances show that the closing of bars serving homosexuals became the SLA's policy:

In the two and a half decades that followed, [the SLA] closed literally hundreds of bars that welcomed, tolerated, or simply failed to notice the patronage of gay men or lesbians. As a result, while the number of gay bars proliferated in the 1930s, '40s, and '50s, most of them lasted only a few months or years, and gay men were forced to move constantly from place to place, dependent on the grapevine to inform them of where the new meeting places were (Chauncey 339).

Queer identity obviously does not manifest and reproduce itself in party practices alone. Nevertheless, the economic regulation of queer night-time venues may be understood "as part of an ongoing disciplinary effort to eradicate forms of public sociability that do not organise themselves around the family or the market" (Race "Party Animals" 51). Given that there is no evidence suggesting the 2014-2020 Sydney lockout laws were intentionally introduced to target queer-friendly spaces, the strong response on the part of Sydney queer community activists is explained by the fact that restrictive reforms to liquor legislation and policing, like the use of sniffer dogs at dance parties, "[reverberate] with historical narratives and cultural memories of state intervention in gay social practices" (Race "Party Animals" 48). Queer people might no longer be explicitly targeted by such police interventions, but their night-time social spaces and consequently some crucial formations of urban queer culture are nonetheless threatened by invasive governmental responses to anti-social behaviour and violence.

While I thus acknowledge the ways in which the lockout laws may limit the possibilities of queer public intimacy, this focus on exposing the surveillance interventions of social

⁴ The local Sydney equivalent to the SLA would be the Liquor & Gaming NSW organisation.

regulation does foreclose on what Eve Sedgwick calls “the possibility of alternative ways of understanding *or things to understand*” (131). I thus want to take up here my discussion of Sedgwick’s distinction between paranoid and reparative reading in the previous chapter. Where queer community activists and scholars identify queer identities, communities, or party practices with ‘counterculture’, they implicitly figure these as constitutively incompatible with or uninterested in ‘normal’ cultural practices, such as work, daytime consumerism, domestic life, or family outings. This presumed incompatibility actually fails to appreciate the plurality of ways in which queer lives are lived. No lives in contemporary Sydney are lived outside some level of ongoing regulation, and there is some literal paranoia in elements of the conflation of the lockout laws with homophobia when its explicit target was so distinct and the negative effects on inner-city economic and social life were in no way confined to queer venues or spaces or even disproportionately felt by them. A reparative approach to the conjuncture of the lockout laws and protests against them would facilitate an analytical shift that emphasises the changing spatiality of queer life. This calls for a consideration of the enduring rhetorical centrality of the gaybourhood to the ‘gay imaginary’ (Weston), which is a reflection of a larger problem some models of queer life have with ‘normal’ life.

Interrogating queer space: the ‘marginal imaginary’

To critically reflect on discourses that frame the lockout laws as ushering in the demise of the gaybourhood, I want to begin by considering the resonance of such discourses and, specifically, of thinking about queer life and queer space in terms of marginality, precarity, or dissipation. These paranoid modes of figuring queer life can be seen, for example, in Reclaim the Street’s emphasis on the importance for queer people and communities of the bars and nightclubs along Oxford Street, which are understood “to counter the effects of systemic discrimination” elsewhere (Reclaim the Streets). As I state in the previous chapter, my argument here and throughout this thesis is not that queer people no longer face systemic discrimination. Rather, in opting for a reparative approach, I consider what paranoid analyses of the lockout laws are prone to foreclose: queer people’s varying and uneven experiences of moving through ostensibly inclusive gaybourhoods, people’s practices of navigating the restrictions imposed on queer publics by the lockout laws, and the significance of queer spaces beyond the gaybourhood’s boundaries and beyond commercial queer scenes. I show that what is frequently framed as the demise of the gaybourhood in fact involves a pluralisation of sexual geographies beyond the gaybourhood’s boundaries.

Discourses that frame the lockout laws as ushering in the demise of the gaybourhood resonate with queer people and activists because they are buttressed by what we might call a 'marginal imaginary'—a formulation I adapt from Weston's account of the 'gay imaginary'. In their reappraisal of Weston's foundational essay on this topic, Karen Tongson and Scott Herring describe the gay imaginary as "the spatial trajectory for coming out and into a broader gay culture and community" (52). In Weston's account, this spatial trajectory animated the "Great Gay Migration" from rural to urban environments in the 1970s and late 1980s, figuring as its destination point the big city where queers will thrive, and continues to encourage the concentration of queers in urban centres (Weston 255). The seed for this imaginary is what Weston calls "a symbolics of urban/rural relations" (262). As I have discussed, this symbolics gives rise to a sexual geography in which rural areas, small towns, or other 'elsewheres' figure as undifferentiated loci of "persecution and gay absence," juxtaposed with the urban as "a beacon of tolerance and gay community" (Weston 262). Gayness, Weston argues, is configured based on an opposition between urban and rural life. Indeed, this opposition is "embedded in the gay subject" (274).

What I want to call the marginal imaginary, in an extension of Weston's argument, draws attention to the oppositions between heterosexuality and non-heterosexuality, normativity and antinormativity, embedded in queer subjectivities and seeding attachment to exclusive spaces where queer identities can be articulated on entry and affirmed by modes of cultural participation. What Robyn Wiegman and Elizabeth Wilson describe as the contrast between the coercive, restrictive, and exclusionary regimes of the normal on the one hand, and forms of queer existence contesting these regimenting forces on the other (Wiegman and Wilson 11), is also embedded in the configuration of queer identities through marginality. Marginality, I argue, is not only experienced as a negative and inhibiting social force but also signifies a powerful, enabling, and identity-sustaining idea. Similar to the gay imaginary, the marginal imaginary sustains strong attachments to resistant queer identities and the specialised areas of the city in which these may be realised. That is, the marginal imaginary can be strongly spatialised, as it is in the positive affect of enduring attachment to the gaybourhood.

The marginal imaginary, I argue, is what sustains many queer people's attachments to and anxieties about the future of queer identities, communities, and spaces, bound up as they are in larger transformations of gay and lesbian life. Berlant and Warner's equation of 'queer' with countercultural and antinormative spaces may already be a somewhat strained historical proposition in 1998. In 2002's *Beyond the Closet*, sociologist Steven Seidman notes that "many gays today have options beyond [either] denying their homosexuality or integrating into a gay

subculture” (89). Pointing to a growing acceptance of white, middle, class, and urban gays and lesbians, Seidman observes that while sexual identities continue to be valued, they are not necessarily the defining feature of personhood: “Individuals may value being gay without building lives around this identity” (89). Those who continue to consider their sexuality as a primary identity over other social classifiers, such as race, gender, class, occupation, or religion, do so no longer in order to overcome social stigmatisation but, as Seidman argues, “to claim a positive identity, to make a lifestyle choice, and to feel a sense of social belonging” (88). Thus, in 2009, Robert Reynolds can still stress that, for some gays and lesbians, the specific communities and spaces elaborated around sexual identities “remain highly significant and emotionally charged attachments,” providing “modes of self-identification and belonging” in a world in which non-heterosexuals continue to be marked as different (Reynolds 85).

The fact that arguments claiming the lockout laws disproportionately impacted on queer publics and, specifically, the gaybourhood resonated with queer Sydney, indicates this kind of enduring attachment to dedicated queer urban spaces and reflects the difficulty of grappling with their profound reconfiguration. With this in mind, discourses about the gaybourhood’s demise may also be understood as attempts to reaffirm and sustain specific queer identities, forms of community life, party cultures, and spatialities—attempts continuously animated by what I have called the marginal imaginary. Notwithstanding the validity of concerns about such transformations and the loss they involve, analyses of the lockout laws that focus on this legislation’s negative impacts foreclose a more critical interrogation of the ostensibly inclusive queer space the gaybourhood is presumed to provide as well as of the ways in which sexual geographies are evolving.

The marginal imaginary—like the gay imaginary—conceives a distinct relationship between queer people, their lifestyle choices, and a specific territory. As such, it figures queer life as taking place in specialised queer spaces. Queerness is, as I have argued, configured by elaborating an opposition between the rural and the urban and, implicitly, between ‘the normal’ and queer life. It follows that the physical space where queer life may occur—queer space—is also imagined in opposition to the physical spaces of ‘normal’ life, heterosexual space. Akin to rural life in Weston’s gay imaginary, straight spaces in the city are figured as loci of intolerance, persecution, and gay absence. For example, when Berlant and Warner describe adult businesses, theatres, and clubs as constructing that necessary “architecture of queer space within a homophobic environment” (551), they mobilise a spatial logic that yields an imaginary urban environment in which intolerant straight spaces are juxtaposed with queer spaces as sites of acceptance and freedom. Of course, the living context of Berlant and

Warner's argument, the United States in the late 1990s, is very different from the living context this thesis addresses. While contemporary Western societies are still hegemonically heteronormative, the infrastructures of intimacy that have sustained this dominance and historically privileged heterosexuality over other sexual lives, now provide legitimacy and protection for some queer identities, relationships, and families. Considering the growing visibility and changing representation of some queer lives in literature and media cultures, public life, marriage and family law, diversity and inclusion discourses, or in politics, the claim that "queer culture ... has almost no institutional matrix for its counterintimacies," including physical spaces, is outdated (Berlant and Warner 562). Binary spatial logics, however, continue to inform studies of sexualities and space: "Defining gay commercial leisure spaces by the acceptance of alternative sexualities," Kath Browne and Leela Bakshi note, "has been paralleled by discussions of work, public, street and/or institutional spaces as heterosexualised and often unwelcoming, unaccepting and potentially dangerous" (180).

The assumption of spatial singularity—the idea of a singular gay enclave in urban environments—produces a dichotomised understanding of cultural space, which yields an image of gaybourhoods (or other gay-identified areas) as "singular island[s] of meaning ... surrounded by a sea of heterosexual hostilities" (Ghaziani *Gayborhood* 160). Debates about whether gaybourhoods will either persist or perish exemplify this binary thinking as they fall short of attending to how gaybourhoods become more diverse and, indeed, plural. Problematically, then, the assumption of spatial singularity cannot account for more complex spatial realities, namely the changing geography of queer infrastructures afforded by what Jeffrey Weeks aptly characterises as an "unfinished but profound revolution that has transformed the possibilities of living our sexual diversity and creating intimate lives," (3) marking "enormous strides" (4) in social and cultural acceptances of difference. I do not presume that this kind of transformation is inevitable or yet linear and my discussion of forms of heteroactivist resistance to sexual and gender rights in the next chapter exemplifies the messiness and volatility of living in what Weeks also depicts as "a world of transition" (3).

Ghaziani echoes Weeks' account of the transformation of intimate life when he writes that gays and lesbians are able to draw on a broader set of options for how and where to live based on "feelings of cultural similarity that they experience with their heterosexual neighbors," which may reduce the discomfort that might have previously prevented them from considering life beyond the gaybourhood (*Gayborhood* 160). The desire to be seen as 'the same' or to be 'just like' heterosexuals has been contested by queer activists and scholars alike and I survey some of the debates about what Michael Warner (1999) frames as 'the trouble with

normal' in relation to same-sex marriage in the next chapter. Yet while the benefits and drawbacks of equality legislations are controversially debated, I agree with Browne and Bakshi's contention that "there can be no doubt that how LGBT people socialise has been affected by the 'equalities' context," and this includes queer people seeking out and socialising in supposedly hostile straight spaces (183). This raises another epistemological blind spot of contemporary queer identity defined by this spatial singularity. The assumption that the gaybourhood is comprised of ostensibly open and inclusive spaces that affirm queerness and are vital infrastructural resources for that reason ignores the fact that the gaybourhood, or indeed any singularly queer space, does not actually afford all sexual 'others' the same opportunities and affective experiences of acceptance and inclusion.

While there is plenty of general truth to the claim that urban and rural areas are strongly distinguished in terms of the infrastructures for queer life these provide, Weston is just as clearly right to argue that "most tales from the Great Gay Migration do not end in the discovery of a bounded community ('my people') after the arduous trek to the urban Promised Land" (269). As I have noted, non-heterosexuals who arrive in declared queer urban spaces may find themselves having little in common with those who are supposed to be 'their people'. The exclusions that operate within queer spaces privilege different identities and sexual lives in different scenes and communities. Some queer urban cultures are understood to centre around 'normalised' non-heterosexual lives while others idealise identities that are understood as resistant and subversive. Depending on the cultures they encounter, queer people may be alienated by "sexual lives that mirror the norms of heteronormativity (e.g. long-term, monogamous relationships within specific gender norms)" (Browne and Bakshi 181) or feel uncomfortable inhabiting queer spaces, worrying they may not be "queer enough, or have not been queer for long enough, or [are] just not the right kind of queer" (Ahmed *Emotion* 151). While queer people's experiences of and within straight spaces may differ, this does not mean that inhabiting queer spaces is equally comfortable for all queers. Some may feel out-of-place in spaces in which their sexual lives do not align with scene-specific queer ideals. I show in more detail in chapter four that these ideals are not equally available to and liveable for all queers. As such, the type of queer someone is (closeted, assimilated, transgressive, 'non-scene') and the spaces they are likely to feel most comfortable in are less a reflection of a political choice than of their material, social, or physical possibilities.

As it constructs a dichotomised sexual geography of urban environments, the assumption that 'queer' life is most essentially experienced through an investment in spatial singularity privileges sexuality over other identities and fails to consider, to paraphrase Natalie

Oswin, “queer subjects as simultaneously raced, classed and gendered bodies” (“Critical Geographies” 91). Queer people are not only differently positioned in relation to queer ideals but also, as Weston notes, “within relations of gender, race, age, and class” (269). Gaybourhoods have been demonstrably dominated by white, middle-class gay men, with groups, such as queer women, queers of colour, and working-class queers often finding themselves excluded from or neglected by the gaybourhood’s ostensibly inclusive infrastructure. Drawing on the experiences of some of my interviewees, I explore uneven access to and exclusions within Sydney’s queer spaces in more detail in chapter four, but some remarks on queer lives lived beyond the intensely urban specialised gaybourhood will move towards my conclusion here.

The study of urban sexualities, as Gavin Brown suggests, “has, until recently, been founded ontologically on understandings of human sexuality that rest on a binary opposition between homosexuality and heterosexuality” (“Urban Sexualities” 1216). Discourses about the lockout laws’ impact on Sydney’s queer geographies confirm Ghaziani’s observation that this type of binary thinking “is still entrenched in urban studies” despite its self-evident flaws (“Archipelagos” 3). As I have suggested above, however, queer people in Western societies today are generally able to draw on a broader set of options for how and where to live. Rather than causing the death of the gayborhood, however, the emergence of diverse types of queer spaces is better understood as the gayborhood’s unexpected growth, rendering conceptualisations of the city as a dichotomy of gay and straight spaces increasingly inadequate. I explore queer everyday geographies in more detail in the final chapter of this thesis but provide a brief preview of that discussion here.

Drawing on research about the “the location patterns of lesbians, transgender individuals, same-sex families with children, and people of color,” Ghaziani observes the gaybourhood’s unanticipated expansion responding to the heterogeneity of queer communities (“Archipelagos” 4). Because lesbians are more likely to have children and tend to have less socioeconomic power than men, their housing needs and financial means differ from those of gay men (“Archipelagos” 6). High rents and a majority of single-occupancy units in many gaybourhoods make other suburbs as well as nonurban areas more suitable for many lesbian women. This is confirmed by the most recent study on the prevalence of adult gay men and lesbian women in each Australian postcode cited above recording the highest prevalence of lesbian women in two regional communities in the state of Victoria (Callander et al.). The gendered nature of the gaybourhood and the ways in which it reinforces traditional gender norms has also created the need for spaces in which trans* and/or non-binary gender

expressions are celebrated, such as 'queer pop-up' events or temporary gathering spaces ("Archipelagos" 7; Stillwagon et al.). Because of their housing needs, same-sex families with children tend not to live in the gaybourhood either. Nevertheless, their spatial distribution is not random. Acknowledging the spatial plurality of queer life, Ghaziani argues, "we can identify discernible pockets of concentration for same-sex families with children" (9). The place-making efforts of queer people of colour, too, undermine the assumption of spatial singularity. Responding to racialised exclusions in largely white gaybourhoods, queers of colour invest in the formation of distinct queer communities, which are variably connected to existing gaybourhoods. To account for the different perceptions of the gaybourhood of these four groups and their corresponding territoriality, Ghaziani proposes the imagery of "cultural archipelagos" to resist framings of queer space as a singular, isolated island and to acknowledge more diverse types of queer spaces (*Gayborhood* 160; "Archipelagos" 3).

As another example for an alternative to a singular gaybourhood, Gorman-Murray and Gordon Waitt point to the 'queer-friendly neighbourhood', characterised by a visible, though not overwhelming presence of non-heterosexuals in which local authorities and residents alike make "attempts ... to be inclusive of diversity" (2855-56). Similarly, Gustav Visser explores how gay male cohorts in Bloemfontein, South Africa use spaces that are coded heterosexual for gay leisure practices. "Some leisure spaces," Visser argues "are claimed by both hetero- and homosexual identities, simultaneously 'gayed' and 'straightened'" (Visser 1345). This marks a significant change in terms of what kinds of queer identities, expressions, or intimacies have become acceptable in straight spaces, which are normally regulated by "unspoken understandings ... and by the verbal interventions or looks of passers-by" in order to constrain public displays of affection or sexual desire (Brown et al. 2). Some of the straight venues in Visser's research, however, were reported to allow gay men to "act out their adult desires in terms of 'cruising', if they so wished" (Visser 1354).

Here, we may also consider the example of how Sydney's drag scene evolved with the lockout laws. In an interview with the LGBTI magazine and online newspaper *Star Observer*, full-time drag queen Shay Evans (aka Felicity Frockaccino) noted that the loss of 175 entertainment venues by 2018 "hurt the [drag] industry" because Sydney's estimated seventeen drag queens were forced to compete for work outside of Oxford Street: "I've emailed over 300 venues and only got two or three replies back. It's really hard," Evans said, yet adding optimistically that "the industry has diversified" (qtd. in Voutos). Despite its history in the venues of the gaybourhood, Evans found it easier to find work at straight venues than ever before. "Performers are doing shows in the broader Sydney community, which is good

because it encourages acceptance and integration” (qtd. in Voutos). Here, I resist framing drag performances in straight venues as what Visser might call a ‘gaying’ of straight spaces because such a framing would reinstate the gay/straight binary I have problematised above. Cultural space is more productively understood as (re)configured in sexual and gendered ways in relation to diverse identities and practices—such as Felicity Frockaccino calling out bingo numbers in five-inch heels—than as always already straight and “awaiting ‘queering’” (Browne and Bakshi 183).

In an interview about the future of Sydney’s queer nightlife shortly after the lockout laws were lifted earlier this year, journalist and writer Katie Cunningham spoke to a group of well-known figures in Sydney’s queer nightlife scene who are promoters of queer dance parties, bars, and performance spaces, and who all noted that queer nightlife cultures need to and are shifting and diversifying. Jonny Seymour, for example, welcomed a shift “from the traditional white cis organised events to gatherings that are browner, queerer, feminine, feminist, witchier, trans and non-binary, experimental, performance artist led” (qtd. in Cunningham). Jacqui Cunningham said that Sydney’s queer hubs are already no longer where they used to be because of the lockout laws but also due to processes of gentrification. This has meant that bars are generally becoming more queer-friendly and crowds more mixed. While Joy Ng was hoping for a “rebirth of Oxford Street with more queer clubbing,” Seymour said that the time of Oxford Street as the epicentre of queer clubbing is over, suggesting that spaces in Sydney’s inner west, such as Newtown and Marrickville, have taken over throughout the past ten years. Nic Holland said that Sydney’s LGBTQI+ community “has shown that queer parties can exist and thrive almost anywhere” but others, like Seymour, called for the establishment of “more brick and mortar spaces” (qtd. in Cunningham). The process of queer people seeking out spaces beyond the gaybourhood does not indicate its demise but its unexpected growth beyond separate or integrated spaces. With this in mind, the effect of the lockout laws should not be thought of in terms of a zero-sum relationship between forms of governance and precarious urban cultures but rather as one factor in an already ongoing pluralisation of queer geographies.

In drawing this chapter to a close, I want to acknowledge that queer people, of course, also socialise in much more ordinary and mundane spaces than queer bars, nightclubs, or performance spaces. In fact, everyday spaces like the home are central to the mappings of everyday infrastructures I discuss in chapter four. Yet because LGBT socialising is imagined in relation to socio-spatial formations like the gaybourhood, it is easily overlooked, to paraphrase Browne and Bakshi, “where [it] takes place beyond commercial scenes and in less visible ways”

(188). The complex creations of everyday spaces, however, are central to the ways in which queer people sustain their lives and build affirmative social relations. This shows that limiting our analysis of queer geographies to gaybourhoods and/or other more or less visibly marked queer spaces cannot capture the much more complex spatiality of infrastructures queer people actually draw on in the everyday. I will conclude then with two rhetorical questions that gather the concerns of this chapter as an interrogation of some assumptions embedded in the marginal imagining of queer life. What if it is not (now) terribly significant to queer identity or community where or how queers go out? What if the 'night in' is no less significant for queer life than the 'night out'?

Queer Marriage

We know that marriage equality will take nothing from anyone.
No one will be less married the day it happens and no one will be more gay.

— TIERNAN BRADY, Executive Director of the Australian Equality Campaign

Any argument for gay marriage requires an intensified concern for what is thrown into its shadow (147).

— Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal*

In February 2016, after almost 38 years, the NSW government issued a formal apology for the public discrimination against and violent treatment of the original Mardi Gras protesters. These protesters had held a 1978 rally calling for an end to the criminalisation of homosexuality, equality before the law, and respect from the larger community, but this turned into a riot when many protesters were brutally beaten and arrested by the police (Wotherspoon 215-16). Two days after the riot, *The Sydney Morning Herald* newspaper published the names, addresses, and occupations of the 53 people arrested during that violent confrontation. And on August 29 that same year, the *Herald* additionally published the names, addresses, and occupations of 104 people arrested at an adjacent event. In June 2016, the *Herald's* then editor-in-chief, Darren Goodsir, acknowledged the mistreatment of gay rights protesters by police, government, and media, emphasising that while the publication of court attendance lists was common practice, “these particular actions [of the *Herald*] were a stark illustration of the harsh reality of the time—that the media was part of a broad array of political and social institutions that perpetuated the oppression of lesbians and gay men” (Goodsir). Into the 1980s, the publication of these names functioned as forced outings and caused many to lose their jobs and housing, to be ostracised by their families and friends, and brought some to end their own lives (Kennedy et al.).

I will demonstrate in this chapter that mass media outlets continue to function as a cultural infrastructure that can be mobilised to such ends, albeit with diverse strategies and consequences. Gays and lesbians in particular, within the broader set of people I have gathered under the term ‘queer’ in this thesis, are now very differently situated in relation to dominant

public discourse in Australia, and they have very different access not only to niche media that addresses them but also to representation in the public sphere. Nevertheless, as cultural infrastructures in their own right, the media and other public sphere institutions such as parliamentary debate, continue to generally position non-heterosexual lives and cultural practices at a 'queer' tangent to hegemonic values. In this chapter, I will focus in part on what I frame, following Kath Browne and Catherine Nash, as forms of 'heteroactivist' resistance to the relatively new rights and visibility of sexual and gendered others (Browne and Nash "Heteroactivism"). While the previous chapter considered the relationship between queer life and the cultural infrastructure offered by bars, clubs, and other venues and spaces for community and leisure, this chapter considers other kinds of infrastructures and their relation to queer life. More specifically, instead of focusing on policies that govern literal, material urban infrastructures such as access to or the operations of party cultures, the infrastructures under discussion here are symbolic and representational in that I am concerned with how queer people and their social position are 'mediated' by debates about the legalisation of same-sex marriage and, relatedly, about young people's access to sexual knowledge.

Liberal Party MP Bruce Notley-Smith introduced that historic apology in the NSW Parliament by addressing the surviving '78ers' seated in the viewing gallery as follows: "As a member of this parliament who oversaw the events of that night, I apologise and I say sorry ... As a proud gay man and member of this parliament offering this apology, I say thank you" (qtd. in Dumas "Apology"). The cheers that followed the personal reflections of several MPs indicated just how meaningful this apology was for many of those present. This was a historic moment signifying the state's formal symbolic recognition of homosexuals and an implicit promotion of their equality within the public sphere. However, in the very same week in which this apology was offered in the state parliament, *federal* parliamentarians sent out a very different message, particularly to young queer people. Several conservative politicians had recently used both the media and the parliament to draw public attention to the Safe Schools Coalition Australia's (SSCA or Safe Schools hereafter) education programme, which had been designed to provide school communities with the resources necessary to help school environments become safer and more inclusive spaces for same-sex attracted, gender-diverse, and intersex students, staff, and their families (Safe Schools Coalition Australia). These politicians, prominently including then Liberal National Party MP George Christensen and then Liberal Senator Cory Bernardi, attempted to discredit Safe Schools as a grooming tool for sexual predators seeking to pervert vulnerable young people. "Our schools should be places of learning," Bernardi declared, "not indoctrination" (qtd. in Anderson). In February 2016,

responding to such concerns among right-wing conservative politicians as well as the Australian Christian Lobby group and News Corp media, then Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull announced that he would order an independent review of the programme (Anderson). Drawing attention to the contradiction between the NSW apology and this review, Moo Baulch argued that “apparently [some] permutations of homophobia are worthy of a government apology, while others are state sanctioned and sponsored” (“Vitriol”). However, as I will demonstrate with reference also to the marriage equality debate of the following year, calling resistance to Safe Schools homophobic is insufficient to account for the complexity of heteroactivist interventions as a matter of access to public infrastructure.

I will return to the Safe Schools controversy at the end of this chapter, but a similarly contradictory message was sent out by the High Court’s September 2017 ruling authorising the Australian government to allocate \$122 million to the Australian Bureau of Statistics to conduct an Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey. As I outlined in the introduction, this survey was a national opinion poll conducted between September and November of 2017, intended to gauge support for the possible legalisation of same-sex marriage in Australia (Karp “High Court”). The first point to make here is that the High Court’s ruling was also inconsistent with formal government and media apologies for past instances of discrimination and oppression of non-heterosexuals. While arguing the lawfulness of spending taxpayers’ money on this survey, this case did not dispute the legitimacy of publicly scrutinising the validity of non-heterosexual relationships or whether the harm inflicted on non-heterosexuals would constitute any kind of public negligence. Penny Wong, Senator for the Australian Labor Party (ALP), for instance, warned that a survey of this kind would “licence hate speech,” echoing then ALP leader Bill Shorten’s characterisation of the inevitable public debate as a “taxpayer-funded platform for homophobia” (qtd. in Karp “Plebiscite”). Further, former High Court Justice Michael Kirby argued that a nationwide vote on same-sex marriage would allow politicians to evade their responsibilities: “It will mean that any time that there is something controversial, that is difficult for parliamentarians to address ... they’ll send it out to a plebiscite. ... This issue [of same-sex marriage] has not been given a fair trot in Parliament” (qtd. in Patel). At best, this failed duty of care toward non-heterosexuals is inconsistent with formal apologies for past wrongs. At worst, the postal survey provided the platform for a debate that reverberated with histories of public shaming, discrimination, and symbolic violence—the very things for which the NSW government and the *Herald* offered their apologies.

Same-sex marriage in Australia

Public debates about same-sex marriage in Australia had been underway for over a decade prior to the postal survey. Notably, in 2004, former Prime Minister of Australia John Howard, leader of the conservative Liberal-National Coalition Government from 1996 to 2007 and known for his efforts to resist policy reform that would support gays and lesbians, introduced legislation to amend the *Marriage Act 1961*. This amendment was specifically designed to both prevent gay and lesbian Australians from getting married and to preclude the recognition of same-sex marriages performed in countries whose laws sanctioned such unions (S. Robinson 10-11). This amendment to the *Marriage Act* included for the first time a definition of marriage, as follows: “Marriage, according to law in Australia, is the union of a man and a woman *to the exclusion of all others*, voluntarily entered into for life” (*Marriage Amendment Bill 2004*; emphasis added). Reading the bill in the House of Representatives, then federal Liberal MP Philip Ruddock cited in its support ‘concerns’ held by many Australians about nations around the world permitting same-sex couples to marry—concerns this amendment would assuage by providing certainty about the (heterosexist) meaning of marriage. It is worth noting that the amendment of the Australian constitution followed a recently amended United States government definition of marriage, which shows how forms of resistance to sexual and gender rights are embedded in both national *and* transnational discourses. In early 2004, after marriage amendments had been introduced to Congress for a number of years but never materialised, then President George W. Bush, at the start his re-election campaign, urged Congress to act on a constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage, also citing the need for clarity with respect to the law and for husband-and-wife marriages to be protected from what he called “activist judges” (qtd. in Stout). To provide such clarity, the new definition of marriage emphasised that “neither [the U.S.] Constitution, nor the constitution of any State, shall be construed to require that marriage or the legal incidents thereof be conferred upon any union other than the union of a man and a woman” (*S.J.Res.30 - Marriage Resolution*).

By basing rights and legal protection on heterosexist assumptions, Gordon Waitt notes, the Australian amendment exemplifies how the government “policed and institutionalised the heterosexual/homosexual national boundary” (431).⁵ The blanket

⁵ The governing of sexual lives based on ideologies of heterosexuality is of course inherited from the British colonial legacy and legal frameworks intended to prohibit homosexuality as a threat to social life (Waitt 430). Most Australian states enforced laws carrying prison sentences for acts of male homosexuality until the mid-1970s when Australian jurisdictions began to enact law reform, gradually repealing sodomy laws over a 20-year period (Carbery; Smaal and Moore). The fact that the law was silent with regards to acts of female homosexuality is likely a reflection of 19th-century beliefs about women’s lack of sexual desires: “The possibility of women being sexually attracted to other women,” Graham Carbery suggests, “did not occur to (male) politicians” (3).

exclusion of same-sex couples from the institution of marriage, whether they had been legally married or not, demonstrates the ways that, as Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner also suggest in “Sex in Public”, citizenship is always already inflected by discourses about sexuality: The heterosexist assumption of national heterosexuality, Berlant and Warner argue, “is the mechanism by which a core national culture can be imagined as a sanitized space for sentimental feeling and immaculate behaviour, a space of pure citizenship” (549). The heteronormative family form, they further argue, functions as both “mediator and metaphor of national existence” (549). Similarly, David Bell and Jon Binnie argue that one’s sexual citizenship status—our access to rights, protection, and recognition, for example—is defined “in terms of how our sexual identity fits (or doesn’t fit) with the prescribed, naturalized heterosexual presumptive of the notion of citizenship itself” (27). Certain rights of citizenship may have been extended to non-heterosexuals, including limited recognition of intimate couple partnerships—in the form of de facto relationship status, for example—for the purposes of incorporation within family law and insurance policies.⁶ As Diane Richardson points out, however, these and related examples show that who or what counts as ‘normal’ or ‘equal’ continues to be determined with reference to “historically hegemonic forms of (hetero)sexual relations as the yardstick for recognition” (*Sexuality and Citizenship* 87). While these ideas may lend themselves to the argument that such recognition has normalising effects, I want to simultaneously resist the idea that heteronormative social institutions and practices such as marriage or family are necessarily a form of complicit assimilation that supports heterosexist norms, and also resist the idea that the rejection or (at least) transformation of these institutions and practices is a queer political imperative, burdening queer people with the task of constantly representing their own difference.

My understanding of citizenship here is informed by these ideas but also draws on the work of Lynn Staeheli who emphasises the “multifaceted,” “elusive,” and “slippery” nature of both the figure of the citizen and the concept of citizenship (393). Citizenship, Staeheli

⁶ Led by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd (2007-2010) and responding to a report by the Australian Human Rights Commission calling for the equal protection of same-sex couples before the law (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission), the federal government passed the *Same-sex Relationships (Equal Treatment in Commonwealth Laws) Acts 2008*, the *Family Law Amendment (De Facto Financial Matters and Other Measures) Act 2008*, and the *Evidence Amendment Act 2008*, which, collectively, recognise same-sex couples as *de facto* couples and, as such, “on an equal footing to [heterosexual] de facto couples in areas as diverse as taxation law, social security law, immigration and superannuation” (Magarey). Yet it is worth noting the shortcomings of such recognition, including that the laws pertaining to de facto relationships do not provide the same benefits and entitlements in all states, that both spouses are not automatically recognised as legal parents where de facto couples use reproductive technologies (in contrast to married couples), or that de facto couples bear a significant burden of proof, having to provide evidence about their sexual relationship, property and finance, or shared living arrangements, none of which are required for a heterosexual marriage to be deemed valid (for further discussion of the different benefits of de facto and married couples, see Robert and Kelly).

suggests, simultaneously describes both the actually existing status of being a citizen of a particular country—a legal status, which my participants share with their heterosexual neighbours, friends, and family members irrespective of rights conferred elsewhere—and “a set of relationships by which membership is constructed and qualified through physical and metaphorical boundaries and in the sites and practices that give it meaning” (394). In these terms, citizenship is not just a legal fact but also an experience of how a range of boundaries affirm, or not, various aspects of social and cultural life, including some bodies and desires more or rather than others. Citizenship, in other words, describes the complex imbrication of legal, spatial, and symbolic infrastructures which afford different degrees of belonging, and invest ‘actually existing citizenship’ with heterogenous qualities or meanings. “The borders of citizenship,” Staeheli infers, “are everywhere—at the physical boundary of national territories, in political practices and policies, in social norms, embodied in individuals” (395). The lived experience of citizenship in its evident complexity as a sense of belonging sustained vis-a-vis various relations to the social is determined at all of those ‘borders’ which structure people’s public and private lives and leave some people feeling less included despite their actually existing citizenship status. People often use the idea of being a ‘second class citizen’ to refer to this commonly recognised aspect of citizenship’s diversity. With all this in mind, I conceive of infrastructures of citizenship as both public and private at once, though not always in equal measure. This approach to infrastructures of citizenship—Staeheli uses the term ‘sites’—as simultaneously public and private,

opens us to the ways in which identities and agents known as ‘citizens’ understand the opportunities, capacities, barriers, and relationships that motivate them, that condition their understandings of the world, and that enable actions of different kinds. ... It draws in a range of sites, from the spaces of formal power, to spaces of interaction and public address, to the sites of ordinary lives. It is in these diverse, imbricated sites [or, infrastructures] that citizenship is forged, given meaning, contested, and changed (359).

To exemplify the overlap of public and private spheres, we might consider the infrastructure of the school, presumably a prominent feature in most of our lives, and certainly “an important site of social reproduction [providing] what we need to know to function in the world,” attempting to manage and “mould ... citizens-in-the-making” (Staeheli 395-96). As such, the school serves as a mediator, to speak with Berlant and Warner, of how national cultures and ‘good’ citizens are imagined by providing us with a plenitude of “images of social being” (558) and representations of “a taken-for-granted social existence” (559). For Berlant and Warner, such an “appearance of plenitude” (558) in images of how to be in the world

characterises the public proper, and signifies a 'power', which queer worlds (in their terms, queer counterpublics, see below) do not possess as they are not authorised to provide models for being in the world. My own research challenges this assumption, given that queer people report being very aware of very specific ways of *doing* being queer and *looking* queer. In chapter four, I will discuss the process of articulating queerness by, to take examples relevant to the previous chapter, going to the *right* queer events and venues, as a 'know-how of antinormativity', but this may also be understood as a queer literacy to foreground even more directly the importance of education that I want to consider in this chapter. In schools, the plenitude of images and representations to which Berlant and Warner refer is not only provided by formal curricula but also, as Jessica Pykett shows, (re)mediated via "teacher interpretations, classroom practices and everyday responses to pupils" ("Making Citizens" 817). The 'good' citizen, in this sense, is constructed in relation to how teachers integrate curricula into classroom practices based on "their own located experiences and perceptions," calling into question the idea of a 'neutral' curriculum and education ("Making Citizens" 817). The same situatedness of experience and perception of course also informs the processes by which curricula themselves are conceived and regularly reviewed. Considering, as well, how pupils (and their families) make sense of the curriculum, it becomes clear that, as Staeheli argues, "'schooling' is connected to a much wider set of relationships and sites than those contained within the physical structure of the school" (395). I will return to this at the end of this chapter, where I consider virtual extensions of 'schooling' beyond the physical classroom and the significant role these play particularly in young queer people's ordinary lives by providing access to knowledge about various aspects of queer life and identities.

The point of discussing schooling here is to provide an example for how infrastructures of citizenship, of which the school is a fundamental example, involve various agents with different forms of power in both 'public' and 'private', formal and informal educational domains, neither of which are thus ever fully contained. Staeheli notes: "Power is used [both] in a pedagogical sense in the formation of governable citizens, but also in the ways that citizens enact, co-construct and contest governing practices" (396). Students are not "passive vessels," merely taking in the knowledge presented to them but, rather, actively engage with and make sense of such knowledge with reference to their own experiences and lives (396; see also Pykett "Pedagogical Power"). This also echoes Raymond Williams' influential argument, discussed in chapter one, that *culture is ordinary* and, as such, typified by day-to-day creative processes of learning, reflection, interpretation, and contestation of narratives, images, and representations available to us (Williams "Culture").

Thinking of citizenship as learned through engagement with a cultural infrastructure in these ways foregrounds the complex relationship between spaces and institutions like the school, the curriculum, the state, or the home as well as the various discourses and values these espouse. Citizenship, with this in mind, is a fundamentally relational *process*: “Citizenship,” Staeheli writes, “is never static, settled, or complete, and identities or subjectivities as citizens are similarly unstable,” and she thereby emphasises the significance of the everyday—of “daily repetitions”—and the constructions and disruptions of citizenship it entails (398-99). The contradictory relationship between formal government apologies and the endorsement of public debate about the rights of same-sex couples discussed in the opening of this chapter indicates how citizenship can be a contradictory experience precisely because of its complex infrastructural articulation.

Drawing on and extending Staeheli’s ideas, scholars like Phil Hubbard understand citizenship as “an ongoing process wherein the rights secured at the national level can be overridden or undermined by laws enacted at other, lesser, scales” (“Scales of Citizenship” 224). While Hubbard shares an interest in the complexity of infrastructures of citizenship, his focus is on negotiations between actors who operate at different jurisdictional scales and the implications of such negotiations for sexual citizenship. Specifically, Hubbard observes how national legislation plays out in the context of local government regulations and practices. He shows how local governments may impose certain norms around how space is to be used, which cannot be challenged even with reference to rights to sexual freedom granted at the level of the state. Municipal law, Hubbard argues, revolves around control over and access to spaces, buildings, and land providing local authorities with enough power to override legislation passed by the state. Hubbard discusses the case of a same-sex kiss in a bar in London, which resulted in the kissing couple being kicked out of the bar. Here, municipal law reserves the right for a landlord to ask people to leave if that is perceived to be required for the sake of “good order” (Hubbard “Scales of Citizenship” 228). I am obviously not interested in the workings of municipal law as such, but this serves to highlight the fact that infrastructures of citizenship are constituted by a heterogenous set of actors, discourses, and laws that facilitate different kinds of cultural practice as well as different senses of belonging in a given cultural space. Recognising how such laws and policies also operate infrastructurally illustrates the importance of expanding the concept of citizenship beyond an individual or a group’s relation to a rights-conferring or rights-denying state. If citizenship is defined in terms of whether or not certain rights are granted or denied, then people’s sense of belonging, respect, agency, or visibility is also a function of citizenship. What might be best summarised as a sense

of belonging for the purposes of this chapter is, in short, not only negotiated at the scale of the nation-state. The legalisation of and debate surrounding same-sex marriage is a case in point.

To return to my short history of same-sex marriage in Australia, subsequent governments upheld Howard's ban on 'gay marriage' while public pressure in its favour grew as same-sex marriage gained attention and also legal recognition in many nations around the world. In 2016, then Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull defended the controversial idea to conduct a plebiscite on the issue of same-sex marriage, which had been promised by his predecessor Tony Abbott, citing the importance "to respect that [same-sex marriage] is a very big moral issue ... for millions of Australians" (qtd. in Koziol "Plebiscite"). Following community opposition due to concerns about discrimination, reflected in the 2017 High Court case cited above, and accusations of unnecessary delaying tactics, the Senate rejected the *Plebiscite (Same-Sex Marriage) Bill 2016*, with Liberal Senator Dean Smith describing it as "an abdication of parliament's responsibilities" and Centre Alliance Senator Stirling Griffin stressing that "far less harmful, far less costly alternatives exist," the most obvious one being a free vote in parliament (qtd. in Karp "Voted Down"). The ruling government was unwilling to allow such a free vote in parliament, in order "to appease the far-right members of [this] coalition government," (Dovey) but as the bill had been voted down there was no legal means by which the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) would be able to conduct a compulsory plebiscite using the infrastructure of Australia's compulsory voting system ("Fact Check"). So instead, bypassing parliamentary approval, the Turnbull government directed the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)—a body which normally collects and analyses statistical information such as census data—to obtain "statistical information" about Australians' views on the question of whether or not the law should be changed to allow same-sex couples to marry, in the form of a voluntary postal survey (Australian Bureau of Statistics "Postal Survey" 1).

I acknowledge that the examples I have referenced so far—the issue of same-sex marriage as well as the controversy surrounding the Safe Schools programme mentioned at the beginning of this chapter—are quite distinct. Allowing same-sex couples to marry has no actual bearing on whether or not schools provide students with access to knowledge about sexual and gender diversity. However, both same-sex marriage and Safe Schools are directed towards affirming and protecting queer people's lives and identities, and marriage equality is likely an indication of support for young queer people and would provide legal grounds for requiring safer schools for queer students. It is perhaps no surprise, then, that the issue of access to knowledge about sexual and gender diversity and the issue of same-sex marriage

were frequently conflated by politicians addressing the national media, and especially by the campaign against same-sex marriage (referred to as ‘the No campaign’ or just ‘No’ hereafter). Indeed, fuelling what I will discuss below as moral panic about ‘radical sex education’ was the purpose of the No campaign’s discourses relating to the ‘grooming’ of ‘innocent’ children by ‘sexual predators’. Positioning the loss of childhood innocence as the ultimate price of voting in favour of changing the *Marriage Act*, No rationalised resistance to same-sex marriage and yet deflected accusations of homo- or transphobia through the default public good of protecting children.

The eventual legalisation of same-sex marriage in December 2017 should, I argue, be set alongside continued resistance to Safe Schools as exemplifying what Matthew Waites calls a “‘rationale of containment’, in which the approval of [equality] is conditional upon preventing increases in the prevalence of homosexuality” (Waites 540). So, while marriage equality has been achieved in Australia, a commensurable recognition of sexuality and gender difference continues to be excluded from the national Australian Curriculum (see e.g. Rasmussen et al. “Education’s Queer Relations”). This idea of containment is apparent in the ‘heteroactivist’ resistances I discuss below, which frame a limited degree of visibility for queer lives and identities as threatening the normative sexual and gender order. This chapter is thus predominantly about the debates that preceded and followed the 2017 postal survey. More specifically, I highlight the No campaign’s focus on the radical potential of and ‘risks’ associated with the legalisation of same-sex marriage, including the Safe Schools programme and ideas about inclusion that it was taken as standing for. The issues of non-heterosexual marriage and LGBTQI-positive education converged as the latter was mobilised at the centre of heteroactivist campaigns against the former. In response, the Yes campaign largely ignored the arguments put forward by No and focused instead on representing queer marriage through a rhetoric of sameness and assimilation. I also, however, want to resist the ‘paranoid reading’ of the Yes campaign’s rhetoric as conservative assimilationism, and turn instead to a reparative reading that understands marriage as irreducible to its function as a normatively regimenting institution insofar as it is also always a social practice which can be and is *done* in various and, indeed, “destabiliz[ing]” and “troubling” ways (Johnson 249). This recognition is, I argue, a crucial consequence of my emphasis on staying with the trouble of trying to represent empirical lives (over abstract theoretical considerations) the messiness of which is also not reducible to assimilation/transgression binaries.

What is ‘the trouble with normal’?

Legal scholar Kirsten Walker argues that denying same-sex couples access to marriage, while heterosexual couples are granted that privilege, “perpetuates the continued inequality of lesbians and gay men [and] sends a powerful message about the value we accord (or do not accord) same-sex relationships, and indeed lesbian and gay lives—regardless of the conferral of substantive rights elsewhere” (123). While agreeing that marriage equality is necessary on grounds of equality, Louise Richardson-Self also endorses a “pluralisation strategy,” which promotes alternatives to married life such as de facto relationships and civil unions as equally good and “*purposefully diverse*” variants to marriage (“Questioning Marriage” 206). Reliance on a conservative conception of marriage alone, Richardson-Self cautions, “encourages a return to normative ideals of marriage and parenting whilst simultaneously dissuading individuals from pursuing a plurality of conceptions of how intimate relationships ought to be organised” (“Questioning Marriage” 210). For example, we might argue that the institution of marriage—as an infrastructure of intimacy in the sense suggested in the introduction—performatively solidifies monogamy and sexual fidelity as the principal ways to express long-term commitment.

In the midst of the debates surrounding the postal survey, the convenor of the advocacy group Australian Marriage Equality, Rodney Croome, suggested that if the Australian movement was to succeed, marriage equality activists should privilege and focus on “those things we can all value—commitment, family and abiding love” over issues of “inequities and prejudices that divide us” (Croome). Sociologist Luke Gahan frames such an approach as “conservative family values discourse,” and thus as presuming that the majority of LGBT people aspire to conventional married and family life in ways that obscure the diversity of queer lives and families (Gahan). In other words, marriage is not only understood in this critique as stigmatising those who do not or cannot comply with the family form or the couple but also as confining and restricting people’s practices of intimacy. A similar conception of marriage as a restrictive infrastructure also figured in more conservative arguments for same-sex marriage. Melbourne Baptist Minister Nathan Nettleton, for example, argued that “socially honoured, legally recognised, life-long exclusive commitments [are] clearly the best way of diminishing the attractions of sexual promiscuity and infidelity” (Nettleton). Suggesting that “monogamy does not come naturally to most human beings,” Nettleton framed marriage as a “strong social support and encouragement,” which would help homosexuals foster sexual fidelity in their relationships (Nettleton). What we might think of as the terms of the

agreement implicit in marriage are in this way conceived as a set of always already determined and static prescriptions for intimate life.

A tension between assimilationist and transgressive tendencies in queer communities emerges as a recurring theme in both popular and scholarly debates about same-sex marriage. In an opinion piece on 'gay marriage', for example, one journalist asked: "Will [gay marriage] go down in history as a progressive social reform celebrating alternative ways of living and loving, or a conservative affirmation of the primacy of the family unit?" (Woods). In a scholarly vein, Warner's widely cited critique of same-sex marriage in *The Trouble with Normal* contends that while restricting marriage to heterosexual couples is, undeniably, "a potent form of discrimination, regulation, and stigma" (*Normal* 108), combating such inequalities requires more than advocating for the inclusion of lesbian and gay couples in a normative couple model. In fact, he argues, opening marriage to same-sex couples is best understood as a process of gradually recognising some queers as socially acceptable and, to take up related work by Judith Butler, separating them from other, "not yet legitimate" bodies, relations, and desires (*Undoing Gender* 106). While Warner acknowledges the appeal of striving for the legalisation of same-sex marriage for the sake of "enlarging the life options of gay men and lesbians," he is more concerned with the consequences of marriage, resisting the idea that marrying is merely a private act without social consequences (*Normal* 96). Marriage may give people "validation, legitimacy, and recognition," yet he insists that it only does so at the expense of others—by "invalidating, delegitimizing, or stigmatizing other relations, needs, and desires" (99). We should, with this in mind, take seriously the consequences that the institution of marriage has for the unmarried. As an effect of this *inclusion* of same-sex marriage, Butler also argues, "various sexual practices and relationships that fall outside the purview of the sanctifying laws become illegible or, worse, untenable, and new hierarchies emerge in public discourse" (*Undoing Gender* 106). Such hierarchies, she infers, do not only distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate non-heterosexual lives but increasingly disregard the latter as permanently illegitimate; as "an illegitimacy whose temporal condition is to be foreclosed from any possible future transformation" (106).

I reiterate these widely cited queer critiques of same-sex marriage to establish the ground for some reflections. With reference to the activists and cheerleaders for the Yes campaign, and also my interviews with participants, which I will discuss more closely in chapter four, it seems at least questionable whether people *experience* their exclusion from marriage in these terms. At any rate, a not inconsiderable number of queers and queer community activists articulating their positions on marriage equality in Australia in 2017 clearly disagreed

with the idea that “options outside of marriage are becoming foreclosed as the unthinkable” (Butler *Undoing Gender* 106). Clearly, there *are* options outside of marriage, inhabited by many queers and even preferred by them in many cases, and Butler herself is invoking the visibility of these when she writes that they become unthinkable in the first place. Butler’s argument here provides the critical foundation for Jack (Judith) Halberstam’s account of “sexual liberation discourses [that] recapitulate the terms of the homo/hetero binary that oppress minority sexual subjects” and, in this vein, “become part of the installation of the very sexual hierarchy they seek to oppose” (*Queer Time and Place* 52-53; see also Wiegman and Wilson 13). Forms of sexual repression, as Michel Foucault instead suggests, always operate as part of a complex economy of discourses about a diverse range of sexualities. Sexual norms, this is to say, are defined and sustained relationally with reference to forms of transgression—with reference to those supposedly ‘illegible’ or ‘untenable’ sexual practices and relationships to which Butler alludes (Foucault “Transgression”; an inconsistency between Butler and Foucault also noted in Jagose 41).

In the text cited above, Warner argues that marriage is an “ethical problem” because its consequences reach far beyond the marrying couple (107). Accepting that, it is worth asking whether marriage equality may not be an inevitable first step in changing the social imaginary by unsettling hetero-privilege (Richardson-Self “‘No’ Campaign”). It is not self-evident that ‘queer marriage’ would always be consistent with or a homogenous alternative to heterosexual marriage. In the same way, it is not self-evident that queer families would necessarily be an extension of the ideal image of the heterosexual family or exemplars of assimilation supporting it. While queer people might be invested in marriage and/or family life, Sara Ahmed stresses, contrary to the Warner and Butler cases made above, that “this does not diminish ‘queerness’, but intensifies the work that it can do” (*Emotion* 152). For example, while queer lives are inevitably affected by the heterosexualised ideal image of ‘the family’ they at some level fail to reproduce, they also shape and/or destabilise that image where their own productions of intimacy are visible. The gap between what Ahmed calls “the script” of family life on the one hand, and queer people’s ‘iterations’ of family life on the other, may “rework” that script, even if the ability to visibly rework such scripts is largely dependent on social privileges aligned with such factors as class, race, and gender (152).

Such reworking does not necessarily depend on conscious political acts of resistance, just as the scripts of antinormativity may also be transformed by the proximity of social forms, spaces, or queer bodies. While it remains important to consider what the right to marry affords queer people with respect to matters of the everyday, such as medical rights, hospital

visitation, or adoption, the queer appropriation of the symbolic cultural infrastructure manifest in marriage also has more banal everyday effects. For now, I will let the summary of these divergent arguments by one of my participants, Giselle (33, female/femme, lesbian/gay/queer), stand in for the importance of this issue in the interviews produced by my fieldwork. Asked about her view of the marriage debate, Giselle's response reflects how the tension between assimilationist and transgressive tendencies figures in queer people's everyday lives, as they reconcile their politics, identities, privileges, personal histories, and reflections in relation to ideas about hegemonic heteronormativity:

I've been very much anti the marriage equality thing because I just think there's so many other important issues and it did feel, again, like a very 'gaystream' issue, you know—white, middle class—not that it is. I mean there's people from other cultures and communities who want it as well, but it just felt like there's so many issues happening around suicide, around mental health, around all sorts of things, around gender—I think so much about the opposition toward same-sex couples is people having a freak-out about people crossing gender lines or perceived gender lines. And I was just like, 'why is this becoming the number one thing in terms of being generated from within community?' You know, even if I have my own reservations around marriage and what that means and why do we want to assimilate and all these sorts of things, I still think it has to get through because it does create some legal differences and it's actually—like my mother, who is very anti-gay, said, 'you can't even get married. The men in their suits, the government, don't even agree with you, they don't let you get married.' So that's why I thought it had to go through.

Given the prevalent awareness of both sides of this debate among not only activists but also ordinary queers who were continually compelled to reflect on the meaning of marriage equality during the postal survey debate, it seems we should do more justice to the complexity of everyday ideas about marriage, anchored as they are in extensive experience of marriage as a messy set of empirical variations (see also K. Browne "Gay Marriage" 103; Peel and Harding). It is overly simplistic to argue that marriage always has the same kinds of effects, even in a shared cultural context, or that it always works to privilege or produce monogamous relationships. While every marriage, in a performative sense, represents and symbolically supports the institution of marriage, different people bring their differences to this institution and 'do' marriage in ways that suit their various relationship practices. Katie (40, female, queer), for example, responded to my questions about the role same-sex marriage, once available, might play in her life and how it might impact her seven-year relationship with her current partner in the following way:

If we got married, it's not a big thing as to whether we did it or not, it's probably more about the party and the celebration but, saying that, marriage comes with a lot of legal, you know, legal things and a marriage certificate gives you like next-of-kin [status], that sort of thing rather than having to jump through loops. ... I think marriage would be more for the legal sort of rights not necessarily to just show that you love each other.

Do you think the availability of same-sex marriage would have an impact on your personal relationship beyond any legal benefits?

No, I don't think it would make one bit of difference if we were married. To me it wouldn't. I mean, I feel like we're in a committed relationship and—I can't see how that would change in any way.

I am nevertheless interested in looking at how, on a discursive level, the marriage debate centres particular kinds of 'respectable' gay and lesbian subjects. This process may disavow those members of queer communities and queer political projects (including, for example, Safe Schools) that are perceived to threaten the heteronormative social order in ways that might dissuade heterosexuals from voting in favour of the law being changed to allow same-sex couples to marry. In this more delimited sense, I do side with Warner's caution, in the epigraph to this chapter, that any case for same-sex marriage ought to consider "what is thrown into its shadow" (*Normal* 147).

Yes/No: The postal survey debate

The Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey collection period began on September 12, 2017 and lasted until November 7, 2017. This was also the period in which No and Yes campaigns emerged and engaged in an extended public debate, which rigorously scrutinised the lives of queer people. The Yes campaign was ultimately successful, with a majority of 61.6 per cent (7,817,247) of eligible Australians voting, in the *voluntary* survey, in favour of marriage equality and a corresponding minority of 38.4 per cent (4,873,987) voting against it (Australian Bureau of Statistics "National Results"). While the survey returned a majority of 'Yes' responses, pressuring the government to pass the *Marriage Amendment Act 2017* before the end of the year, many non-heterosexuals and their families found the scrutiny involved in the divisive public debate traumatising. The postal survey's association with public shaming and discrimination, as well as its temporal proximity to the interviews I conducted, might have produced heightened responses about its traumatising effects among my interviewees, but the strong responses generated by my research are consistent with an array of other sources (see e.g. Verrelli et al.; Eades and Vivienne).

In this section I will take the debates between the campaigns and queer people's engagements with them as a springboard to point to both the limits and potential of assimilatory politics in relation to queer sexual citizenship. Here, my earlier conceptualisation of citizenship as processual and infrastructural comes into play. An account of citizenship that is limited to rights granted by the nation-state reduces citizenship to a zero-sum game where one has been granted citizenship or not vis-à-vis legal rights. Such a model of citizenship (limited only to rights granted or denied) fails to account for the various ways in which people find and create a sense of belonging in the everyday. Thinking, instead, about citizenship as an infrastructure of laws, representations, discourses, norms, values, spaces, and their various relations, foregrounds the complexity of how forms of social affirmation and a sense of social belonging and inclusion are produced.

If we understand citizenship as something that exceeds a legal document and also involves a sense of belonging, then citizenship is not only a matter negotiated at the level of the nation-state (as with the formal legalisation of same-sex marriage). It also involves more fine-grained dynamics that, for example, engage queer people with groups that may be overlapping or at different scales, whether families, communities, networks of friends and allies, or groups formed around institutions like schools, electorates, and the media. The contradictory experiences afforded by this complex infrastructure were reflected on by most of my participants. Rose (43, female, lesbian) accounted for the postal survey period as follows:

I feel like we're arguing ... it's just about gay marriage and then they're saying it's all this other stuff, and it's not. So, of course we're going to be angry because you're changing the definitions of the whole thing. It's been a shit three months.

When I asked Rose what she did to sustain herself through this difficult period, she pointed to her 'wheel of support', referring to the close friends whom she represented in the form of a circle centred on her and her partner's home during the mapping exercise I will discuss in the next chapter. Rose said:

I'm there for them, they're there for me, they're there for each other, and you know they may not have known each other before they knew [my partner] and I, and so it becomes this network of support, which I think has been invaluable during this fricking horrid storm of hate. But as [my partner] pointed out to me ... we've seen more hate than we've ever seen in our lifetimes—but we've also seen more love. And I'm, you know, maybe I'm just a bit of a pessimist but I didn't really see that until she pointed it out. And I was like, 'you're right actually. You know what, there's so much support in this little community.' It has felt really little [in the context of a large-scale national debate] but the amount of support from outside of the [LGBTQI] acronym that

has come forward made us feel a little bit less little. ... I actually did a Facebook post after the marriage equality thing [to] thank everyone who has voted. Yes, especially those who had no vested interest in doing so. Because, I mean, why would they even care? ... And it's because they love.

In popular discourse, answers to this last question, 'why would they even care', are likely to invoke the notion of wanting to be on 'the right side of history'. Tanja Dreher suggests this desire constructs same-sex marriage "as natural, unremarkable and inevitable, marking the nation and its people as modern and tolerant" and signifying "a commitment to progressive politics" (183) associated with justice, fairness, and perhaps indeed 'love' for others. Framing support for same-sex marriage as a metaphorical litmus test to assess a nation's political orientation, however, may enable the regulation and policing of racialised communities. In an online article on 'the problem with the Yes campaign', for example, Emily Castle argues that the rhetoric of 'love is love', which is to signal tolerance and a commitment to equality, aligns queer love "with nationalist norms and values, allowing LGBTIQ rights to legitimate the marginalisation and exclusion of other social groups" (Castle). Reflecting and extending Warner's concerns about what or who is thrown into the shadow of same-sex marriage, the Yes campaign's appeals to 'justice' and 'fairness' and a 'more inclusive country' post marriage equality, may serve to defuse criticism, for example, of the mandatory detention of asylum seekers—including LGBTIQ asylum seekers—in Australia's offshore detention centres taking place at the same time as the legalisation of same-sex marriage was being debated.⁷ Providing some insight into the Australian approach to LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees, Michael Pezzullo, former Secretary of the Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection, stated in a 2016 Senate hearing that the offshore detention of gay refugees in Papua New Guinea, where acts of male homosexuality may lead to imprisonment of up to 14 years, is "no concern" of the Australian government (qtd. in Dawson). "We have enough on our plate," Pezzullo stated, indifferently dismissing any sense of responsibility let alone obligation to investigate persecution of LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees in offshore detention (qtd. in Dawson). A further example of what Jasbir Puar characterises as a "folding in of homosexuality into the 'us' of the 'us-versus-them' nationalist rhetoric," (43) can no doubt be

⁷ The infamous offshore detention centre on the Australian external territory in the Indian Ocean, Christmas Island, "an emblem of Australia's controversial handling of asylum seekers," was closed in 2018 and the refugees detained there were taken to "mainland facilities" (Koziol "Christmas Island"). On February 29, 2020, the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) recorded 1440 people (including 72 women and 1363 men) in Australian detention facilities with the largest populations now located in Villawood, Sydney and Yongah Hill in Western Australia. This marks a significant decrease in the number of people detained compared to 5697 in January 2013 (Refugee Council of Australia).

seen in white middle-class same-sex couples receiving institutionalised forms of support and encouragement in their efforts to become foster parents among many other discourses about same-sex marriage constantly invoking the family form. That injustice can be continued through such forms of inclusion is apparent in the fact that, at the same time, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are 10.2 times more likely than non-Indigenous children to be removed from their families into foster care (Fryer). According to Richard Weston, chief executive of the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care, “it happened in the Stolen Generations and it is happening with kids today, that they will come away struggling to know who they are and where they fit” (qtd. in Fryer).

Berlant and Warner cite similar concerns about queer people aiming for more rights as citizens or extolling the value of the state sanctioning their lives and identities, arguing that “nationality, the state, and the law” are foundationally the infrastructure of heteronormativity (554). Puar would agree, on the grounds that the ‘homonationalist’ inclusion of non-heterosexuals is merely rhetorical and, at that, a rhetoric that includes only ‘good’ gays at the expense of sexual and racialised ‘others’. Puar argues, moreover, that the purpose of this rhetorical inclusion in “the convivial, rather than antagonistic, relation between presumably nonnormative sexualities and the nation” is to obscure past and present oppressions in order to promote the state (Puar 49). It is ironic, then, that publicity surrounding the results of the postal survey and, specifically, explication of the geographical patterns of Yes/No vote distribution, which indicated that metropolitan outer Western suburbs with heavier ethnic, migrant, and/or refugee populations were more likely to vote No, was also mobilised by right-wing politicians to demonise migrant communities as lacking the civilised modernity that at least tolerated non-heterosexual couples. For example, then Liberal Democrat Senator David Leyonhjelm, who would soon after form a political alliance with Senators Bernardi and Fraser Anning who both fiercely opposed same-sex marriage (see Koziol “Alliance”), told reporters at the time, “We are a very tolerant society. We want to make sure that we maintain that tolerance” (qtd. in Bianchi). Linking religious and cultural diversity with No votes, Leyonhjelm suggested that “If we had a very high level of immigration from those same countries where those western Sydney electorates are derived from then we wouldn’t have got a positive vote” (qtd. in Bianchi). Fahad Ali, a Muslim advocate for marriage equality, challenged Leyonhjelm’s claims noting not only a lack of campaigning by marriage equality advocates in Western Sydney but also pointing out that only 30 per cent of residents in the electorate of Blaxland, which showed the highest percentage of No votes in Australia at 73.9 per cent, actually identify as Muslim (Bianchi). Extrapolating this discussion to the national level, journalist Osman Faruqi

(see also D'Cruz) pointed out that to blame Muslim communities for the No vote was spectacularly unfounded, posting to Twitter: "Muslims make up 2% of the Australian population. The No vote was nearly 40%. Even if literally every Muslim voted No you're going to need to find a better scapegoat you giant, giant knobs" (15 November 2017). Framing the achievement of marriage equality as a reflection of Australian values and tolerance, Leyonhjelm's remarks are a case in point for Puar's argument about how homosexuality is co-opted to sustain a national rhetoric that juxtaposes a white, Christian 'us' with a brown, Muslim 'them'. It is worth noting as well that while Leyonhjelm linked No votes to religious and racialised 'others', he needed look no further than the Anglican Diocese of Sydney whose Archbishop, Glenn Davies, announced a \$1 million donation to support the cause of the No campaign in October 2017 (R. Browne).

In simultaneously exercising and disclaiming their citizenship, the Yes campaign attempted to reframe the conditions of possibility for queer life in Australia, even if it did not attempt the antinormative 'queer world-making' espoused by Berlant and Warner. Nevertheless, the heterogeneity and complexity of the politics buttressing the Yes campaign suggest that thinking about marriage as a restrictively assimilationist and fundamentally conservative norm is too limited. We can see some of the dynamics of both the Yes and No campaign through an analysis of one of No's key television advertisements and of recurring themes in the campaigns' rhetoric. While I am interested in the key concerns and arguments underpinning Yes and No's respective cases in the same-sex marriage debate, I also want to consider what the level of engagement between the two campaigns says about the politics and ethics of 'queer marriage' in the unique context of the postal survey. Specifically, I consider the choice of Yes not to engage more thoroughly with No's efforts to incite a moral panic in framing resistance to same-sex marriage as a matter of protecting childhood innocence, parents' rights, and religious freedom. These arguments by the No campaign framed queer marriage as the harbinger of the end of the world as 'we' know it and I will understand them here as examples of what Browne and Nash call 'heteroactivism': "activisms seeking to place heteronormativities (that is the alignment of normative genders and sexualities) as superior to other sexual/gender identities and therefore 'best for society'" ("Heteroactivism" 644). The No campaign's rhetoric cannot be contained by terms such as homophobia—which is not to say that heteroactivist representations are not also homophobic—because it actually often deflects straightforward 'phobia'. In line with Browne and Nash's contention that "heteroactivist arguments seek to reinstate or perpetuate sexual and gendered inequalities in less obvious but increasingly effective ways" (646), the No campaign's rhetoric is heteroactivist

because it purports to protect childhood innocence, parents' rights, and religious freedom whilst deflecting accusations of being anti-gay. Such activisms take both social and political forms, exerting different levels of influence through governments, the media, websites, and online articles as well as in school communities, parents' organisations, and family homes (647).

Because Yes refrained from engaging with the issues No used to incite a moral panic, Yes has been characterised as symptomatic of an assimilatory 'post-liberation' approach, which "dismissed the need for the radical reimagining of society ... as *already* achieved" (Thomas et al. 2). I want to complicate this assessment of the Yes campaign by suggesting that its refusal to take up certain issues might be better understood—adapting Gayatri Spivak's concept of 'strategic essentialism' (Spivak)—as *strategic* assimilation. Amy Thomas et al. find the Yes campaign represents "a homonormative assimilatory approach" as well as "a distinct denial of a more liberatory vision around sex, gender and sexuality" (8). Drawing on Spivak's arguments about the tactics by which specific groups of people may emphasise a shared identity despite their many differences in order to achieve certain goals, I understand Yes's focus on same-sex couples wanting 'love' and aspiring to 'sameness' as a largely strategic response—albeit essentialising in its effects—to new forms of resistance to sexual rights. Essentialisms, Spivak stresses, are "not ... descriptions of the way things are" but tactics mobilised for self-representation (Spivak 51). This is not to deny that a lot of queer people have variously strong attachments to forms or ideas of sameness and likeness, including understanding same-sex marriage as the same as heterosexual marriage. Many non-heterosexual families want to be recognised as 'like any other family' and this, as Ahmed points out, might be simply strategic but might also be necessary for survival where queer families rely on care and kinship networks in local neighbourhoods (*Emotion* 153). While I resist the dismissal of the Yes campaign as homonormative and necessarily uninterested in a more radical liberation of queer people, I also want to acknowledge the impact of the debate between Yes and No on the prospects for programmes such as Safe Schools and, as such, on young people's access to sexual knowledge.

The inherent 'wrongness' of homosexuality or the 'sanctity' of marriage as a procreative union continues to feature in some anti-equality discourses in Australia, but the No campaign's arguments focused on the ostensible impact of marriage equality not on the marriage institution as such but on democracy and society more generally. Such a focus, Richardson-Self argues, set the No campaign's tactics apart from previous versions of the defence of traditional marriage in Australia, such as Howard's, and signals "a new trajectory in anti-queer advocacy" ("No' Campaign" 33). The fact that the No campaign managed to increase its support from 30 to 34 per cent during the survey period indicates that its attempts

to arouse public fear about marriage equality resonated with many members of the Australian public (Crowe). The mail-out of survey forms began on September 12, 2017, with the collection period lasting until November 7, 2017. As soon as millions of households had been sent their voting papers, former prime ministers Howard and Abbott publicly warned about the impact marriage equality would have on religious freedom. Following in their footsteps, Tasmanian Liberal Senator Eric Abetz pointed to what would become the key themes of the No campaign's rhetoric when he warned the Australian public about the consequences of marriage equality for parental rights; freedom of speech, religion, and conscience; and sex education in schools (Crowe).

The so-called Coalition for Marriage, constituted by the Australian Christian Lobby, the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney, the Anglican Diocese of Sydney, and a group called Marriage Alliance was one of the most visible bodies campaigning for No in the postal survey and claimed to speak for "the silent majority" (qtd. in Gregory; see also Richardson-Self "'No' Campaign" 33). One month prior to the beginning of the survey collection period, Michael Stead, Anglican Bishop of South Sydney, declared that the Coalition's goal was to make the Australian public aware of the consequences of marriage equality:

They've only heard one side of the story, which is very strongly pushing a line that says marriage equality is necessary and that there's no negative consequences. And we want to put a contrary view that there are actually consequences to changing marriage (qtd. in Gregory).

Shortly after these remarks, the Coalition for Marriage aired its first television advertisement, published by the Australian Christian Lobby and rallying fears, in the video's caption, about "Radical gay sex education programs" becoming "widespread and compulsory" in Australian schools. This advertisement mobilised the figure of the cautious, responsible, and concerned parent, represented by three mothers, filmed in what appear to be their respective family homes, and addressing the No campaign's concerns about what children are taught about gender and sexuality in schools. "School told my son," one mother shares with the audience, "he could wear a dress next year if he felt like it." In the next frame, another mother claims that "When same-sex marriage passes as law overseas, this type of programme [one that encourages gender-nonconforming ways of dressing] becomes widespread and compulsory." Echoing these fears, the third mother alleges that "Kids in Year Seven are being asked to role-play being in a same-sex relationship." While sombre piano music plays in the background, these interview-style snippets are framed as factual by interspersed reinforcing blocks of text informing the audience that "In countries with gay marriage, parents have lost their rights to

choose.” At the same time, viewers are reassured by the next interspersed block of text that “We have a choice” right now here in Australia to protect such rights. “You can say no,” the advertisement finally declares: no to marriage and, thus, no to radical gay sex education programmes. The caption below the video states that the legalisation of same-sex marriage will mean that “parents will not have a leg to stand on if they don’t want their kids taught radical sex education, and gender ideologies” (Australian Christian Lobby). The No campaign frames a Yes vote as willingly renouncing inalienable parents’ rights. Voting No is thus constructed as the only responsible course of action ultimately protecting childhood innocence.

The women featured in this advertisement are represented as ordinary mothers, but behind the scenes they in fact held expert heteroactivist positions. One of them was an evangelical pastor, another the founder of a conservative group called Australian Chinese for Families Association that has promoted ‘conversion therapy’ designed to ‘cure’ people of homosexuality, and the third had already gained media attention for characterising Safe Schools as “warping” children’s thinking and withdrawing her own children from their high school, which was using the programme (qtd. in Chang “Controversial”; “No’ Mums”; Washington). Less than a week after the mail-out of survey forms, Margaret Court, former Australian tennis player and current Christian minister, infamously suggested that, if same-sex marriage passed as law, “There will be no Mother’s Day, there will be no Father’s Day, there will be no Easter, there will be no Christmas” (qtd. in Caporn). In this newspaper interview, Court claimed that the Yes campaign was not actually pursuing marriage equality. “They want marriage because they want to destroy it. ... It’s not about marriage. It will affect Christian schools, it will affect freedom of speech” (qtd. in Caporn). Paradoxically, while demonising queer people as the harbinger of the end of free speech, mothers and fathers, and even Christian holidays, both in numerous media interviews and in her professional capacity as a Christian minister, Court bemoaned a sense of intimidation and restricted freedom of speech. Given that her other widely reported pronouncements include referring to trans children as the work of the devil (Brennan), it is unclear what speech she felt had been censored by intimidation and restriction.

Court’s media profile built itself partly on her marginality to mainstream media discourse on cultural tolerance, which allows her to captivate public attention through her ‘shock value’, even while appealing to highly visible interest groups like the Australian Christian Lobby and, as such, she lacks any direct political authority. But her position here actually echoed earlier and ongoing claims by figures like Bernardi and then Australian Treasurer (later, Australian Prime Minister from 2018), Scott Morrison, who responded to Senator Wong’s

concerns cited earlier that the campaigns generated by the plebiscite would enable hate speech, by claiming that he, too, as a Christian in particular, had suffered hate speech: “Frankly, people of very strong religious views,” Morrison claimed, “have been subject to quite dreadful hate speech and bigotry as well, it’s not confined to one side of the debate” (qtd. in Dziedzic and Norman). Wong in turn retorted that “Not one straight politician advocating a plebiscite on marriage equality knows what that’s like. What it’s like to live with the casual and deliberate prejudice that some still harbour” (qtd. in Karp “Bigotry”). At the level of federal politics, then, Court is representative of competing claims over access to media representation—to the right to speak in the public sphere. While Court, Bernardi, Morrison and Wong clearly all have such a right, the fact that only Wong recognises that privilege is telling. It reflects what Warner characterises as dominant publics “tak[ing] their discourse pragmatics and their lifeworlds for granted, misrecognizing the indefinite scope of their expansive address as universality or normalcy” (*Publics* 122). By obscuring as hate speech the mere disagreement Morrison may encounter as a professional politician and public figure, and comparing it to the prejudice and discrimination queer people face, he denies his own privileged access to public debate (see also J. Wilson). Such claims to victimhood also foreshadowed the heteroactivist rhetoric right-wing politicians later (re)mobilised during the postal survey debate and again, more recently, to underpin ongoing claims about the need for a bill to protect religious freedom to which I will return to at the end of this chapter.

Nancy Fraser’s critique of Jürgen Habermas’ influential account of the bourgeois public sphere is particularly useful, in this context, to discuss the complexity of who has the right to speak in public. Habermas characterises the public sphere as an arena for “rational-critical public debate” (28) of matters of common concern amongst “private people [who] come together as a public” (27) in emerging public institutions, such as coffee houses, salons, or literary societies, which he understands to be accessible and inclusive in principle (Habermas 32-34). Fraser is critical of “the rhetoric of publicity and accessibility” implicit in Habermas’ argument, suggesting instead that the public sphere of the eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century was “the training ground, and eventually the power base of a stratum of bourgeois men, who were coming to see themselves as a ‘universal class’ and preparing to assert their fitness to govern” (Fraser 60). Fraser’s own *post*-bourgeois conception of the public sphere thus emphasises that ‘the public’ is not singular but, importantly, a more complex arrangement of “a multiplicity of public arenas” and, as such, “constituted by conflict” (61). More specifically, the exclusions of dominant publics are contested by subordinated social groups, or what

Fraser calls “*subaltern counterpublics*” (67), including queers, people of colour, women, and workers.

If the public sphere is an arena of discursive relations, the proliferation of multiple publics and counterpublics expands those relations, widening the discursive space for subordinated social groups to articulate their needs, interests, and concerns. Citing the example of U.S. feminist subaltern counterpublics in the late-twentieth century, Fraser shows that feminist women invented new terms to account for their social reality (e.g. ‘sexism’, ‘marital rape’, ‘sexual harassment’) and reduced “the extent of [women’s] disadvantage in official public spheres” (67) by using new languages to advocate for a shift in what counts as a matter of common concern and, as a such, as a legitimate topic of public discourse. In fact, to cast some matters as ‘private’ and others as ‘public’ often does not refer to actually existing social spheres but serves to rhetorically delegitimise some needs, interests, and concerns and to valorise others. As Fraser points out, “This usually works to the advantage of dominant groups and individuals and to the disadvantage of their subordinates” (73). In the context of the controversy surrounding the Safe Schools programme, which emerged prior to the postal survey and which I will discuss in the final section of this chapter, the programme’s most vocal opponents typically stressed that to teach young people about sexual and gender identities was an exclusively parental responsibility or, as Pansy Lai, one of the three mothers who later featured in the No campaign’s video, suggested, “a parent’s *right*” (qtd. in Deare; emphasis added). Many of the SSCA’s opponents, like Lai, morphed into No campaigners in the marriage debate, seeking to delegitimise as ‘contentious’ the needs, interests, concerns, and indeed existence of young non-heterosexual and/or gender non-conforming students that Safe Schools was intended to inform about. Implicitly, the normative sexual and gender order is deemed equal to *the public*, further reinforcing public/private, heterosexual/homosexual binaries. As Fraser recognises, such binaries are continually shifting as counterpublics “offset ... the unjust participatory privileges enjoyed by members of dominant social groups” (68). Indeed, to return to the right to speak in the public sphere, what Christian conservatives and right-wing politicians like Court and Morrison described as a sense of intimidation and misconstrued deliberately or ignorantly as restricted freedom of speech in fact reflects their experience of grappling not only with contestations concerning dominant public concerns—which coincide with *their* concerns—but also with changes in what is admissible in public debate, as well as with evolving norms for public speech. Rather than restrictions on her freedom of speech, Court was subjected to public scrutiny and criticism for making comments

that were no longer deemed socially acceptable, condemned by current and former tennis players, and resulted in the Cottesloe Tennis Club voting to drop her as vice-patron (Caporn).

To a certain extent, queer Australians also had the right to speak through the Yes campaign and, for example, through media coverage and community campaigns in which they publicly voiced their critiques of the postal survey. They thus also had a right of reply to powerful voices like Morrison and Bernardi, and could defend themselves publicly against homophobic and transphobic hate speech within the No campaign. They were also, like the No supporters, able to ‘vote’ in the postal survey. At the same time, however, while stories of gay and lesbian lives, in particular, frequently featured in public arguments both for and against marriage equality, these representations tended to lack specificity or complexity. On the Yes side, queers were broadly represented as a homogenous group of in-love and committed couples, and at times as undifferentiated normative abstractions. The Yes campaign’s efforts to capitalise on themes such as family life, monogamy, justice and fairness, and the routine representation of heterosexual family members vocally supporting same-sex marriage in campaign advertisements (Thomas and McCann; Thomas et al.), openly worked to reassure the Australian public that, as Tiernan Brady emphasised in the epigraph, “marriage equality will take nothing from anyone. No one will be less married the day it happens and no one will be more gay” (Brady). Richardson argues that the appeal to such a universal lesbian and gay citizen, who is fundamentally the same as most heterosexuals, frames access to citizenship “within a model of universalism, where equality is premised on being regarded by the nation state as ‘the same’” (*Sexuality and Citizenship* 85). Similarly, appeals to ‘love’ rights, rather than rights to *sexual* relationships, seek to advance “the right to form committed, loving [and marital-style] relationships and to family life in raising children with partners” (86). The assumption central to the Yes campaign was that love requires marriage, which is precisely what troubles Warner about the normalisation inherent in same-sex marriage claims. The implicitly but not explicitly sexual social subjectivity defended by the Yes campaign might perhaps be called *intimate* citizenship more appropriately than *sexual* citizenship. What matters is no longer *who* we love but *that* we love—and that we love just like heterosexuals.

In the marriage debate, then, it seems, the diversity that normally characterises queer communities collapsed into homogeneity—at least at a representational level. While I will discuss the extent to which my interviews sought to capture the impact of the postal survey on queer communities in Sydney further in chapter four, it is particularly pertinent here that a number of interviewees addressed the exclusionary effects of this collapse of difference:

Louise (44, femme, queer): I think the problem, obviously, the problem with the marriage

equality debate in general, aside from the plebiscite process, which is just terrible, is that it does marginalise those in our community that don't fit. I mean even looking at the marriage equality campaign ads, they are so white, you know. They are so white, so normative, all the women are femme and all the men are, you know, standard, cis, white gay dudes, you know. Where does that leave people who are poly, you know. Where does that leave aboriginal people, you know. It's like those people are not being included in this. So, it's like even within our own community we're perpetuating that bullshit.

Reese (28, genderqueer, bisexual/queer) was also very clear about not wanting to centre couple relationships in their representation of queer life, and about not wanting normative parental relations with children for themselves. In fact, Reese does not recognise their own life or preferred forms of intimacy in the gay mainstream activist pursuit of marital-style relationships, with or without children. In mapping their social world and imagining its future shape, Reese looks primarily to community-oriented older queers for inspiration.

I look to like older queers in like community spaces who retain lots of really significant relationships and are really like kind of active in their queer community and I guess like that's some like vague vision of a future that I would want, kind of like stay connected to those kinds of community spaces, I guess.

The appeal to sameness in pursuit of marriage equality strategically blurred the line between heterosexual and queer life through a discourse on love, desexualising homosexuality to render it more broadly culturally palatable and thwart moral panic arguments about threats to a heteronormative social order. In this respect, the Yes campaign certainly privileged white, monogamous, cohabitating couples over other queer identities and forms and practices of intimacy.

The Yes campaign's response to the No campaign's emphasis on freedom of speech and religion reflected an awareness of just how precarious support for same-sex marriage was at the time. If 'moral panic' was the guiding key theme of No, Yes's guiding theme was 'love is love'. The 'sameness' of hetero- and homosexual relationships has been a key argument of marriage equality advocates and activists alongside appeals to themes such as 'commitment' and 'monogamy'. Yes's emphasis on sameness flattens out the differences that typically characterise queer communities, but it is widely understood to resonate with heterosexuals (Richardson-Self "'No' Campaign" 32-33). The campaign's dominant orientation toward both sameness and love is a specific example of what I referred to above as strategic assimilation. When Thomas et al. argue that Yes did not engage with the main arguments presented by No, in particular avoiding the arguments pertaining to the impact of same-sex marriage on school

education that I discuss in the following section, they are criticising the pragmatism of the Yes campaign in strategically stressing assimilation and refusing to be drawn into contestations of, for example, childhood innocence (Thomas et al.).

The Safe Schools Coalition Australia controversy

As I noted at the beginning of this chapter, the SSCA was a national coalition of organisations and schools working together to provide school communities with resources to combat the bullying of LGBTI students in Australian primary and secondary schools, including government, private, and faith-based schools. In each state or territory, Safe Schools partnered with an existing key organisation, such as the AIDS Council in Western Australia, the reproductive and sexual health service, Family Planning, in New South Wales, or La Trobe University in Victoria (Louden 4). At the time of the SSCA review in 2016, more than 500 schools were listed as SSCA members along with 95 registered support organisations, each linked to the relevant state or territory key organisation, such as local government authorities, community health and advocacy organisations, universities, teachers' unions, and principals' and parents' organisations (Louden 4-5).

As a voluntary programme, accessing the suite of free resources provided by the SSCA was at the discretion of school principals and teachers, as was the approach for how to utilise these in practice. The resources schools could opt to request included professional training tailored to the particular needs of any given school, advice from SSCA expert staff on inclusive practices and school policies, as well as resources helping school staff to better respond to instances of homo- or transphobic behaviour and bullying, and to better support and include non-heterosexual and/or gender non-conforming students. The key organisations visited many member schools for meetings with senior staff as well as for larger training sessions on the needs of LGBTI students, with schools most commonly requesting staff training. The proportion of member schools requesting such sessions varied from 90 per cent in one jurisdiction to 40 per cent in others (Louden 6). All member schools also had access to eleven official resources available on the SSCA website, including four whole school guidelines (e.g. *Guide to Kick Starting Your Safe Schools* or *Guide to Hosting Inclusive School Formals*); the *All Of Us* teaching resource containing lesson plans and short films designed for students in Year 7 and 8; three booklets created by young people (*OMG I'm Queer*, *OMG My Friend's Queer*, and *Stand Out*) on coming out and challenging trans- and homophobia in schools; and three posters for display in schools (e.g. *Discrimination Free Zone*) (Louden 5). Since federal funding ended in June

2017, the website of the Student Wellbeing Hub still provides access to some of these resources (Student Wellbeing Hub).

When it was launched in 2014, Benjamin Law noted, “Safe Schools was largely seen as a political no-brainer” (“Moral Panic” 3). Buttressed by statistics according to which 74.1 per cent of LGBT students experienced verbal harassment based on their sexual orientation and 55.2 per cent based on their gender expression (Kosciw et al.; Zaglas), an inexpensive \$8 million-programme (over three years) intended to “create safer and more inclusive environments for same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse students, staff and families” (Safe Schools Coalition Australia), was largely uncontroversial.⁸ This changed in early 2016, Law observed, when the News Corp-owned conservative broadsheet newspaper *The Australian* published its first of many front-page stories “excoriating the Safe Schools programme,” headlined “Activists push taxpayer-funded gay manual in schools” (Law 3). Fierce and persistent opposition by religious groups, conservative politicians, ‘concerned’ parents, and other right-wing media ensued, characterising the programme as ‘radical’ and ‘ideological’, and as a form of ‘indoctrination’ intended to align young people with a covert ‘political agenda’.

David Goodwin, Catholic businessman and columnist for *The Catholic Leader*, for instance, claimed that Safe Schools introduces young people to “the Grindr App,” informs them about “chest binding for girls and tucking for boys,” and teaches them that “STIs are not so terrible at all” (Goodwin). Despite Goodwin’s polemic, chest binding, tucking, Grindr, and STIs are all absent from the resources taught in schools provided by the SSCA. Instead, these examples were taken from the website of Minus18, a youth-led organisation for gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans youth, which is one of the partner organisations in the SSCA, but which is also an easily accessible online resource. Condemnation of Safe Schools broadly associated the programme with materials and debates outside it. Bernardi suggested that the programme sought to “[indoctrinate] kids with Marxist cultural relativism,” and that it was “pushing a social engineering agenda that is radically at odds with the aspirations of many parents,” who ought to be concerned about the “appropriateness of material presented to [their] kids” (qtd. in Medhora). Liberal MP Andrew Hastie said that the Safe Schools programme “advances an exclusive ideology that doesn’t allow for competing views on sexuality and gender” and

⁸ Safe Schools is inexpensive compared to initiatives, such as the National School Chaplaincy Programme (NSCP), providing pastoral care by chaplains to support student wellbeing in school communities, which has received federal government funding since 2007. In 2014, the Abbott Government’s federal budget allocated \$243.8 over a period of four years to the NSCP (Hurst). Notably, the NSCP was also controversial when first established by the Howard government in 2006, with critics complaining that the programme undermines the separation of church and state and that unqualified chaplains put vulnerable students at risk, seek to recruit children to Christianity, and, reportedly, have in some cases handed out literature claiming that homosexuality is wrong, and that condoms are both ineffective for birth control and promote promiscuity (Burton-Bradley).

thereby “pushes its own form of bullying by pressuring young children to conform to a particular view of sexuality” (qtd. in Medhora). Law aptly summarised the trajectory of how Safe Schools was constructed in News Corp media as follows:

In February [2016], the *Australian’s* editorial referred to it as the ‘so-called Safe Schools Coalition’; by March, it was the ‘not-so-safe schools program’; by May, the ‘gender fluidity Safe Schools program’; by the end of 2016, the ‘Marxist inspired Safe Schools’ (38).

It is clearly paradoxical to frame an anti-bullying programme as bullying and ideological indoctrination while sustaining heterosexist and cissexist ideologies. Schools are not neutral, unsexed, or ungendered environments exposed to the SSCA’s infiltrating queer political agenda but, to paraphrase Scott McKinnon et al., already “heavily sexualised and gendered spaces that map a clear pathway to heterosexual and hetero-gendered conformity for individuals, the family and the nation” (146). As Kerry Robinson also notes, claims about children being ‘too young’ or ‘too innocent’ to learn about gender and sexuality are at odds with the reality of children being constantly encouraged to align themselves with particular views of gender and sexuality in their everyday life: “the construction of heterosexuality and heterosexual desire is integral to children’s everyday experiences,” manifesting in, for example, games or children’s literature commonly reinforcing binary gender norms and heterosexual narratives from early childhood (K. H. Robinson "Childhood Innocence" 121). The fact that such processes of heterosexualisation are not registered in any way that is comparable to the perception of Safe Schools as sexuality training exemplifies how heterosexuality is equated with the social and thus remains largely unmarked as ‘sexuality’, or is registered by heterosexuals as ‘asexual’. The school, as an infrastructure of citizenship in the sense elaborated earlier, conditions young people’s understandings of the world, including their own identities and desires, teaching them “to distinguish between particular notions of love, sex, and family as either ‘good’ or ‘bad’” (McKinnon et al. 146). Attempts to frame Safe Schools as a form of bullying indicate the extent to which the content of its resources was and continues to be deliberately obscured by the programme’s opponents.

Toward the end of February 2016, and thus contemporary with debate about how Australia should deal with calls for same-sex marriage, Prime Minister Turnbull responded to concerns about the SSCA expressed by right-wing politicians and media pundits by asking then Education Minister Simon Birmingham to launch an independent review of the programme (Law 4). Bill Loudon, a professor of education, who conducted the review, suggested that some materials, such as the *OMG I’m Queer* booklet, were not age-appropriate in primary schools, but otherwise found the SSCA’s resources to be both age-appropriate and consistent

with its declared intents and objects (Louden; Anderson). Nevertheless, Birmingham confirmed in March that the programme's funding would not be renewed the following year and that parental consent was going to be required before any Safe Schools lessons were taught (J. Taylor). The coverage of Safe Schools, and other programmes providing young people access to knowledge about sexual and gender diversity, continued despite this announcement and gained a great deal of new traction during the same-sex marriage postal survey period. The Coalition for Marriage, in particular, sought to appeal to contemporary political concerns in unmistakably tying the No campaign to recent controversy surrounding the Safe Schools programme. As I have suggested above, the No campaign's frequent invocation of the need to protect innocent children from the indoctrination and sexualisation of programmes like Safe Schools exemplifies how contemporary forms of resistance to sexual and gender rights deflect homophobia by citing concerns about the well-being of children rather than the inherent 'wrongness' of being queer. This also exemplifies, to paraphrase Browne and Nash, that new resistances to sexual and gender rights are carefully crafted with reference to context-specific laws, histories, norms, and values and, as such, "attuned to what people might deem reasonable or acceptable given the progression (or not) in sexual and gender rights" ("Gender Ideology"). The Coalition for Marriage's first television advertisement discussed above was clearly an attempt to resume the debate over Safe Schools and LGBTI-inclusive schools and school education, strongly associating the right to marry with the kind of education strategies represented by Safe Schools. This is also confirmed by Bernardi's characterisation of same-sex marriage as a "rainbow Trojan horse" (Wade). The legalisation of same-sex marriage, he claimed, is not in fact about equal rights but a covert attempt to undermine and overthrow the cultural dominance of heterosexuality.

Although the postal survey yielded a majority of Yes votes, this outcome was dampened by the fierce resistance to the inclusion and representation of LGBTI students in schools exemplified by the SSCA controversy and manifest in the ongoing efforts of 'concerned' parents, conservative politicians, headmistresses and headmasters, and right-wing media to characterise trans and gender-diverse young people and teachers as a social threat. Of course, the success of the Yes campaign did not translate into equal rights to sexual expression in queer people's concrete day-to-day lives, and this is especially true for the lives of queer youth in school communities. The resistance to Safe Schools clearly delineates some of the limits of the social and cultural acceptances discussed in the previous chapter and demonstrates that sexual citizenship is not only negotiated at the level of the nation-state but that citizenship is infrastructural and, as such, determined by a more complex interplay of

various actors who impact the lived experiences of queer people at the level of government but also more locally in domestic spaces, media coverage, classrooms, or the school yard.

The rhetoric of child protection was central to the No campaign and served to inspire what might be called a ‘moral panic’. The concept of ‘moral panic’ has been widely contested and elaborated on since it was influentially outlined in Stanley Cohen’s *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (see e.g. David et al.), including by Cohen himself (Cohen “Undeclared Politics”), and it is not the aim of this chapter to show how the Safe Schools controversy does or does not fit a model of moral panic. It is nevertheless relevant that this framework has been used to account for the regulatory dynamics of its media coverage (see e.g. Law “Moral Panic”). Cohen characterised moral panics as a “*misplaced*” or “*displaced*” (*Folk Devils* xxxix) social reaction towards a target—towards “folk devils ... portray[ed] as atypical actors against a background that is overtypical” (*Folk Devils* 61)—that is not a ‘real’ social problem but a strategic mobilisation manipulating social reactions in the service of specific political agendas (*Folk Devils* xlv). Extending this idea, Sean Hier defines moral panics as “*an ordering practice* in late modernity” (19), whereby the social construction of ‘folk devils’ functions to (re)affirm and/or regulate what are understood to be the boundaries of the normative social order and public sphere (Hier 4). This invocation of ‘risk’, such as the risk of children being ‘victimised’ by Safe Schools, may be understood to function as a “discursive technique” implying that social phenomena are controllable (e.g. the formation of young people’s sexual and gendered identities) and, at the same time, manufacturing a heightened sense of social uncertainty through “collective feelings of suspicion and fear” (Hier 14). The Safe Schools controversy of 2016 can be understood to have generated feelings of suspicion and fear along these lines, gaining new traction through fresh generation of suspicion and fear during the same-sex marriage postal survey period the following year. As Angela McRobbie and Sarah Thornton also suggest, however, “‘folk devils’ are less marginalized than they once were; they not only find themselves vociferously and articulately supported in the same mass media that castigates them, but their interests are also defended by their own niche and micro media” (McRobbie and Thornton 559). This recognition is consistent with my account of counterpublic contestations of matters of ‘common’ concern, public debate, and norms of public speech (Fraser), and also with my discussion below of some of the social support networks young queer people can now draw on for affirmation irrespective of institutionalised programmes like Safe Schools, or, indeed, the discursive space provided by the Yes campaign.

As Robinson demonstrates, similar “Discourses of childhood innocence and the homosexual as ‘folk devil’” had already served to instigate moral panic when the Howard

Government, lobbying to ban same-sex couples from getting married in 2004, anticipated needing “a moral coup” to oppose calls for legislative reforms and legal equality of same-sex couples (K. H. Robinson "Difficult Citizenship" 269). As a political tactic, Robinson argues, moral panic has been utilised “by conservative governments and right-wing Christian groups for maintaining the heteronormative nature of the curriculum in schools ... the hegemony of the nuclear family, the sanctity of heterosexual relationships, and the heteronormative social order more broadly in society” (“Difficult Citizenship” 268). As an effect of such strategies, laws and policies put in place to protect and advance the welfare of children, as Gayle Rubin points out, are in fact frequently “used to deprive young people of age-appropriate and eagerly desired sexual information and services” (218). People like Bernardi, Hastie, and Morrison were clearly not interested in the ways in which Safe Schools might positively impact the daily lives of queer students, their well-being, sense of safety and inclusion in society, concepts of self, or perceived future choices. The innocence of children being defended in this case both equated ignorance and morality and excluded from the category of innocent children any child who already conceived of themselves as not heterosexual or as gender diverse.

What is at stake here, to speak with Fraser, is the regulation of the public sphere’s boundaries. Alongside continued resistance to Safe Schools, the legalisation of same-sex marriage in December 2017 exemplifies a “rationale of containment” (Waites 540). While the law was changed to allow same-sex couples to marry, the prevalence of homosexuality continues to be regulated by excluding from the national Australian Curriculum any formal recognition of sexuality and gender difference (see e.g. Rasmussen et al. “Education’s Queer Relations”). Bell and Binnie echo this point, arguing that “sexual rights [tend to be granted] only on the understanding that they will be kept private: that is, invisible” (5). Similarly, Richardson suggests that “lesbians and gay men are granted the right to be tolerated as long as they stay within the boundaries of that tolerance, whose borders are maintained through a heterosexist public-private divide” (“Sexuality and Citizenship” 89). By these logics, queers can be citizens as long as they (1) uphold heteronormative values by rendering themselves invisible in the public by relegation to the private, (2) avoid any suspicion that they aim to increase in numbers by promoting homosexuality, and (3) do not raise children who will turn out to also be queer. The heteroactivist resistances discussed throughout this chapter invoke a similar rationale, as they respond to (the spectre of) changing visibilities of queer lives and identities, threatening the normative sexual and gender order deemed equal to the social itself. Any school curriculum component aiming for more inclusion of LGBTI issues risks exceeding the

contract implicit in this heterosexist public-private divide by making queer identities and practices too visible. Indeed, programmes like Safe Schools would *institutionalise* this visibility.

As Mary Lou Rasmussen et al. suggest, however, it is less than clear that including LGBTQI people in the curriculum will necessarily result in more or better inclusion. Where David Rhodes argues that the national curriculum “oppresses and silences those who don’t conform to heterosexist ideals” and that “A multicultural curriculum [would] promote understanding about difference ... to ensure that all young people are protected and safe at school” (Rhodes), Rasmussen et al. question the assumption that formal inclusion of LGBTQI students will necessarily make schools safer for them. This assumption rests on a reductive understanding of manifestations of homo- and/or transphobia, conceived as the result of ignorance based on a lack of education rather than a more complex set of historical, structural, social, and personal factors—“a process, an atmosphere, a contingent relation” (Payne 95-96)—and, as such, as something that can be ‘fixed’ by the right kind of education and inclusion strategies. Rasmussen et al. show that rather than approaching LGBTQI issues as cross-curricular areas of learning, they are flagged as ‘sensitive topics’ in Health and Physical Education (HPE) curricula (as is the case in the state of Victoria’s school curriculum analysed by Rasmussen et al.) and, by being classified as such, set apart as *specialised*.

As a specialised programme catering to LGBTQI issues, the Safe Schools programme may also have the effect of setting apart such issues from the rest of the curriculum. It is worth noting, however, that Safe Schools’ *whole school* guides may also be understood as an effort to counteract precisely this effect by facilitating the inclusion of LGBTQI students and their needs across a much wider range of a given school’s operations including, for example, school policies, classroom activities, the training of teachers, lesson plans, the school yard, and school forms, compared to HPE curricula only. What sections off LGBTQI issues here is less a matter of how Safe Schools itself was conceived than the product of discourses, which performatively constitute the issues the programme addressed as ‘contentious’ to a degree that the government eventually required parental consent for student participation in Safe Schools lessons before young people (who are by default heterosexual and cisgender) were ‘exposed’ to the issues they raised (Rhodes et al.). In the Victorian HPE curriculum, coming out is listed alongside abuse and family violence under the heading, ‘Disclosure’, calling on teachers “to use strategies to minimise the risk of harmful disclosure in the classroom” (qtd. in Rasmussen et al. “Education’s Queer Relations” 82). Problematically, this form of inclusion of LGBTQI issues renders non-heterosexuality a private matter in ways that heterosexuality is not as well as representing it as a potential source of harm. Similarly, we may also question

the inclusion afforded by Safe Schools with respect to the (re)affirmation of the boundaries of the normative social order the programme also prompted. In fact, we might argue that attempts to institutionalise queer inclusion in the form of Safe Schools may have further relegated some 'contentious' identities to the private or other (counter)public spheres by inscribing this normative order more intensely than before. For example, after the Loudon review found the resources on being queer and coming out (e.g. *OMG I'm Queer*) to not be age-appropriate in primary schools (to which they were not routinely provided anyways), the government decided that these booklets were no longer to be used as classroom resources (which most schools were already not doing) but only to be provided to students in secondary schools upon request and "for one-on-one discussions between students and counsellors" (J. Taylor). Prior to this decision, circulation of these resources was at the discretion of SSCA key organisations and schools (Louden 16). This decision explicitly privatised and reinforced the contentiousness of being queer, coming out, or learning to support a queer friend, but also required students wanting to access these resources to come out to counsellors and/or other school staff.

Another example of how the Safe Schools programme reinforced the limits of the public it imagines is apparent in its supporters clearly distinguishing SSCA resources from those provided by Minus18, one of its partner organisations. As discussed above, opponents of Safe Schools frequently obscured its content by associating the programme with other materials and debates outside it, such as Goodwin, who claimed that Safe Schools introduces children to "chest binding for girls and tucking for boys" (Goodwin). Rasmussen and Deana Leahy argue that polemics of this kind hail readers who "are meant to be disgusted at the thought of *kids* being exposed to such pedagogies" (63). Publicly naming the precise instructions and recommendations for comfort and safety referred to in Minus18's *OMG I'm Trans* booklet, Rasmussen and Leahy point out, "amplifies the visceral, the place of the body, and the role of feelings in creating and forming publics" (65). The affective response thus created mobilises resistance to the formation of publics in which binding and tucking are *ordinary* practices, "no longer [seen as] shameful but practical; not hidden but public; not unhealthy but health enhancing" (65). In an effort to defend the SSCA, some of its supporters sought to affirm the programme's legitimacy and age-appropriateness by framing Safe Schools itself as addressing "an appropriate lesbian and gay public" defined by contrast to binding and tucking as specialised, *counterpublic* practices, relevant only to those who specifically need it (Rasmussen and Leahy 67). Such arguments defending or affirming Safe Schools as non-transgressive by contrast to some Minus18 resources can be seen as complicit in the regulation

of accepted boundaries of the normative social order, here identified by what is deemed acceptable knowledge about gender and sexuality in school spaces.

The right to political representation is the other aspect of the Safe Schools controversy that was clearly germane to the unfolding debates surrounding the postal survey. As those who are most directly and disproportionately affected by the defunding of and ongoing controversy about Safe Schools, queer children and teenagers had no right of reply to the programme's condemnation in the sense that they have no right to public representation of themselves, their families, identities, desires, preferences, or lifestyles in response to discourse about those very things. As the "self-appointed guardian of the safety of children," for example, *The Australian* alone published close to 200 stories referencing Safe Schools and yet their authors spoke to or cited not a single LGBTI student in the process (Law 40-1). It is worth emphasising that these 200 stories are underpinned entirely by the rhetorical needs of an imagined young person as conceived by right-wing conservatives and, as such, fail in every respect to account for the experiences of any and all actual LGBTI students currently enrolled in Australian schools. In his discourse analysis of the Safe Schools controversy, Jay Daniel Thompson shows that students are not only represented as, by default, heterosexual and cisgender but also represented as "innocent, vulnerable and powerless; constantly at risk of victimisation by the SSCA" (5). Typifying children as such, as Robinson argues, "is critical to the formation of the good moral heteronormative adult citizen" ("Difficult Citizenship" 264-65). Anti-Safe Schools discourses frequently reiterate that a child's access to sexual knowledge is a private matter and parental responsibility. They warn us that the ultimate consequence of children's access to sexual knowledge, especially the kind of knowledge taught by Safe Schools, is the formation of deviant sexual citizens. Here, deviance is not understood as an ordinary part of the social, "a fact of social life" (Love "Ordinary" 78-79), but as its aberration. Deviant sexual citizens are the product of innocent young people being subjected to queer indoctrination.

Within anti-SSCA discourses, Thompson argues, "students—and especially gender variant and sexually diverse students—appear to have ... non-lives" (5). He draws on one of Butler's key arguments in *Frames of War* according to which "the epistemological capacity to apprehend a life is partially dependent on that life being produced according to norms that qualify it as a life or, indeed, as part of life" (3). For Butler, "recognizability precedes recognition" (*Frames* 3). Thompson suggests that queer students resist cultural intelligibility in this sense and are therefore not recognised, but merely apprehended "without full cognition" (Butler *Frames* 5). Queer students, in other words, may well exist but they are not recognised

as people with a lived reality that Australian society at the level of the public sphere should care to improve, a lived reality worthy of formal, institutionalised recognition in the form of, for instance, Safe Schools. Queer students, who would benefit from such programmes most immediately, are rendered invisible or even non-existent, as was the case for the numerous stories published in *The Australian*. Fears about the safety of always already heterosexual children and the concomitant need to protect them from queer ideological indoctrination continue in Morrison's comments, not long after becoming Prime Minister, about the problem of 'gender whisperers' in schools. Following a report published by *The Daily Telegraph* in September 2018 claiming that teachers "trained to identify potential transgender children in the classroom [have] contributed to a 200 percent surge in the number of kids wanting to change their gender" (qtd. in Butson), Morrison posted a link to the report to Twitter with the comment: "We do not need 'gender whisperers' in our schools. Let kids be kids" (5 September 2018). The repost has since been discredited by the very expert whose counselling work in schools it mischaracterised (Butson). Morrison's call to 'let kids be kids' implies that students can only be forced into being queer and never come to such ways of being of their own volition.

Morrison's tweet and other heteroactivist public responses to Safe Schools discussed throughout this chapter collectively represent a tendency for contemporary conservative Australian politicians and news media to weaponise the idea of 'protecting children' as part of a crusade against initiatives to make schools safer for LGBTI students, which are deliberately obscured as manifestations of 'gender ideology', a 'queer agenda', or as attacks on parents' rights. Without directly attacking LGBTI people (in most cases), what is at stake in these resistances is the making and remaking of what counts as 'public' and 'private'. As McKinnon et al. suggest, the dominance of heterosexual ideologies in school spaces "privileges heterosexual and gender-conforming students within the institution of school governance and forces LGBTI student to find safety elsewhere" (150). Programmes, such as Safe Schools are seen to threaten this 'natural order'.

The way in which queer young people (a complex category in itself overlapping other concepts like children, teenagers and adolescence) are absent or invisible in anti-Safe Schools discourses is connected to, but also contrasts with, the way in which queer adults are positioned in the discourse about same-sex marriage.⁹ Activists concerned with the future

⁹ It is worth noting that the category of young people is a pragmatic one in the discourses this chapter addresses, as well as in my own analysis, in the sense that, as Grealy suggests, it "knowingly effac[es] differences about and between young people" in order to facilitate generalisation (Grealy 31). This exceeds the scope of my research, but a more nuanced analysis of how young people encounter, actively engage with, and make sense of social and

prospects of programmes like Safe Schools also sometimes criticised the Yes campaign's focus on sameness, and particularly the cohabiting monogamous couple form. The No campaign frequently conflated same-sex marriage and Safe Schools and thereby provided many opportunities for the Yes campaign to engage in public debate that could move beyond a focus on love and marital-style relationships with children and, as such, aspire to the acceptance of difference rather than its mere toleration within the limits of a heterosexist public-private divide. Continued resistance to LGBTI-positive education programmes, in other words, serves as a reminder that legal recognition of some queer relationships is only one step toward genuine acceptance of queer identities and lives.

In this context, it is worth noticing that those defending Safe Schools, separately from or alongside advocating for the Yes campaign, often shared with those they were arguing against two important assumptions about young people linked by what I will call a vulnerability discourse. The first assumes that children principally if not exclusively come to public view as victims or potential victims, and the second assumes that they are relatively passive objects of public policy, including institutional education. Both assumptions register an investment in what Liam Grealy and Catherine Driscoll have called "*minoritised adolescence*" (63) to account for how malleable, plastic adolescents are imagined alongside the figure of the reasonable adult, here embodied by the state and the school as providing infrastructures of citizenship. 'Children' are here positioned as uncompromisingly distinct from any citizenship claims via minority as a "political device" that justifies governmental pedagogies (Grealy and Driscoll 74).

It is easy to insist that schools ought to provide affirmative learning environments and access to knowledge about sexual and gender diversity for *all* students. It is much harder to separate schools from popular, politically conservative discourses that frame such knowledge as 'grooming'. Consternation about the fate of the SSCA also needs to be more carefully situated in the broader field in which the programme is just one form of the social support work conducted by a range of groups—whether teachers or queer community activists—designed for queer youth. In this field, such formal government or non-governmental initiatives are not the dominant way in which young people obtain their sexual education. Supporters of Safe Schools frequently framed young people as vulnerable and in need of protection from the harassment facilitated by heavily sexualised and gendered school environments. A reparative approach in this case might draw attention to the complex infrastructures young people use

historical contexts—and this includes infrastructures of citizenship like the school—as children, teenagers, and adolescents would likely complicate the No campaign's common sense assumptions about young people, which they most commonly hailed as 'children' (see also Lesko).

and collectively create for pedagogic purposes, forms of political participation, community, or affirmation and recognises the evident limitations of vulnerability-based politics. Framing queer people as vulnerable and weak, Simon Copland and Rasmussen argue, “treats us as a community in need of help, help that largely comes from Governments, and other institutions,” and, as such, makes us reliant upon state-based recognition and protection (Copland and Rasmussen 93). A focus on vulnerability also tends to treat queerness—and queer childhood and youth specifically—as depressing states, notwithstanding the joy and creativity queerness also involves. This amplifies and reinforces negative experiences by, implicitly, telling queer young people “that they should expect to be suicidal” (93). In noticing this vulnerability discourse, then, my critique of the positioning of young people as ‘always already vulnerable’ draws on a wider body of literature speaking back to dominant and universalising constructions of queer youth as particularly vulnerable to mental health risks, self-harm, and suicidality. Indeed, the remainder of this section is informed by this literature in pointing to alternative frames through which queer young people may be ‘knowable’ (other than through their presumed ‘at riskness’) and to other lived experiences that *also* merit investigation (see e.g. Cover; Rasmussen; Rasmussen et al. *Youth and Sexualities*).

As a first step away from this vulnerability discourse permeating the Safe Schools controversy, we should note that the programme is by no means the only possible support for queer young people in schools. Other social support networks are facilitated by professional development workshops offered for teachers by youth organisations such as Minus18 on *Creating LGBTQIA+ Inclusive Classrooms, Sexuality and Gender (Forum)*, or *Supporting Trans & Gender Diverse Students* (Minus18). Young people also draw support from the visibility, in the media and in their everyday movements and practices, of stories from and about other queer people in recent publications, such as *Young & Queer* (2019), on what it means to be young and queer in contemporary Australia, or *Growing Up Queer in Australia* (2019), compiling coming-of-age experiences in different places and eras from voices across the spectrum of LGBTQIA+ identities. Twenty10, the gay and lesbian counselling service of NSW, also hosts social support groups for LGBTQIA+ young people, such as drop-ins, ‘social Saturdays’, or monthly dinners (Twenty10).

Perhaps more importantly still, the everyday ways in which young people locate and process sexual knowledge, including through queer family members and friends, but especially through online searches and interactions, are not dependent on whether or not the government funds a programme like SSCA. Lynne Hillier and Lyn Harrison, for example, show that because same-sex attracted young people often experience their immediate physical

world as lacking safe spaces in which to explore their interests and desire, “the internet can provide a place for important developmental tasks” (84-85), including practising different sexual identities in chat rooms, forming affirmative same-sex friendships, reading about other people’s coming out stories and exploring possible approaches for coming out to parents and friends, establishing intimate relationships that sometimes continue off line, learning about sex by watching porn or having cybersex, as well as practicing being a member of sexual cultures by investing in learning about others’ experiences and opinions through pictures, poems, stories, and other resources (Hillier and Harrison). More recent work on the polymedia landscape, Tumblr, similarly shows how LGBTIQ+ young people seek out digital spaces to access knowledge and peer support, and to explore their identities (Byron et al.). Paul Byron et al. argue that, compared to social media sites, which are designed to support “a more static, singular user identity” (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), the blog format of Tumblr accounts affords greater privacy and provides a safer space for trans and gender-diverse self-representations (2243). While many of the Tumblr users Byron et al. interviewed initially engaged with the site to connect with and follow fan communities and discussions, they began interacting with other queer people as soon as they found queer content. Byron et al. observe that Tumblr offers their interviewees “access to knowledge and information about gender and sexual identities that are not easily found on most other social media platforms,” with participants recounting how they learned about “gender fluidity, nonbinary gender, experiences of asexuality, and distinctions between bisexuality and pansexuality” on the platform (2245). Acknowledging the significance of such spaces and practices to queer young people’s own sense of belonging does not mean denying that their lives are usually also tied to concrete realities of everyday school and home life or the importance of how their identities are represented and respected in those spaces. Yet recognising the agency of queer young people is at least a first step towards admitting the significance of their self-representation (see also Hanckel et al.; Robards et al.).

Conclusion: The Afterlife of the Postal Survey

A newly amplified set of arguments about freedom of religion have continued to feature in the contemporary Australian political landscape well beyond the postal survey and the legalisation of same-sex marriage. Recognising that the Australian constitution does not include any Bill of Rights, the centrality of religion to this new rights-based legislative agenda is correctly linked to the impact of the postal survey, marriage equality and, perhaps especially, their ties to the Safe Schools controversy. Indeed, since the legalisation of same-sex marriage, conservatives

have been pushing for a religious freedom bill that, according to equality advocates, could serve as ‘payback’ for Australia’s same-sex marriage reform (Ireland). During parliamentary debate about legalising same-sex marriage after the postal survey yielded a majority of Yes votes, the federal Labour caucus voted collectively to block all ‘religious freedom’ amendments proposed to the same-sex marriage bill by other parties (Hilkemeijer and Maguire). Prime Minister Turnbull thus asked former Liberal minister and Attorney-General Ruddock to lead a panel to examine the protection of religious freedom under Australian law (Hutchens).

Subsequent agitation for the protection of religious freedoms have drawn Christian conservative politicians and pundits into some unexpected alliances, including with rugby player Israel Folau, who was removed from his lucrative player contract with a rugby league team for posting and refusing to remove or apologise for a range of social media posts claiming homosexuals would go to hell and that Australia was being punished by natural disasters for the legalisation of same-sex marriage (Gorrey "Folau"). Other paradoxical problems have emerged for conservative voices on marriage and childhood in this changed Australian context. If, for example, religious schools should be allowed to teach their own understanding of marriage, as Federal Minister Peter Dutton vocally argued, it is unclear how this could be legislated in contemporary Australia without allowing all schools to teach their various understandings of marriage (Karp "Religious Schools"). The difficulty of this for a governing coalition specifically linked to conservative Christian religion is part of the reason religious freedom provisions were not fully incorporated into the amendments to the *Marriage Act* and are still awaiting a final proposal for a Religious Freedom Bill at the time of writing.

Some of the recommendations of the Ruddock review are to be enacted by this bill, which is currently being drafted and stipulates, for example, “that religious bodies can discriminate on the grounds of religion where their conduct is ‘in good faith, [and] may reasonably be regarded as being in accordance with the doctrines, tenets, beliefs or teaching of their religion’” (qtd. in Karp "Religious Discrimination"). The bill is also to include amendments to the *Marriage Act* to provide protections for religious educational institutions refusing to provide facilities for marriage ceremonies as well as amendments protecting the status of charitable institutions, which advocate traditional views of marriage (Karp “Religious Discrimination”). In its submission to the Attorney-General’s Department for the public consultation process about this bill, the Australian Human Rights Commission acknowledges the importance of introducing enforceable protections against religious discrimination in Australia, noting that existing protections at the Commonwealth, State, and Territory levels are incomplete. “In many respects,” the Commission states, “the Bill is consistent with the

objective of providing equivalent protection against discrimination on the ground of religious belief or activity—as compared with existing Commonwealth laws that prohibit discrimination on other grounds, such as race, sex, disability and age” (Australian Human Rights Commission 4). Significantly, however, the Commission expresses concerns about the bill providing religious protections “at the expense of other rights” (4), citing, for example, the bill’s departure from human rights laws that commonly protect the rights of ‘natural persons’ (i.e. humans). By contrast, the bill stipulates that claims of religious discrimination may be made by corporations, such as religious schools, charities, businesses, and institutions. At the same time, these ‘religious bodies’, the bill provides, are to be exempt from *engaging* in religious discrimination if such discrimination is in accordance with their religious beliefs or teachings. “This is a wide exemption,” the Commission argues, “that undercuts protections against religious discrimination, particularly in the areas of employment and the provision of goods and services” (5). The bill also stipulates that ‘statements of belief’ otherwise contravening anti-discrimination laws are to be exempt from those laws and includes protections of codes of conduct (including conduct outside work hours) imposed by large employers as well as protections of medical practitioners’ conscientious objections to conduct they may deem not to be reasonable (5).

Another aspect of the postal survey debates that continues is a highly ambivalent set of tensions within queer communities about the relation between political recognition and political containment. Activist efforts to point to the Yes campaign’s complicity in sustaining a culture in which marginalised communities are granted formal equality only as long as they do not threaten to undermine the dominant culture are consistent with the anti-normativity arguments against gay marriage as a form mainstreaming at odds with queer theory, culture and identity. Certainly, it was because Safe Schools was so easily framed as exceeding a mainstreaming ‘rationale of containment’ that supporters of the same-sex marriage bill frequently disavowed intentions to promote such programmes and insisted that they are an altogether separate issue. The discursive position of Safe Schools during and since the marriage debate shows that arguments appealing to formal equality based on ‘sameness’ have and can lead to new exclusions.

Nevertheless, the differing ways in which queer people, communities, and organisations responded to these debates in their everyday lives and practices can in no way be contained by the normalising effects of marriage—or what Warner articulates as ‘the trouble with normal’. It is undeniable, in the case of the postal survey, that “whether marriage is normalizing or not for the individuals who marry, the debate about marriage has done much to normalize

the gay movement, and thus the context in which marriage becomes a meaningful option” (Warner *Normal* 143). But this does not lead directly to the conclusion that this necessarily harms queer people and lives. As Barrie Shannon and Stephen Smith contend, “to present alternatives to the heterosexist understandings of family, property, marriage, sex, gender and sexuality is to question and challenge that position of privilege” (246). Certainly, the participants I interviewed, and to whom I turn more fully in the next chapter, generally did not understand queer life and marriage as incompatible or contradictory, and neither did they understand it as a historically fixed form but, rather, as an evolving practice that can be *done* in many different ways. It seems appropriate to leave the final word on debates about equal marriage as an assimilationist strategy to one of these participants, Louise (44, femme, queer), who reflected astutely on how a blend of aspiration and accommodation fit with her personal and community ideas about inclusion and change. Looking back at the postal survey and the soon to be enacted legislation, Louise said:

[Getting married] was just a no-brainer, we were always gonna get married because that’s what girls do [laughs]. You know, it was very much, ‘oh you’re a girl and you love someone, then you get married.’ I mean, why wouldn’t you? [laughs] ... And this was prior to me going to university and starting to kind of interrogate all of this kind of stuff, you know, interrogate where this idea of the inevitability of marriage comes from. Having said that, I don’t regret it for a second because it was like an incredibly happy day, it was a lovely time with our family. It was actually a very non-normative wedding ceremony, if such a thing exists. However, we still wore pretty dresses and you know, did all that kind of stuff. When I [went to university], I started to kind of interrogate just how, kind of, homonormative I had become. And, I think when I say I’m anti-marriage, I guess I would be anti the institution of marriage as a patriarchal thing. Let’s face it, all the traditions to do with marriage are incredibly patriarchal. However, I don’t begrudge anyone who wants to get married and their decisions. I think the thing for me now is ... we made that decision and we did it but now we’re kind of starting to unpack why ... and if I, like now, and [my partner and I] have talked about this, you know, when marriage equality comes in in this country, we will probably have a registry wedding just so all the boxes are ticked in terms of legality and stuff. Because it does offer you protection. I mean we’re both very lucky because our families are very good and would not contest anything if one of us were to pass away, but I think that’s a really important thing.

So, it’s like, then maybe we need to start, like, finding a new ... unpacking and recreating marriage in a way that is actually ... non-heteropatriarchal, you know ... white, cis, all of that kind of stuff [laughs]. Maybe we need to ... redetermine what it means and in a way that it can suit all sorts of people. ... Or not, because I think the problem, obviously the problem with the marriage

equality debate in general, aside from the plebiscite process, which is just terrible, is that it does marginalise those in our community that don't fit.

Queer Cartography

This final chapter considers the relationship between infrastructure, the queer ordinary, and what I will call *queer cartography*. To frame this discussion, I want to note that my analysis of the Sydney lockout laws, of the Australian same-sex marriage debate, and my short discussion of young people's access to sexual knowledge in schools in the previous chapters, all served to mount a critique of queer theory's allegiance to antinormativity. In this chapter, my discussion of the infrastructures mapped via queer cartographies and of the queer ordinary—through accounts of my interviews and maps generated during those interviews—sits alongside Heather Love's account of queer everyday intimacies as a pluralisation of the normal rather than something that exists in opposition to or outside of it. I aim here to illustrate the inadequacy of figuring assimilation and transgression oppositionally and make more room for important scholarship, which finds in ordinary queer lives the kinds of potential that the dogmatically antinormative mode of queer theory argues is possible only through the most radically oriented versions of queer life. Finally, I will draw these discussions towards a recognition of proximity between queers and heterosexuals, and the productivity of this idea for transformative cultural change.

Mapping the queer ordinary

As I demonstrated in chapter two, an account of the effects of the Sydney lockout laws on queer spaces that is primarily informed by statistical data pertaining to the closure of venues in identified 'gaybourhoods' draws a pretty grim picture of the publicly accessible resources underpinning queer communities. Following Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner's logic in their account of the New York zoning changes of the 1990s, it seems that these laws must effectively diminish the expectations and potential for queer life and politics. This chapter unsettles such a prediction of 'diminished expectations' and 'attenuated capacities', although I have already conceded that, as someone invested in queer communities and politics, this argument immediately appealed to me as student researcher. More specifically, my discussion of queer

everyday spaces here calls for some revision and refinement of what we might understand as the *antinormative* account of queer infrastructure.

My research was designed to capture the ways the lockout laws, and public questioning of the acceptability of same-sex marriage and LGBTI-positive education programmes, limited the possibilities for queer life in Sydney, and to a certain extent my interviews did generate this kind of material. However, it also, and more overtly, produced another kind of story, one which led me to question the antinormative stance that had grounded my sense of queer theory and justified my research goals. This story brought me to ask how our research can be attuned to capturing where and how queer lives are *sustained*. This focus on sustenance over restrictive regulation clearly echoes Eve Sedgwick's calls for reparative rather than paranoid reading, but it is important to stress that I did not devise the visual method I here call 'queer cartography' in response to Sedgwick's challenge. Indeed, when asking interviewees to map their everyday queer lives, I initially imagined I would find objectified evidence of how regulation like the lockout laws restricted possibilities, just as I imagined that our discussion of the marriage equality survey would produce objectified evidence of how queer desires were thwarted by that public interrogation of the value of queer identities and relationships. However, given that the invitation to map an ordinary life necessarily prioritises what is positively done, rather than either what might be done or what is presumed as ideal practice, this method is inherently reparative. It attends to people's ordinary and often banal lived realities, their quotidian dilemmas, obligations, and responsibilities. This is not idealising, and both good and bad relationships to people, places, and practices are represented by the maps the participants sketched, as well as go-to places and favourite community events. In other words, these maps use the everyday as a method to connect queer people's lived experiences with larger socio-political changes taking place before and at the time of writing. These maps also directly affected the tone and substance of the interviews that surrounded them, drawing participants' narratives towards positive descriptions of how they lived, and in what network of relationships and with what reference to queer community resources. That is, the maps themselves became maps of spaces, places, relationships and groups, which brought the concept of infrastructure to my attention.

In this chapter, I will centrally use these maps to argue that an account of queer people's lived experiences, which is primarily interested in exposing forms and instances of regulation, oppression, or crisis, necessarily fails to account for the ways in which queer people are actively involved in creating the conditions for their lives. In fact, the various geographies of queer life in Sydney captured by this queer cartography illustrate that even evidently

restrictive policies like the lockout laws often only figure quite marginally in the day-to-day lives of queer people, and where they do, they might in fact reinforce a sense of community and political potential rather than diminish it. Since their introduction, as I discussed in chapter two, these laws have actually precipitated a number of public protests and rallies under the banner, 'Keep Sydney Open', in a bid to 'Reclaim the Streets', or, responding to increased homophobic and transphobic violence in Sydney's inner west, to 'Keep Newtown Weird and Safe' (Race "Sexuality of the Night"). The large turnout at these protests shows that people feel a strong sense of loss and that the threat of removal of party cultures and the forms of work, sociality, and intimacy they afford produces solidarity not only within but across different social groups and communities.

These maps, and their very diverse relationships to such visible public protests, turned out to also be consistent in important respects with Amin Ghaziani's conception of "cultural archipelagos," signifying a plurality of queer geographies (*Gayborhood* 160). As discussed in chapter two, Ghaziani refuses the claims about the 'death of the gaybourhood' and stresses instead its apparently unanticipated expansion responding to the heterogeneity of queer communities and queer people's diverse needs. Neither Ghaziani's archipelagos nor my ideas about the infrastructures that might sustain queer lives require jettisoning ideas about queer marginality. In fact, lived experiences of marginalisation combined with a powerful idea of marginality—what I have called a marginal imaginary—powerfully inform queer people's sense of identity. It does so in an everyday way, as a rhetoric that enables and asserts belonging relative to the infrastructures of queer community.

Drawing on my discussions of infrastructure and the everyday in the introduction and chapter one, I will here understand the everydayness of my participant's maps, commentaries on those maps, and associated stories about 'queer' identity, community, and lived experience as something more complex than the temporality and spatiality of daily life. I will argue for an understanding of infrastructure through heterogenous intersecting systems and networks that affords everyday life and produces everyday feelings or affects. With reference to the work of anthropologists Shaka McGlotten and Kathleen Stewart, I will argue that these feelings matter more for these participants' stories than regulatory interventions, which are resisted in various ways. Queer cartography here serves as a tool to visualise various infrastructures of the everyday. It offers a visual method for eliciting more descriptively material stories of the everyday that tend to reveal the infrastructural dimensions of day-to-day lived experiences, including their potential to unsettle or affect heterosexual culture. This everydayness is thus not silent substrata, nor the banal site of assimilative compromise opposed to transgressive

events, as queer cartography begins to discern, even though the everyday continually resists complete objectification.

Queer maps of the city

While I have chosen the label *queer cartography* to frame my analysis of the maps drawn by participants in my research, this research strategy draws on visual methods employed in gay and queer studies under a range of labels. In his study of the lived experiences of gay men living in Tower Hamlets (East London) in the late 1990s, Gavin Brown uses what he calls 'cognitive maps' "to chart the changing ways in which [gay men] respond to and adapt the urban landscape for [their] own ends" ("Queer Maps" 50). By mapping queer bodies onto streets, parks, and suburbs, this approach aimed to chart the geography of queer life and implicitly defies the normative demand that sexual desires and practices ought to be confined to the 'private' sphere. Brown's maps involved distributing a simple street map of Tower Hamlets and asking the participants in his research to mark 'gay' sites and spaces as well as areas they perceive as unsafe or dangerous for gay men. During follow-up interviews, the men were then asked to expand on their maps. "Cognitive or mental maps," Brown observes, "can reveal as much, often more, about a place than formal and supposedly 'objective' cartographies. They are part autobiography, part myth and part the embodiment of the tensions of living in a given place at a given time" (51). Sexual identity, he notes, is also only one frame of reference for how the world is experienced for such participants; class, ethnicity, race, and age also influence these maps.

David, one of the participants in Brown's research, explains his choice of 'gay' sites and spaces as follows: "When I say, these are the areas that I consider to be 'gay', I would probably have to put the proviso on that I consider these areas to be, like, visible middle class, white, gay" (53). He prefers to talk about opera and books in Soho's sophisticated café-bars over the more 'provincial' gay pubs in the East End. In fact, Brown observes, "David finds the bawdiness and raw sexuality of certain local gay venues ... more threatening than the borough's streets" (53). Trevor, by comparison, circled the entire map of Tower Hamlets to identify the whole area as gay. Like the other participants in Brown's research, Trevor regulates his performance of gender and sexuality in relation to where he is. Overall, however, he feels reassured by the presence of gay venues and people throughout the area compared to 'homophobic' Essex where he grew up, and Basildon where he lived in a council flat before moving to the borough. Paul, like David and many other participants in Brown's project, mapped queer spaces in line with the location of gay bars and the areas in which gay men tend to live. He nevertheless

describes a diversity of lives lived in the area defined this way, in that “you can do, you know, the New York professional—‘I’ll have a latte, please’—or eggs, chips and beans, onion and bacon in the café in the morning ... You can have an incredibly diverse lifestyle, and that’s another attraction” (57). Such cognitive maps, Brown infers, “can capture elements of the imaginary and the fantastical,” as people project heterogeneous lifestyles and social types onto urban landscapes (57). In contrast to most of the other maps, for example, Sean’s did not include any references to gay space, which, Brown concludes, is partly to do with the fact that he is not out. Further, his partner is Muslim, does not drink alcohol, dislikes smoke, feels excluded from most gay bars, and does not want to be seen walking in public with a male partner because his parents live elsewhere in East London. Thus, both feel the need for queer spaces in the East End, which do not revolve around alcohol consumption or what they perceive as ‘predatory’ sexuality. For Brown, if we understand sexuality and social class as contingent social relations rather than as fixed attributes, then they are best understood as mutually constitutive. “Such an approach,” he writes, “highlights the agency of queer subjects in claiming an identity that mediates a route between our material circumstances, subjective understanding of our place within society and our aspirations” (53). With this in mind, the combined methods of qualitative interviewing and cartography afforded him a nuanced account of queer people’s lived experiences of place and time even as they account for people’s different social identities without, by default, overemphasising one of them.

While I have learned from Brown’s emphasis on what might now be called ‘intersectionality’, the differences between the maps he elicited and the ones drawn by the people I interviewed also generated some questions about this approach. What effect might have been produced, I have come to wonder, by providing people with a map of a place and asking them to chart ‘gay spaces’ and ‘danger zones’? Do gay people only live in and through gay spaces and/or danger zones? What kinds of geographies are privileged by these questions and does this approach sufficiently account for other aspects of people’s identities? The prompt to chart gay spaces and danger zones implicitly renders sexuality central to the participants’ social identity and, thus, their mental maps, even though that is something Brown sets out to criticise about other studies of gay gentrification (53). Moreover, marginality is built into this research design rather than being discovered by it, given the relative difficulty of introducing other stories or versions of queer life. By the time the empirical component of my research design was complete, I was aiming, instead, for a method that did not centre marginality in advance by asking for it to be mapped. Instead, I asked about the geography of relationships and daily life.

Denis Provencher also asked the participants in his research to draw maps of 'gay' or 'lesbian' Paris—"la ville gay"—for imagined foreign visitors who might want to learn more about the city's queer recreational possibilities (*Queer French* 159; "Mapping Paris" 39). This approach, Provencher suggests, allows the Parisian residents he interviewed to show him "where they felt comfortable and to specify their sense of belonging in the city" (*Maghrebi French* 9). Belonging is thus once more rendered a function of sexuality integrated with queer community. Interestingly, twelve out of forty participants in this research declined to participate in the mapping exercise, equating—and implicitly rejecting—the idea of a 'ville gay' to an American-style 'gay ghetto', associated with identity politics, community separatism, and an overt emphasis on nightlife and sex clubs (*Queer French* 159-60). Other participants refused to draw a map because of their self-conscious sense that they lacked artistic skill. The majority, however, "happily complied and became enthusiastic about drawing their rendition of gay space" (160). Drawing on Michel de Certeau's theory of the practice of everyday life and his reflections of *spatial* practices in particular, Provencher theorises these maps as a performative act. "The act of walking," according to de Certeau, "is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or to the statements uttered" (97). This is to say that the 'user' of the city makes "choices among the signifiers of the spatial 'language'" (de Certeau 98-99), which Provencher recognises in the "naming and locating [of] identities in a particular space" that his participants engaged in (*Queer French* 160).

Most of the participants in Provencher's research drew a map of the area within the Boulevard Périphérique, Paris's circumferential highway, and included the river Seine as a divider between the larger north and smaller south of the city. The Marais district in the fourth arrondissement also figured as part of a "canonical model of gay city," which tourists would find in other city guides as well (*Queer French* 164). Many of these maps, including those of lesbian participants, also included references to gay male cruising spots like the Quais de la Seine (the banks along the river) and the Tuileries gardens. But the participants' maps also tended to include bookstores, department stores, bars, cafés, restaurants as well as signifiers such as 'cruising', 'sauna', 'gym', 'tearoom', or 'relax' (*Queer French* 168; "Mapping Paris" 42). "Indeed," Provencher observes, "many of the maps in this study illustrate what recent scholars have argued about gay space as a site of consumption" ("Mapping Paris" 42). By this logic, as Jon Binnie would anticipate, these maps may be understood to exemplify how citizenship is in part constituted via consumption when the (queer) self is managed and disciplined in relation to 'respectable' everyday material leisure activities and lifestyle choices (Binnie 167).

Provencher argues that while these drawings included sites that are commonly perceived to be 'gay', they also objectified very personal experiences and memories of Paris. For instance, while most gay men of European descent charted gay Paris between the first and fourth arrondissements of the capital, Samir, one of two self-identified "Français-Arabes" (French-Arabs), completely omitted the Marais and its adjacent districts. While he assigned numbers to most of the outer districts of the city, he left the heart of the city blank. Samir described passing through the Marais as an 'obligation' as a gay person. This sense of obligation echoes what scholars have written about the city as a safe haven in the queer imagination and its role in identity formation for queer people, as discussed via the 'gay imaginary' (Weston) in the introduction and in the context of my analysis of the presumed centrality of the gaybourhood in chapter two. "The city," Henning Bech also suggests, "is not merely a stage on which ... sexuality is displayed and acted out; it is also a space where sexuality is generated" (Bech 118). Samir, however, did not feel welcome in the gay epicentre of Paris, the Marais—"both as a postcolonial queer in the 'gay Marais' and a Muslim in the 'Jewish Marais'" (Provencher *Maghrebi French* 10). Instead, he preferred to spend his time in more mixed neighbourhoods, including in non-white venues and parties, or private spaces like his boyfriend's or sister's place (*Queer French* 186).

As with Brown's study, I want to note that the specific questions to which Provencher's mapping process is attached at least partly shape the performative dimensions he records. These participants' focus on sites of (queer) consumption may be less a reflection of people's day-to-day lives than a direct response to Provencher's prompt to map gay Paris for foreign visitors who are presumably interested in leisure activities, which signify not only as 'queer' but also as 'Parisian', and whose relation to queer Paris is distinctly not everyday. Nevertheless, Provencher's maps also helped shape my own approach and analysis. In Provencher's terms, the fact that his participants' maps, like those generated by my own research, are not drawn to scale, suggests that highly subjective experiences and memories figure in the imagination and objectification of queer Paris. As Brown focused on 'imaginary' and 'fantastical' elements of cognitive maps, Provencher infers that "(gay) urban space becomes a fictional construction that includes associations between spaces and people that do not necessarily exist" ("Mapping Paris" 42-43). In turning to the maps drawn by participants in my own research, then, I want to focus on the impact of my own questions, on how differences of scale and content map different queer lives, and how imaginative constructions of queer Sydney project simultaneously real and fantastic lives.

Queer cartography

I have already briefly overviewed the scale and demographic range of my interviews, and thus of the maps that were produced in each interview, but it is important to recall here that my initial intention for the mapping exercise I developed for these interviews was to invite discussion (and presupposed critique) of the Sydney lockout laws. While I always acknowledged that positive experiences of the queer hubs of Sydney's nightlife would not be universal, I was expecting to find the interviews generally support the contention that the lockout laws failed to recognise the value and importance, to queer communities, of queer-focused and queer-friendly bars, clubs and other publicly accessible spaces, as sites of belonging, friendship, family or kinship relations, sexual encounters, or political solidarity, as outlined in chapter two (Formby; Slavin; Race "Party Animals"; *Gay Science*). The maps the queer cartography exercise prompted instead emphasised the spaces and places that constitute these queer people's geographies of the everyday, and while this certainly included bars and nightclubs, it also included homes, workplaces, grocery stores, sports clubs, bushwalks, beaches, dating apps, social media platforms, and cars. Clearly only some of this array is directly impacted by the lockout laws, and overall not in the way I had first envisaged. One limitation of my sample is that, although it was recruited through online community sites, it tended to recruit queer-identified participants who were also interested in the idea of such a research project. This in turn skews the sample further towards people with more extensive education than might be average for queers in Sydney. It is also important to note that while this sample matches the tendency noted by other scholars in its inclusion of participants who mostly live and socialise in the inner western suburbs of Sydney, the responses in relation to both the lockout laws and same-sex marriage might differ with a younger sample of participants. A sample in their late teens or early- to mid-twenties might tend to go out more frequently in areas around Oxford Street directly affected by the lockout laws and might be less invested than this sample in the prospect of stable committed relationships.

Unlike methods that rely on verbal accounts alone, sketch mapping involves some significant material considerations. Giving all participants the same instructions and appropriate drawing supplies is not only relevant for comparability but for demonstrating that the drawing exercise is just as much part of the overall data collection as people's verbal accounts. I chose A3 size, 110 gsm paper and reserved a double page for each participant in a spiral-bound sketchbook. While the size of the paper indicated a sense of scale, the higher quality paper chosen might have indicated the importance I attached to the maps and stories about them (see also Giesekeing 715). I provided a selection of drawing tools, including pencils, ballpoint

pens, and coloured fibre-tip pens, which allowed participants to make their own decisions about whether their sketches should be easily erased or rendered more permanent, and whether they were monochrome or coloured. Once participants were given their supplies, I asked one key framing question: “I would like you to draw a map of the spaces and places in which your significant relationships are formed and sustained—a map of where your relationships ‘happen’.”

Unlike Brown and Provencher, I deliberately did not ask the participants to locate gay space(s) but rather to map where their significant relationships *take place*. Such an approach acknowledges that queer people’s lives do not evolve exclusively around matters and issues of sexuality. Prompting people to locate ‘queer spaces’ or asking them for a map of ‘gay’ or ‘lesbian’ Paris, leaves little room for imaginings of space that do not primarily revolve around sexuality. In comparison to Brown or Provencher, again, I was also not asking primarily about the city, or about experiences or spaces, which would appeal to others. Rather, the maps were intended to be subjective and personal from the outset, and framed spaces as the venues for the object being mapped (their lives and relationships), rather than the object itself.

When it comes to sketch maps, Jack Jen Giesecking cautions, “participants require clear and exact directions for drawing the maps, because unlike verbal interchange, a more permanent version of their data is immediately obvious” (715). With this in mind, and acknowledging anxious reactions to the prompt to draw during the interview, such as, “oh God” (Giselle), or, “I think I’m gonna use pencil in case something goes wrong” (Katie), I frequently reassured participants that this exercise was not about producing an accurate representation of a ‘real’ suburb or city, but about representing the general geography of their lives. I was quick to accept any of the various drawing methods with which participants felt comfortable. In practice, although the prompt to draw made some participants somewhat anxious at first, the mapping exercise generally helped establish rapport by inviting conversations about a shared geography and an exchange of shared knowledge about particular spaces, places, people, venues, or events, which helped diminish the effects of expected barriers between researcher and participants (see also Boschmann and Cubbon 240).

This exercise clearly belongs to the category of ‘mental sketch mapping’ or ‘cognitive mapping’, intended to examine, in the most general terms, human-environment relationships (see e.g. Giesecking; Boschmann and Cubbon). In calling this exercise ‘queer cartography’, I am emphasising the extent to which I have also drawn on feminist critiques of cartography. That is, I reject the notion of a fully knowable space revealed by mapping (Huffman 256). Queer

cartography yields maps, which do not make any claims to transparent, let alone complete, knowledge as assumed by traditional uses of mapping. I understand these participants' maps to be at once representational *and* processual (see also Giesekeing 713). They are neither complete nor fully remembered, consistent with Donna Haraway's view of both the knowing self and knowledge itself as multiple and hybrid rather than consistent and unitary (Haraway "Situated Knowledges"; "Cyborgs").

Rather than being a replica of the geography of real spaces and places in relation to one another, this type of map is better understood as what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari call a rhizomatic image of thought: "The map," they write, "is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification" (12). To paraphrase Deleuze and Guattari further, these maps are not tracings of actual sites, spaces, or social worlds; they are not literal representational structures. This is not to say that they offer no truths about people's lives. Rather, this is to acknowledge that such maps chart (produce) a set of momentary relations, which were true for the time and space of the interview, and for our conversation about queer lives in Sydney. The queerness of *queer* cartography, then, not only refers to the queer subjects charting their various socio-spatial relations but also to queer in the sense of reflecting the temporally contingent, or processual, nature of people's socio-spatial worlds. The maps drawn by these participants provide insights into the experience and production of social space, both real and imagined, which can animate qualitative studies of people's relations to space and place. In what follows, I provide a brief overview of the fifteen maps generated in my research, followed by a closer examination of a smaller sample selected to exemplify some of the most significant ways participants engaged with this exercise. This smaller sample foregrounds recurring components on maps across all, or at least significant parts, of the whole sample, while also allowing for more focused analysis.

Interestingly, only two participants drew maps that attempt to represent (parts of) Sydney's spatial reality as a city. This might have to do with the openness of my prompt and my willingness to accept a wide range of drawing methods. Participants' varied perception of their own drawing skills also surely influenced the kinds of maps they attempted to draw, and a geographically accurate map of Sydney might be more difficult to draw than a map comprised of more or less randomly arranged shapes, symbols, and words. However, drawing skills alone cannot explain the fact that most maps were not drawn with any reference to cartographic conventions for urban maps, or even to an idea of accuracy. The narratives interwoven with the drawing of the maps indicated that most participants did not see their own socio-spatial world as primarily determined by the spatial reality of Sydney's urban infrastructure such as

freeways or local council boundaries. While two participants did attempt to represent 'a map of Sydney', the others used an array of approaches to drawing: concentric circles (1), mind maps (1), circular diagrams (4), more or less randomly placed shapes combined with sketched components of built and physical environment (mostly houses, cafes and restaurants, office buildings, road paths, and trees) (5), or maps taking the form of bulleted lists for participants who described themselves as too anxious to draw (2). Given the openness of the task, and that decisions were made under a degree of time pressure, I am cautious about giving much weight to the particular drawing methods selected. In fact, some participants implied they would not draw their map in the same way again, saying that some things were "not really a conscious thing" (Alex), that some components were too small or too large and their size ideally adjusted (Louise), or that they were "kind of surprised" by the final result (Reese). This suggests that the maps are at least somewhat coincidental.

Some important features nevertheless emerged from this variety. To indicate the scale of their personal map, and to situate it in relation to specific areas of the city and beyond, participants usually included text labels indicating distance between places and people, or added names or sketches of workplaces, suburbs, venues, events, cities, states, or countries to their maps. There are only four maps that do not include any components that would allow a viewer to situate them geographically in a wider map of Sydney. While the interview transcripts accompanying those maps also add spatial reference points, the maps give the impression that they would look the same or similar wherever the person lived, and that the components are predominantly a reflection of what the participants value in their own lives. In fact, the maps that included spatial references are also not more informed by the infrastructure or geography of Sydney than they are by the kind of life, work, relationships, responsibilities, or communities in which participants are involved. In fact, it seems likely most people's maps would look similar even if they had lived in another Australian city; except, of course, when it comes to the specific names of venues, events, or Sydney's queer-friendly inner-western suburbs.

Where people differentiated between places and people in terms of significance, this was often expressed by the size of the relevant sign or label on the map (5) or by its proximity to the centre of the map (6). However, some maps followed different logics or emphasised certain components in ways that seemed unintentional, at least to them. Wren's map, for instance, follows the main roads connecting Sydney's inner-western suburbs of Marrickville, Newtown, Camperdown, Glebe, and Petersham. Significance is not expressed in terms of proximity to the centre, which they left blank because it covers the area in between these

main roads to which Wren has no significant relationship or attachment. Louise's map (Figure 5, discussed below), by comparison, centres around an oval shape labelled 'internet' as its largest component. As we discussed her map in more detail during the interview, however, she frequently reiterated that this was not intentional and that other components are equally and/or more important. With this in mind, it is important to consider the verbal interview and the mapping exercise together, as complementary aspects of the one method. I asked participants to think out loud as they were drawing (or writing) their maps. These maps were thus useful in giving the participants time and space to construct stories about and meanings around their socio-spatial worlds. More often than not, people added places, people, or things to their map as we continued talking about it. While it might be interesting to reflect on what people understand to be significant in a map of spaces and places in their personal life, the openness of the prompt, and this ongoing dialogic process of revision, also makes comparisons more difficult.¹⁰ Another important reason to consider the verbal interview and the mapping exercise as *complementary* aspects of the methodological approach I am advocating here is that the maps, in their own right, may be perceived as somewhat limited in terms of the insights they provide into queer life in contemporary Sydney. Rather than necessarily being a methodological drawback, however, the maps were critical in anchoring the participants' accounts of socio-political changes in the concrete geographies of their day-to-day lives. Indeed, the maps facilitated the reparative approach to the study of queer sexual lives I am arguing for throughout this thesis by (1) drawing attention to (or, by visualising) the fact that evidently restrictive policies often only figured quite marginally in the participants' practices of everyday life and by (2) eliciting positive (though not idealising) accounts of how queer lives are *sustained*.

The difficulty to make comparisons between the maps was exacerbated by people's varied approaches to drawing, which might also be exemplified by the use of colour. While eleven maps were drawn in either pencil or a single colour, four participants made use of multiple colours. Wren used a different colour for each of the five suburbs their map traverses, and Peter used colour to differentiate between water, roads, parklands, and restaurants and bars. Ruby used colour in order to help make her map more directly resemble the look of her house and her workplace, while Mira used colours to indicate how different elements of her map relate to one another (via red arrows) and to distinguish between the part of her map,

¹⁰ These factors also mean that participants produced some maps which cannot be published with the kind of minor edits possible here, because they might identify the participants to people within their focused social networks, given the final availability of this thesis through the university library. This has been factored into my selection processes for the maps I chose to incorporate as figures.

which includes the home she shares with her partner and child, her best friend's home, and her close friends (green and orange shapes and labels) on the one hand, and the home of her mother and her sister (dark blue shapes and labels) on the other. While the choice of colours, like other formal aspects of drawing, could thus be used to talk about the personal meaning of individual maps, it cannot be used for comparative purposes. However, the maps can certainly be compared in other respects, beginning with the fact that a lot of the maps are not recognisably 'queer'—Giselle said as much about her map (Figure 2) in ways that can be compared to Mark's narration of his own map (Figure 6), as I will discuss further below.

Spatial imaginings of queer Sydney

The map drawn by Giselle (33, female/femme, lesbian/gay/queer) offers a circular diagram which represents the interconnectedness of the different elements she chose. The diagram includes the rectangular figure of a building labelled 'café/restaurant', and a table and a tree with 'parks', 'bushwalks', and 'nature' mapped next to it. She also drew what she called a "generic house ... where my relationship would be." The interactions which take place in these spaces, Giselle said, are all planned and mediated digitally, which she represented with a drawing of an iPhone. The interactions which take place in these spaces, Giselle said, are all planned and mediated digitally, which she represented with a drawing of an iPhone.

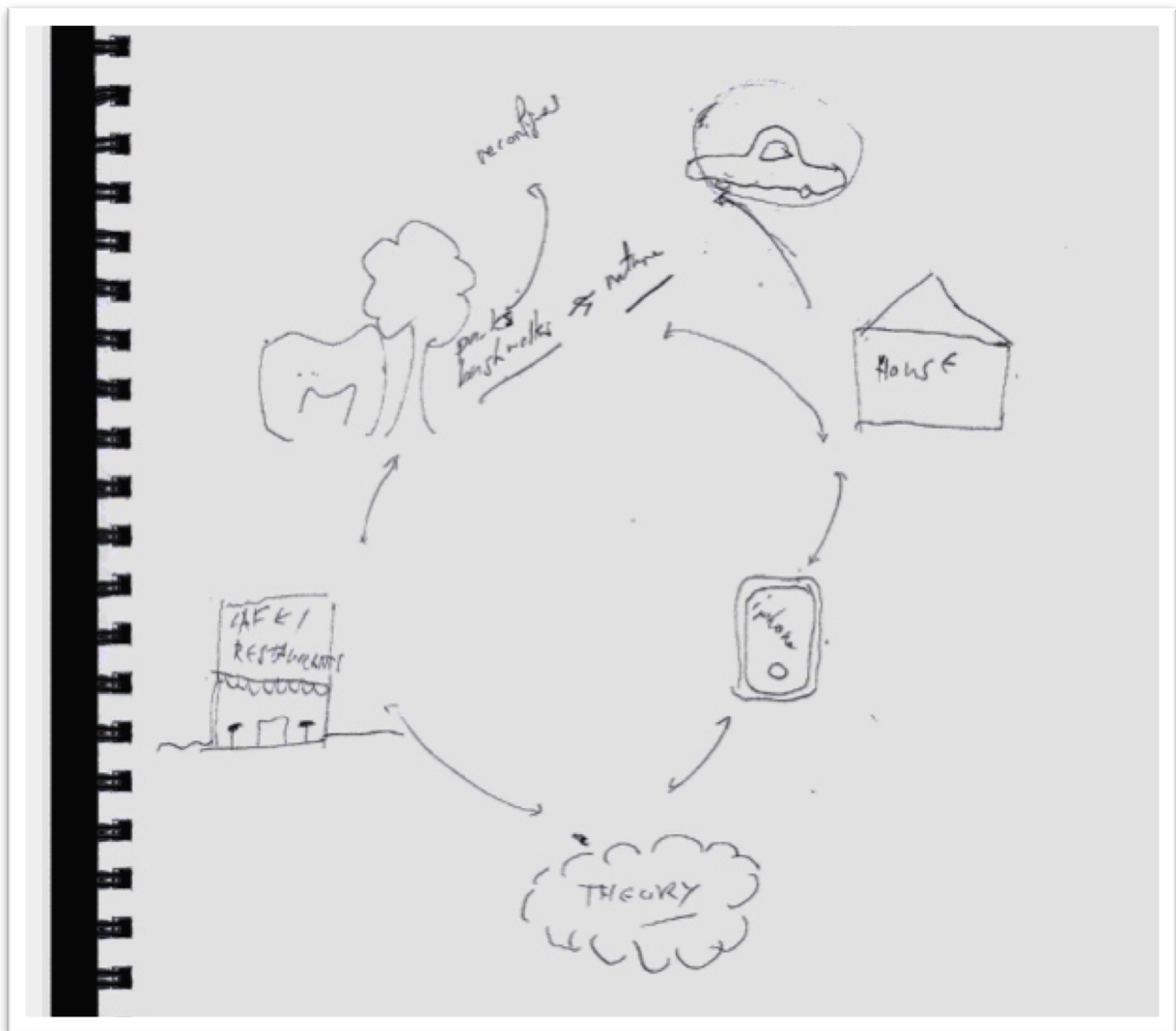


Figure 2: Giselle (33, female/femme, lesbian/gay/queer)

Giselle then drew what resembles a cloud and labelled it 'theory'. She said, "I love theory. It helps me make sense of the world." This was reflected throughout the interview during which Giselle returned to the idea of 'reconfiguring space' several times:

Space is kind of coded [as straight] by default. ... Like even, say, Parramatta Road, there's so many bridal places on Parramatta Road and they're just so straight, right? But then someone

walks in who's, say, a guy who wants to dress as a bride for a parade or a woman who walks in and is gonna marry a woman and then all of a sudden that space—it doesn't even see itself as anything beyond straight—it can be reconfigured by the person there. ... The space might not change but it changes in terms of the relationship to the person within it.

Giselle here reflected on the idea of “being able to reconfigure spaces for your own ends” and the importance of enacting “resistance against the world that might not necessarily want that I exist” by simply taking up space. Her love of “theory” or, more specifically, her love of what “theory” affords echoes Berlant and Warner’s understanding of theory as a queer social practice, trying to unsettle “the garbled but powerful norms” that allow for the heterosexual couple to appear as the privileged example of sexual culture (548). To ‘reconfigure space’, in Giselle’s account, is to disturb the world’s dominant orientation toward the heterosexual couple. This nevertheless does not exactly mirror the work of being queer emphasised by a critic like Warner, who has argued that “queers do a kind of practical social reflection just in finding ways to be queer” (“Queer Planet” 6). Instead, Giselle represents her queerness as something she brings with her and to reflect on available resources that may not themselves be queer.

Asked about the kinds of contexts which require ‘reconfiguration’, Giselle pointed to the spaces that do *not* require it: “It’s funny that this doesn’t happen at all in nature.” Here, she recalled not being able to be intimate with her first girlfriend in either of their family homes: “We ended up having to go to a park. And so, in those sorts of circumstances, it felt like a very neutral space.” As she was completing her map, Giselle added a “crappy drawing” of a car. “Like I think ... at different points in time, that’s also kind of a moving home in a sense.” Here, she recounted her experiences with her first girlfriend once more: “When I was younger in my teens, we would drive around and spend time. ... We were either not out or out and not accepted. So, yeah, that kind of took on its own moving home in a way.” The car, Giselle told me, continued to serve as a moving home whenever her current partner’s homophobic and transphobic family would show up unannounced, harassing the couple from outside of their apartment block, making them feel unsafe at home.

That flat he moved into because he was kicked out didn’t feel safe because his family would come around and stand outside the apartment block and yell at you from downstairs. So, we would get out and we would just drive around. And so, yeah, that’s why the sense of home shifts. It doesn’t feel that strong. But I do think the car is definitely—it’s like a, sort of like the park as well. It’s finding other ways of having those—not just physical intimacy but also just being able to have conversations you couldn’t have.

As such, both the park and the car in this account may be understood as examples of what Foucault calls heterotopias in that they provide spaces in which normalised forms of social organisation are suspended to some degree, providing an escape from homophobic presence.

When I asked Giselle if there was anything else or different that she would like to see on her map in the future, she told me that she regrets not having a strong sense of home. Here, comparison becomes useful as more general questions about people's associations with terms like 'home' and 'family' consistently helped with a better understanding of their maps: "I don't have family—like biological family. And my partner doesn't really have any contact with family." Reflecting on what she perceived to be a "hugely popular concept" in queer communities, 'chosen family', Giselle told me that using the term 'family' to describe a partner or friends would be "a bit too painful" for her. For her, the word 'family' was very important, and she admitted to struggling with queer people using it, as she felt, "flippantly." Giselle's map did not currently include a 'home', just a 'house', because she did not feel that she and her partner had been dating long enough for a sense of home and family to manifest in that relationship. However, there were a few places in which Giselle felt more comfortable and at ease:

I have places where I feel more comfortable that I go to that are not anything related to anything LGBTQI. It's just going out to places where I feel like a sense of home—even in a temporary sense of home. I feel more at ease.

Giselle here distinguished between the neutrality of 'nature' and the very different feelings evoked by, for instance, domestic spaces, specifically her mother's home, or other places and spaces clearly coded 'straight'. Giselle liked to be in nature because she felt it did not require the labour of thinking about how it is to be used and inhabited appropriately: "I don't need to put energy into thinking how I go there. It just feels more natural." Such "nature places" could evoke for Giselle "a sense of home because they've been more constant than anything physical, any domestic space I've had." One nature place she frequently visited is a peninsula in south-east Sydney, where her grandfather had used to live and that her grandmother used to visit. While Giselle had never met her grandfather, her attachment to the area nevertheless created a sense of home, albeit temporarily.

I understand Giselle's use of both cars and nature places as an example of the often hopeful ways in which people engage in the creative everyday art of 'making do' (de Certeau 30), which McGlotten describes as "the practices of organizing feelings and realities of loss and longing, of struggle and transcendence, and all the other disparate aspects of a life into a life that is literally livable and that always promises something more" (50). Attending to "affective

ordinariness,” McGlotten argues, is to approach ordinary life in a way that is informed by the affective intensities that emerge in people’s encounters with the material world (47). Drawing on the work of Stewart, McGlotten conceives everyday life as “life lived on the level of surging affects, impacts suffered or barely avoided” (Stewart 9). One of the values of an affectively saturated conception of the ordinary, they suggest, is that it puts less emphasis on “the systemic effects of large scale structures” in order to privilege, instead, the ways in which *feelings* shape the texture of ordinary life and render it meaningful (McGlotten 49; see also Stewart 1).

I did ask Giselle if she could think about instances in which external factors have had an impact on her map, but even then, she did not talk about such systemic changes as the lockout laws or its effects but, instead, wondered what her map might look like if she had enjoyed more family support and had a stronger sense of home in her life. Eventually, I specifically prompted Giselle to consider whether she thought the lockout laws had any impact on queer life in Sydney. She acknowledged, then, that “the lockout laws make it difficult” to go out at night and, specifically, to “jump between events,” although also noting that “as a female it does feel a bit different because the events [in the areas affected by these laws] were only ever like once a month or whatever, so it’s not like it was always open at night.” And, she added, the effects of the lockout laws coincided with people’s increased reliance on dating and/or hook-up apps to meet each other:

I think there’s probably a confluence of factors [affecting how people go out now] because I think the lockout laws also overlap with the introduction of apps like Grindr or Her and those sorts of things. I think ... people are already not going out as much because they’re meeting people online.

Aside from these prompted remarks, Giselle was more interested in talking about how men who are not “buff and white” might experience “entering those sorts of [male-dominated party] spaces and being in any way marked as different.” Here, she felt the marriage equality survey and result had a tangible present effect. She feared, “there’s a bit of a witch-hunt happening,” specifically targeting queer people from western Sydney’s Muslim communities, which, as I have also shown in the previous chapter, are frequently associated with the campaign *against* marriage equality. Giselle accounted for these dynamics through the idea of “postcode superiority,” suggesting “it is quite rife within the rainbow world.” To describe people who live in the inner-eastern suburbs of Darlinghurst and Woolloomooloo, she took up the term “the gaystream,” also describing the inner-western suburbs around Newtown as “more queer-aligned,” and she highlighted the continuing reestablishment of the superiority of

both “gaystream” and “more queer-aligned” queers from these areas over other queers who, for a variety of reasons, live in other suburbs. Giselle in fact lived in the Inner West at the time of our interview and described having a “hate-love relationship” with the area: “I’m struggling, at times, because I think it could be more inclusive.” Alluding, in particular, to common assumptions about anti-queer sentiments in Muslim and immigrant communities living in Sydney’s western suburbs, Giselle insisted that “not everyone that’s progressive has to live in the Inner West and vice versa.”

The experience of being marked as different also featured in other interviews. Jeff (25, male, gay), for instance, fleetingly noted that he has done “the going-out-all-night thing” and, with that now in his past, did not feel the lockdown impacted people of his age as much as they might younger queers. Instead, he proceeded to talk about hook-up apps and, more specifically, about how Grindr “can be quite discriminatory toward Asians.” Here, Jeff stressed that some queer spaces cater to or privilege white bodies over others, a point stressed by a range of writers on queer experience, including Sara Ahmed (*Emotion* 160). While Jeff can relate to people having and wanting to state a preferred ‘type’ on such apps, he was nevertheless offended by Grindr accounts which read, ‘No Asians. No Indians’. “There is a lot of discrimination like that—incredibly!” Hongwei Bao’s insightful reflections on why the phrase, ‘I am attracted to’, is not a benign statement of preference but a “tricky phrase” and “double-edged sword” are relevant here (Bao 136). On the one hand, ‘I am attracted to’ performatively renders a person’s preferences and desires innate and thereby *positively* affirms a diverse range of expressions of sexuality. On the other hand, this naturalisation of who one is attracted to often justifies discriminatory practices. As long as preferences and desires are figured as personal matters that belong to the private sphere, they may go unexamined. Yet who one is attracted to, Bao stresses, is not simply personal but, rather, “subject to different social [as well as cultural and political] discourses” (136). Desire impacts the social in that it *includes* as much as it *excludes* different bodies differently. As such, desire may disrupt but also sustain and reinforce racialised social hierarchies.

Critically examining the phrase, ‘I am attracted to’, involves extracting, rhetorically and conceptually, preferences and desires from the private sphere and paying attention to their social operation. The terms ‘private’ and ‘public’, as I have argued, do not describe objective and straightforward spheres of the social world. Instead, to apply Nancy Fraser’s critique of the public sphere again, ‘private’ and ‘public’ are “rhetorical labels ... deployed to delegitimize some interests, views, and topics and to valorize others” (73). To make preferences and desires properties of ‘the personal’, to paraphrase Fraser further, “is to enclave [such] matters

in specialized discursive arenas and thereby to shield them from general debate and contestation” (73). The point here is not, of course, to suggest that distinctions between private and public are altogether redundant, but this point indicates how Jeff’s private offense, and personal feelings of attraction, are each tied to the public realm in which the media discourse, law and policy, and the provisions of material urban infrastructure all belong (see also Henry). I can thus draw on Fraser’s critique of the public sphere, and of the public-private dichotomy in particular, to emphasise that ostensibly intimate matters such as our desires and preferences are, to agree once more with Berlant and Warner, always also publicly mediated (Berlant and Warner 553). To think of desires and preferences primarily as properties of private personhood is to accept as true what Berlant and Warner describe as the “mirage” of “a home base of prepolitical humanity from which citizens are thought to come into political discourse” (553). To understand sexual preferences, including heterosexuality, as prepolitical and private, is to overlook much more complex relationships between sexuality, racism, representation, and national culture.

The Beresford Hotel, the place to be on a Sunday afternoon for gay men who (want to) belong to the Oxford Street and larger Darlinghurst scene, Jeff observed, is not dissimilar to digital spaces when it comes to racial discrimination, even if such discrimination often manifests less overtly offline than it might online. He described gay men assembling at the Beresford in small pockets of people based on shared interests but, in some cases, also based on skin colour. While Jeff tends to associate with his fellow hockey team members when he attends ‘Beresford Sundays’, he also told me about the so-called ‘A-Gays’ who gather in their own corner of the bar and tend to be predominantly white. “I suspect that if someone ... not fitting the right kind of mould goes and speaks to them, you’d probably get knocked back pretty quickly.” Here, Gilbert Caluya’s autoethnographic account of experiencing anti-Asian racism on Sydney’s gay scene strikingly captures what getting ‘blocked’ in ‘real life’ (rather than on Grindr) might *feel* like:

He leans forward to order a drink and then turns my way. In reaction I smile. His left eyebrow rises, his eyes look me up and down, he scrunches his nose and with curled back lips he says, “I don’t do Asians.” He raises his hand to block the sight of me. He palms me off, so to speak, and suddenly I feel ashamed. I’m ashamed to be the object of his disgust, ashamed of my skin, my face, to be in the last moment one of them ... one of those ‘Asians’ (“Scene of Racism”).

Kane Race suggests that sharing space with unlikely social and sexual ‘others’ can lead to unexpected exchanges and connections, while “Cruising websites and apps presume a sexual actor knows exactly what they want in advance; with preferences and interests that precede

their worldly engagement with others” (“Nightlife” 104). The experiences reported by two of my interviewees who self-identified as Chinese as well as by Caluya and Bao, however, show that ‘sorting mechanisms’ are not only part of the literal infrastructure of apps like Grindr but also functioning parts of the infrastructure of urban party cultures.

Despite their apparent racialised exclusivity, the descriptor ‘A-Gays’ suggests that the men it designates enjoy a degree of popularity as well as a different kind of access to and amplified standing in this particular space. ‘A-Gays’ conjures up the idea of alpha males—the dominant and domineering group in a given social setting. It also invokes the image of those bodies that Giselle described as “buff and white,” and that (literally) measure up to the demands of this scene’s homonormative aesthetic. As Bao also notes, in gay bars someone’s interests, hobbies, education, or profession are often secondary if not altogether irrelevant: “Appearance is all that matters. Simply put, being Chinese or Asian is considered effeminate, passive and unattractive” (Bao 136). What Kam Louie might name ‘soft masculinity’ (*Chinese Masculinity*) here figures in opposition to the dominant, ‘A-Gay’, white, severe masculinity dominating this particular scene.

Queer people’s different levels of comfort and success in accessing the public forms and forums of queer culture also featured in Giselle’s account of seeking out “more queer-identified spaces.” For instance, the people who go to “Red Rattler-type events,” as Giselle called them, “can be their own clique, and have their own rules.” The Red Rattler Theatre is a warehouse venue, which hosts dance parties and showcases arts, performance, music, drama, and film, variously described in its own promotion and by many fans as alternative, edgy, or queer. Giselle described herself and her friends as being “in this in-between ground ... We’re not really the gaystream but we’re not really the queer world.” She remembered her attempts to feel part of the Red Rattler-type scene, and feeling pressure to regularly attend the events put on by insiders to that scene, whether to socialise and make connections, or to volunteer behind the bar in order to be registered and acknowledged as a member of this scene. Eventually, Giselle and her friends gave up on becoming “scene people,” though some of them endured, got involved in queer performance, and picked up smoking: “I don’t feel like going through all these hoops to be part of a social hierarchy; to get a sense of community.” Reflecting on her laborious attempts to be part of this scene, she described herself as “boring and bland” in relation to what she called “a more queer world.”

Ahmed conveys similar feelings in her account of how different bodies inhabit the same space with varying levels of comfort and ease. Without saying that people are necessarily *made* to feel out of place, Ahmed suggests that “discomfort is itself a sign that queer spaces may

extend some bodies more than others (for example, some spaces might extend the mobility of white, middle-class bodies)” (*Emotion* 151). Similarly, in her critique of the 1990s-geographical literature on sexuality and space, Natalie Oswin takes issue with the juxtaposition of heteronormative hegemony and queer resistance in relation to space. Oswin advocates an understanding of queer space that acknowledges the “racializations, genderings, and classed processes” that *also* characterise queer cultural politics (“Critical Geographies” 100). For Ahmed, identity categories such as ‘queer’ or other terms signifying non-normative sexualities may also feel more comfortable for some than for others: “Bodies that can move with more ease may also more easily shape and be shaped by the sign ‘queer,’” if queerness is understood to signify mobility, fluidity, or detachment (Ahmed 152). Jeff and Giselle’s experiences remind us that queers do not always feel comfortable in nominated queer spaces. This is not to say, however, that they do not have very significant attachments to other queer people or to queer communities and/or scenes. In fact, both of them described the importance of living alongside other queer people, specifically in relation to the sustenance and embodied comfort queer presence provides in their day-to-day lives.

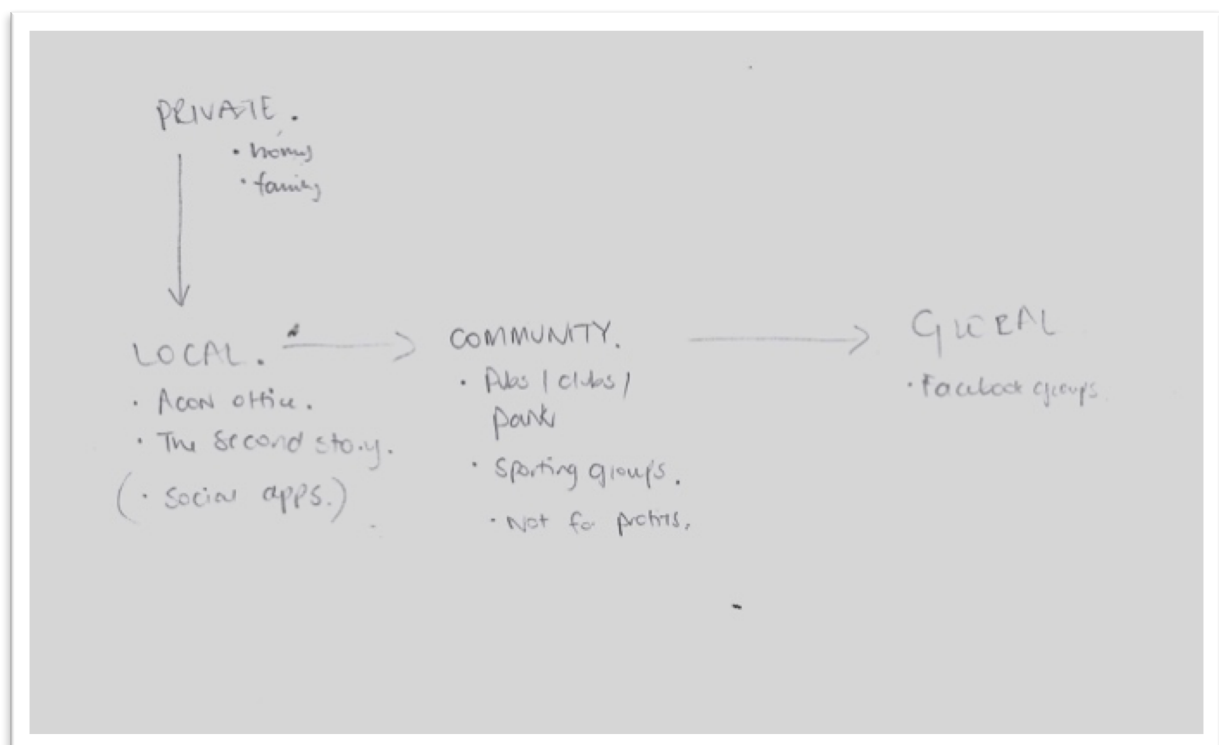


Figure 3: Jeff (25, male, gay)

Thinking infrastructurally, the central question to ask of such maps is, *what affords queer life in Sydney?* What makes it safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable for a sufficient variety of queer lives? Jeff’s map (Figure 3)—one of the two maps taking the form of bulleted lists—is divided into four different sections titled ‘private’, ‘local’, ‘community’, and ‘global’. The

'private', which includes his 'home' and 'family', featured as the starting point from which Jeff made connections, via arrows, to the other three sections, which he positioned alongside one another in a row below the 'private'. The 'local' features Sydney's ACON (AIDS Council of New South Wales) office where he regularly attends a Gay Asian support group; a youth health service organisation he frequented when he was coming out, and where he befriended a counsellor—"probably because he was Asian"—with whom he still keeps in contact today; and social apps, "the kind of geo-locating social apps like Grindr and Scruff." On the level of community, here largely referring to *queer* communities, Jeff mapped 'pubs/clubs/parks', 'sporting groups', and 'not-for-profits'. Facebook, the only item Jeff listed under 'global', allows him to connect with friends who live overseas.

After coming out and having left school and university, Jeff increasingly reached out to queer communities and told me that the friendships he has forged since "tend to be with gay people." He related this shift to the kinds of things he feels comfortable sharing with other queers, such as matters of sexual health, people's views on family and children, or issues to do with "boys," one-night-stands, or, as discussed above, Grindr. "I'm thinking about these two [straight] good girlfriends of mine," he said. "I probably wouldn't talk about many gay issues with them specifically." The fact that 'gay issues' appear awkward, controversial, or at least specialised, rather than ordinary topics of conversation, reflects the ways in which many queers have internalised the heteronormative demand to restrict signs of queer intimacy in social space. This includes avoiding disclosure of more or less banal details about their intimate lives. For the sake of heterosexual comfort, queers are often required to relegate aspects of their lives or identities to *either* private or counterpublic spheres, in which they will not run the risk of making heterosexuals uncomfortable about their contentious intimacies. Ahmed likens this dynamic to forms of 'feeling fetishism', arguing that "some bodies can 'have' comfort, only as an effect of the work of others, where the work itself is concealed from view" (*Emotion* 149). The emotional labour required for the uninterrupted comfort of heterosexuals, this suggests, remains the invisible burden of their queer friends, neighbours, family members, and colleagues. That dynamic, in turn, explains why Jeff has increasingly forged friendships with other queer people and sought to be involved in queer communities, despite the fact that such involvement is far from being exclusively pleasurable for him. Giselle, too, stressed the significance of the company of other queers, recalling a trip to the Blue Mountains, a region west of Sydney, which she affectionately referred to as a 'femme-cation': "It was interesting because we went to a lot of restaurants and cafés and there's a lot of women who are clearly

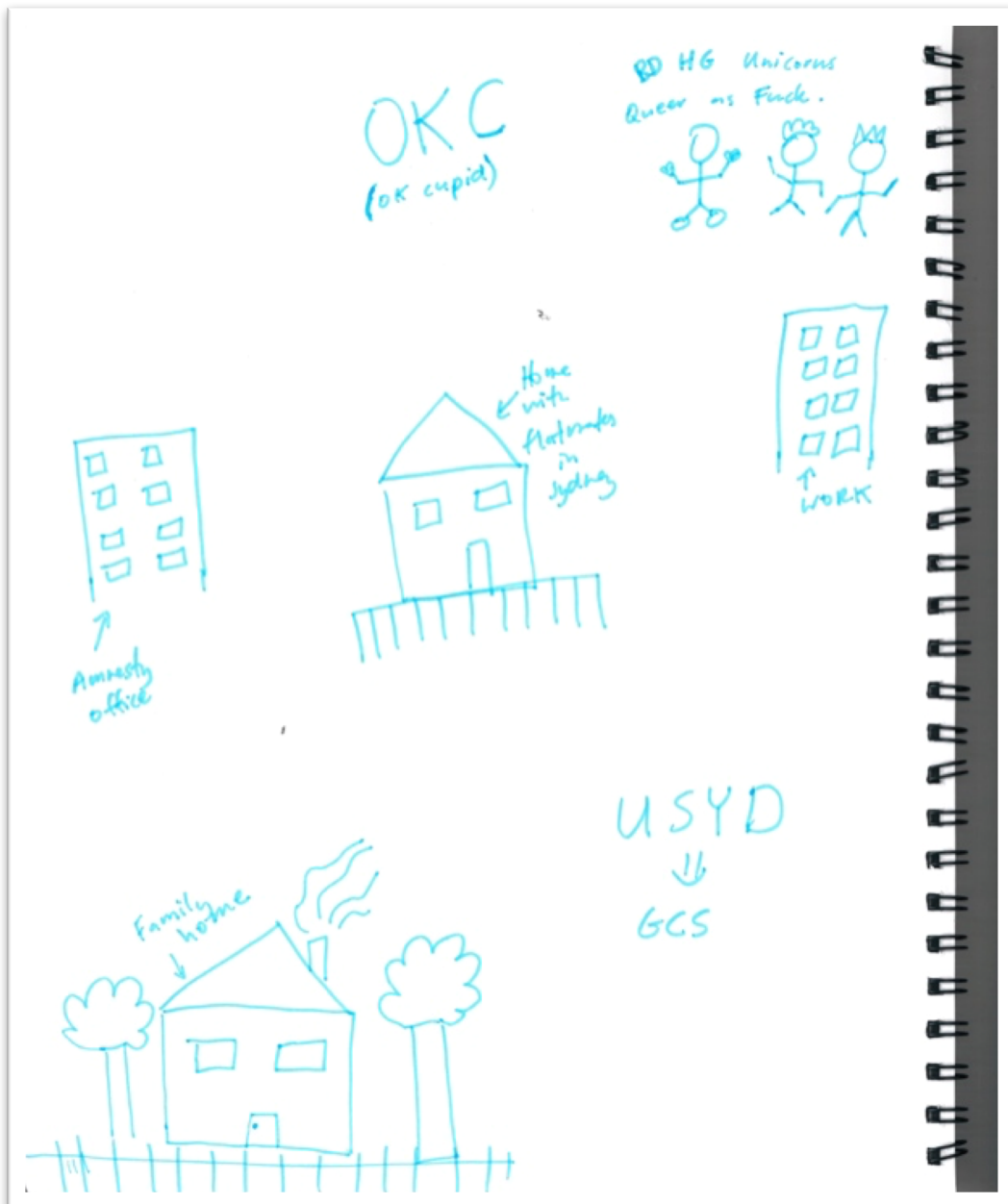


Figure 4: Alex (28, gender-fluid, lesbian)

in same-sex relationships up there.” She remembered how good it felt not to be surrounded by people whose conversations tended to be dominated by topics such as property prices or questions like, “when are we going to have a baby?” For Giselle, being in the company of other femme queer women during this femme-cation meant that she did not have to fragment her different identities as other contexts and people in her life often required: “It was nice to ... feel more whole in a space. I often feel like my various identities are fragmented and not whole in the one space.”

Similarly, Alex (28, gender-fluid, lesbian) said that being around other queer people “is really important for me and for my socialising and who I am.” She compared her identification with queerness to an embodied sense of being a feminist, which tends to register as an integral

part of people who identify as such. “Being queer is a similar thing. It feels like it’s kind of in my bones, part of who I am ... kind of essential to who I am as a person.” Reflecting on the impact of the lockout laws, she noted that “not to be around other queer people or at queer events would probably make me quite depressed. It’s important for my mental health. Yes, that’s probably the best way that I can put it.” The conditional mood of this statement suggests that despite the lockout laws, Alex continued to be able to socialise with other queers at night, though, at times, in a more limited capacity: “I feel like my movements have been more confined ... I like being able to move through party spaces rather than to stay in one place for a whole night,” something the lockout laws made impossible in the inner-city areas after 1:30 a.m., or 2 a.m. in venues who have been granted the relevant extensions.

The importance of queer spaces is also reflected in Alex’s map (Figure 4), which centres around a drawing of the home she shares with her flatmates in Sydney’s inner west. Her home is surrounded by a drawing of her parents’ home, ‘USYD’ (the University of Sydney), a drawing of the office building of her workplace, and of the ‘Amnesty office’ where she goes to volunteer. To signify her attachment to queer party spaces, Alex included drawings of three stick-figures who appear to be dancing as well as the names of three queer parties she regularly attended: ‘HG’ (Heaps Gay), ‘Unicorns’, and ‘Queer as Fuck’. Alex’s map also features a dating app, in this case ‘OKC’ (OkCupid) which, she said, “has led to some lasting friendships with people.”

Echoing Giselle, Jeff, and Alex’s points about the significance of digital spaces, Louise’s (44, femme, queer) map (Figure 5) is a mind-map organised around a large oval shape labelled ‘internet’. “The internet,” she said, “would be a big one,” and it remains the largest feature on her map. To be more specific, she then drew lines to smaller oval shapes labelled ‘Tumblr’, ‘Twitter’, and ‘Facebook’, linking the latter to queer Facebook groups like ‘Club Kooky Veterans’ and ‘Vegans of Sydney’. Here, Louise reflected on the role of the internet in ways that reminded me of Giselle’s account of ‘reconfiguring space’ because these reflections, too, were clearly informed by an awareness of cultural and queer theory. As Louise indicated in a quote cited in chapter three, she started interrogating her own identity, politics, and relationship when she went to university, and the language Louise uses indicates that ‘theory’ plays a big part in how she makes sense of the world. Her map also features an oval shape labelled ‘university’ and her studies came up several times throughout the interview:

I think the internet is a really interesting one. ... I guess Foucault would call it a heterotopia, you know, it’s like a very important kind of meeting ground for all queers. ... I’m not as much on there as I used to be, but I mentioned Tumblr because I think it’s a really good space for young

queer people to kind of hang out. Like there's a lot of young trans and non-binary kids on there.

Louise here echoes some of my earlier arguments about the enduring significance of the internet, particularly for young people, which may indeed be understood as heterotopian. The 'university' is, in turn, linked to an on-campus 'Wom*n's Space', clubs and pubs in nearby-suburbs such as Newtown and Darlinghurst, and also Aotearoa, where she is from and where her mother lives.

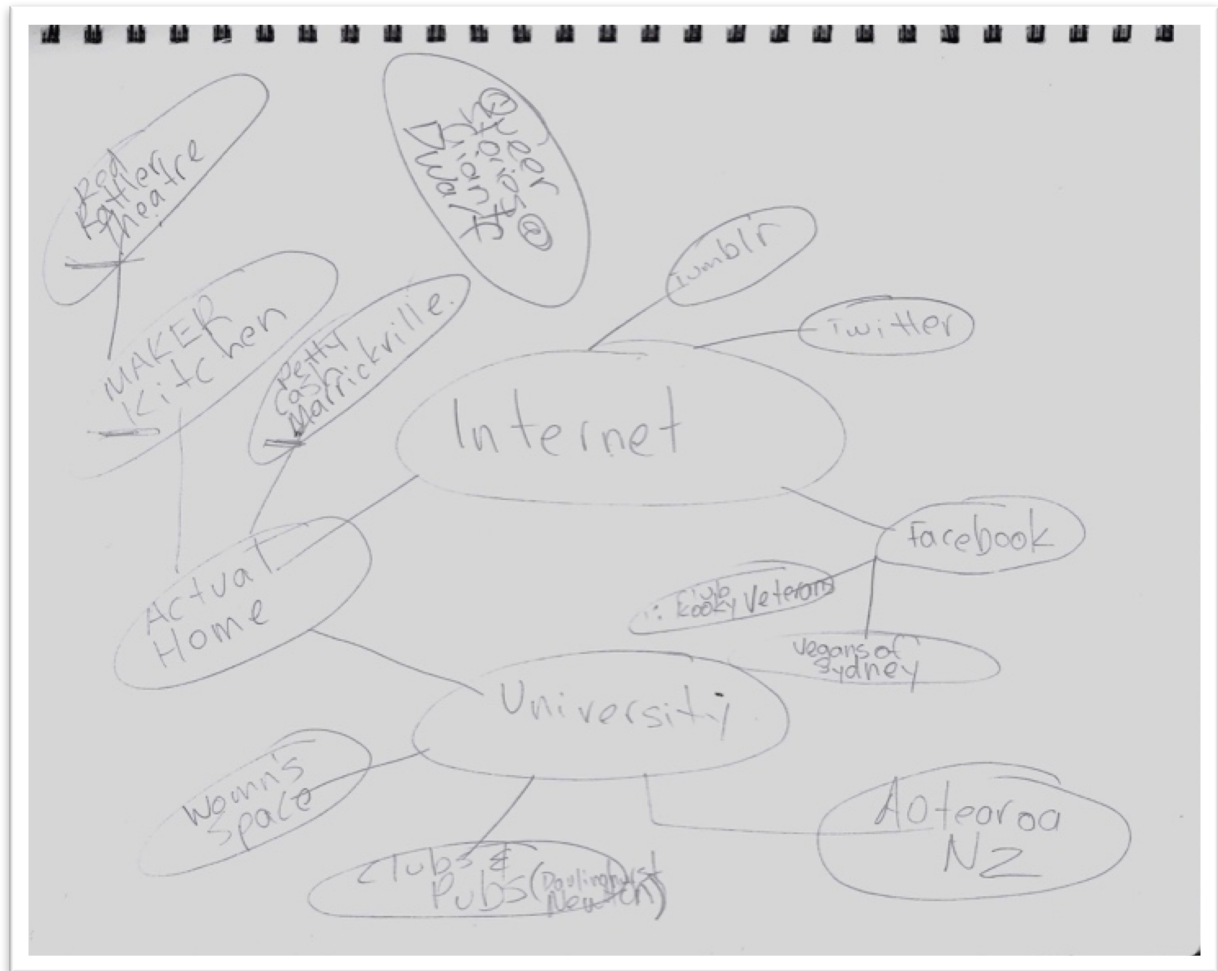


Figure 5: Louise (44, femme, queer)

Louise's map also features her 'actual home' connected, via lines, to a number of queer spaces including MAKER Kitchen, which was a queer vegan café on Parramatta Road in Petersham at the time of our interview and is now a shared commercial kitchen and education space; Petty Cash café, "another good queer space" in Marrickville; as well as the Red Rattler Theatre, "another really queer space." Completing her map, Louise added the Giant Dwarf Theatre to this cluster of queer venues, not because it is known as a queer space per se but because it hosts Queerstories, a monthly queer storytelling night. One of her friends, she told me, was going to perform at the next session. Louise's map thus features not only personal resources, but also maps a queer community semi-formally materialised through a network of

venues and spaces in just the way that critique of the lockout laws might presume required defence. This map includes both spaces Louise frequently goes to but also some that she does not. She has never, for example, herself attended Queerstories, because they sell out every month and she tended to miss out. However, she often listened to the Queerstories podcast and specifically mentioned the stories performed by “celebrity queers” like Benjamin Law and Rebecca Shaw. Shaw, Louise told me, “is always at [Club] Kooky as well”—a queer dance party, running since 1995, which, according to the Club Kooky Veterans Facebook group also included on Louise’s map, features live bands, ‘queerdo’ performance, art installations, ‘freaky’ dancing, dress ups, and good times.

The Giant Dwarf’s appearance on Louise’s map, despite the fact that she has never attended a Queerstories session in person, reminds me of Provencher’s discussion of male cruising sites in Paris, which feature on the spatial imaginings of lesbian participants not because they seek out these cruising spots themselves but because they are such an important part of the gay male experience and, as such, a symbolic space linked to an imagined community (*Queer French* 163). Similarly, the Giant Dwarf’s Queerstories has become a significant event for a particular queer scene, selling out every session since its inception in 2016 and regularly featuring key figures of that scene, such as Johnny Seymour, one of the ‘curators’ of Kooky, or Kate Jones, one of the founders of MAKER Kitchen. Louise’s map thus charts both her own and others’ connections between various queer venues and events whose organisers, founders, and curators frequently collaborate with one another, and she perceives the Giant Dwarf as a significant space for a group of people in whom she is invested and understands herself to be part of. That the scene’s attachment to this venue puts it on Louise’s map indicates that Sydney’s queer community infrastructure is partly visible through identifiable material sites, but also partly invisible insofar as the selection of and connection between these sites relies on advanced knowledge of particular ‘scenes’ or networks.

Louise’s sense of the queer scene largely overlaps with what Giselle described as “the more queer world” of Sydney, and in both accounts is defined in opposition to, or as diverging from, a gay ‘mainstream’ in important and significant ways. Queerstories, for instance, is advertised as an LGBTQI+ storytelling night, which features a diverse line-up of storytellers. What makes the scene set here different from Beresford Sundays is, for example, its interest in providing spaces for political life informed by an awareness of gender, sexuality, race, class, and ability as intersecting categories. In the introduction to a collection of stories from the monthly event, the Queerstories presenter, Maeve Marsden, emphasises it is “a platform for the stories we don’t always hear in the mainstream” (viii). Thus, in preparation for the very

first evening of Queerstories in 2015, Marsden told the storytellers, “don’t tell your coming out story or give a speech about same-sex marriage. Tell the story you share when you aren’t performing for the straight gaze” (viii). This continues to be the ethos of Queerstories. Indeed, the opening sentence to the collection’s synopsis reads, “There’s more to being queer than coming out and getting married.” While the collection actually features one coming-out story by Benjamin Law, the synopsis promises that this collection showcases stories that suit this particular scene’s queer political imperative of “disrupting and reinventing conventional ideas about narrative, family, love and community,” and Marsden pledges to “prioritise the marginalised and outsiders over the status quo” (viii).

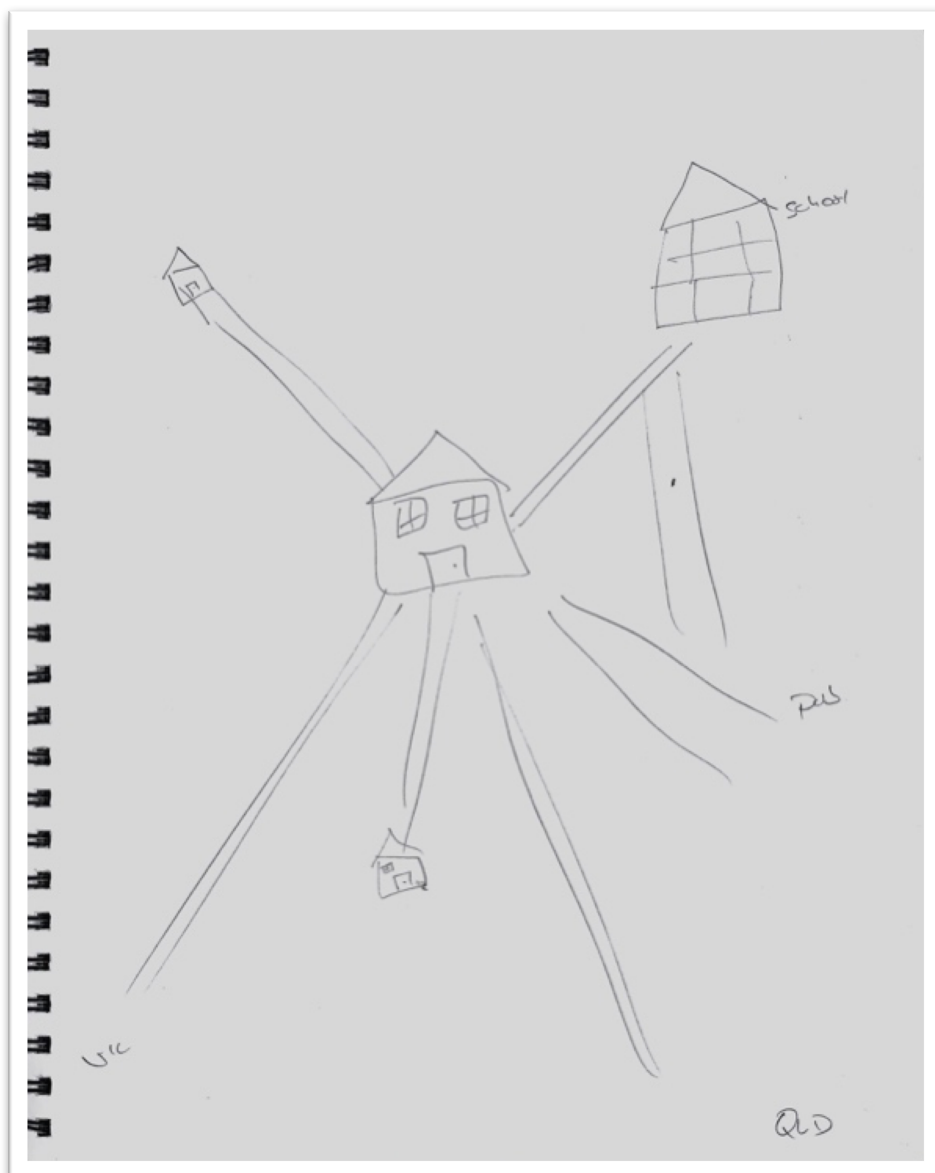


Figure 6: Mark (36, male, gay)

With this imperative in mind and in drawing my discussion of this set of exemplary maps to a close, I want to consider the relationship between queerness and normativity in relation to queer cartography. Upon further reflection about their map, specifically in relation to the broader geography of Sydney, a few participants noted that it looked 'normal' and was not recognisably 'queer'. Indeed, this is true for most maps as they chart participants' relations to spaces and people that are distinctly everyday. Out of the complete sample of fifteen maps, only four include names of venues, events, parties, or organisations that tend to be known as queer or at least queer-friendly and might identify the person who drew it as also queer. Mark (36, male, gay), for instance, described his domestic family, consisting of two parents and two kids, as "boring" because, as he continued to explain, "it's quite standard other than the fact that we're both men." His own map (Figure 6) centres around his home from which he drew paths connecting it to his children's school, the local pub, friends' houses, as well as his and his partner's extended families who live in neighbouring states. When I asked Mark about the friends on his map, he echoed what other participants said about the significance of queer friends: "We have a lot more in common with other LGBTQI people in general and also parents because our kids can play together and it's just easy. At the school, for example, I tend to gravitate mostly towards gay parents." That said, he acknowledged a group of parents who are not gay but very supportive "of our community."

Similar to Mark, whose map centres around the home he shares with his partner and children, more than half of the participants gave a special status to their partner relationships. As discussed above, Giselle's map currently includes a 'house', but she emphasised longing for a strong sense of 'home' and 'family', which did not materialise in her current relationship. Rose's (43, female, lesbian) map (Figure 7), similar to Mark's, also features the home she shares with her partner as the central space around which all other social and spatial relations revolve. Drawn as a circle at the centre of her map, Rose labelled her home as 'super safe' and indicated that, "home for me, primarily, like when someone says the word 'home', it's my house and my backyard and where my partner is." Everything else on her map is drawn in relation to this home. She described the Inner West, where her home was located, as a "larger home," and added that "home is definitely not where I grew up." On her map, Rose and her partner's domestic home is surrounded by friends' houses, drawn as smaller circles and all connected to the centre via equidistant lines. She indicated that these were her "primary" friends, whom she affectionately referred to as her "wheel of support," and drew slightly longer lines connecting her home to her sports club, a "secondary hub" of friends, to the home of a friend and work colleague, and a dotted line connecting her home with her biological family to which

she was “not really close,” emphasising, however, that “none of it’s to do with coming out or anything.” The centrality of the home in this and similar maps, I want to argue, highlights the extent to which the couple form is, for many of these participants, synonymous with safety, comfort, and a sense of home, more so than any other space or relation.

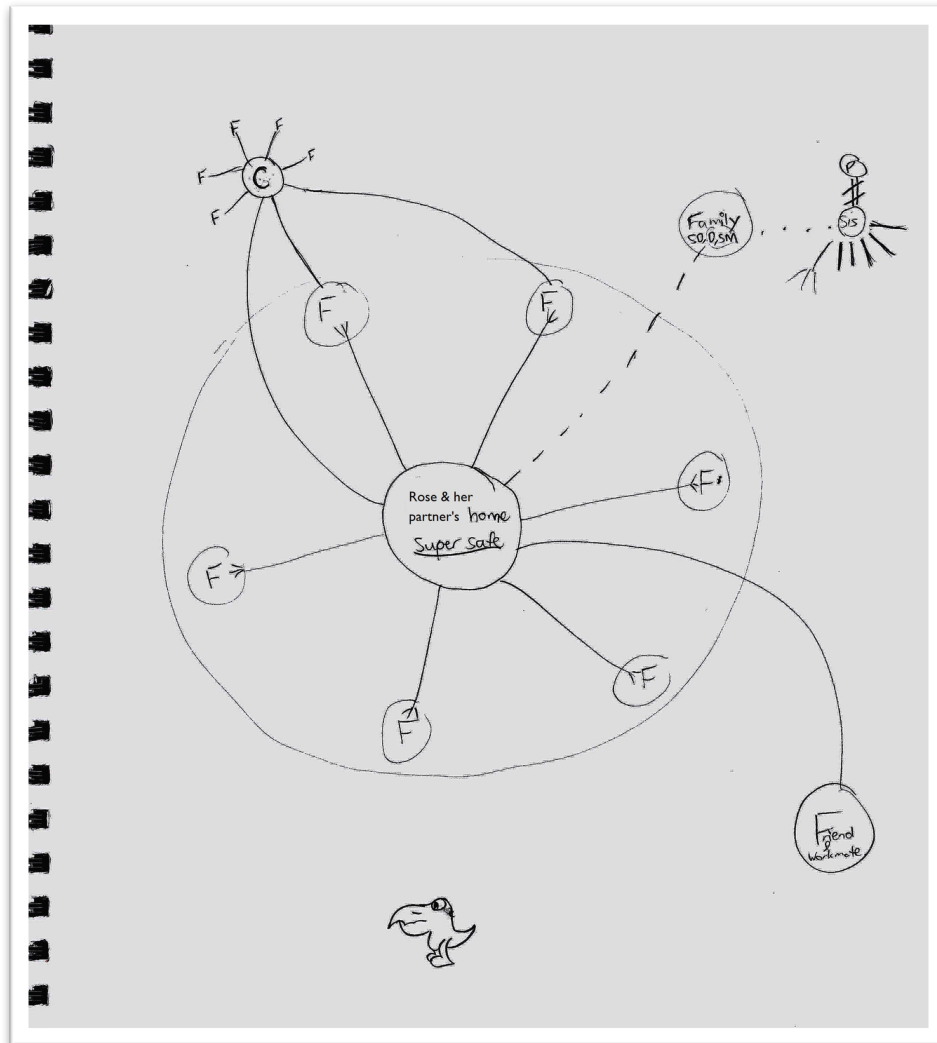


Figure 7: Rose (43, female, lesbian)

There are other participants, like Reese (28, genderqueer, bisexual/queer), whom I cited earlier as not wanting to centre couple relationships in how they go about their day-to-day life as well as in representing it in the form of a map, and who explained this commitment as being “tied to my practice of polyamory or non-monogamy.” Relevant to the commitment to not centre the couple, Reese also shared their experience of attending one of the Yes campaign’s rallies for marriage equality and described feeling

like everybody was putting on their gay face ... [including] all of these otherwise like fairly, you know, really queer and non-binary people [suddenly] invested in wanting to get married. ... Like you’re otherwise wanting to disrupt so many normative ways of being and yet you want—and I know that feels really ungenerous, but I guess there’s a part of me that wonders, I don’t know,

what's that like ... it's bullshit but it's like feeling some sense of like betrayal.

The fact that Reese accounted for these 'disruptive' queers putting on their 'gay faces' (i.e. investing in marriage) as a form of betrayal may be connected to their own difficulties and/or sacrifices involved in grappling with the tension between their queer politics and the commitment to not centre the couple form on the one hand, and their partner's palpably special status on the other. When Reese began drawing their map halfway through our interview, they offered these reflections:

I feel a bit weird but I guess a fairly significant [element] would actually be my partner's [home] and I think I feel strange about that because I, ehm, I feel kind of strange about that because how much it like centres the couple, which is not what I really wanna do, but I guess it is a really significant part of my life.

Providing a space for representing day-to-day lived realities, queer cartography provides further insights into how queer people try to reconcile their intimate lives with what they perceive to be worthwhile or expected political commitments or ways of life. This is also reflected by Mark choosing the descriptor 'boring' (see above) to describe his "quite standard" family. 'Boring' here invokes a model of queer life, which may indeed dismiss a family of two children and two fathers as boring because it renders such a family void of any potential to disrupt heteronormative forms of intimacy as if that were, by default, the political imperative of a queer life. As it foregrounds the *ordinariness* of how these queer people live most of the time—going to work, shopping for groceries, meetings friends for coffee, spending time at home, going for walks, seeing a doctor, being on the phone—the small archive of representations of queer life produced by this exercise clearly differs significantly from the queer project Berlant and Warner imagine and advocate.

Echoing Mark's assessment of his map, Giselle said, "I think if someone looked at this on paper, it would just seem quite normal in the sense that these are spaces that a lot of people would have ... It doesn't look like anything out of the ordinary." In making this point, Giselle also compared her map to her own house, about which she said that "there is nothing, if you come into our house, in terms of an indication of difference necessarily in any way." Elaborating on these reflections, Giselle might be understood as making a many-layered point about the importance *and* difficulty of visibility. On the one hand, her point reflects the homophobic pressures and presence in her and her partner's life, as discussed above. In this respect, visibility is burdensome, difficult, unpredictable, or even dangerous. On the other hand, it is important to Giselle that her life is not misread as 'straight' because it involves attachments, which might not necessarily be readable as 'queer'. Paraphrasing Ahmed, the

maps produced by these participants indicate that a model of queer life, which always already excludes normative attachments, fails people like Giselle and her partner whose day-to-day lives may not “support the ‘risk’ of maintaining anti-normativity as a permanent orientation” (*Emotion* 152). More generally, such an orientation requires not only an understanding or know-how of anti-normativity, but also resources to facilitate a lifestyle that involves paying rent in the right kind of suburb as well as regularly paying for things like clothes, alcohol or other drugs, transportation, or tickets to the right parties.

Further, such a model of queer life also fails to fully acknowledge the complexities of proximity between queer and heterosexual cultures. What is frequently dismissed as evidence of queer assimilation or normalisation—such as the couple form, marriage, domesticity, nuclear families—might, in the concrete, unsettle heterosexual ideals. Mark and his partner, while unable to inhabit the heterosexual ideal of mother and father, take up the social position of parents so fully that their inhabitation of those roles has become “boring.” They negotiate with other parents, teachers, schools, and local communities in an everyday way, which suggests they may thereby rework the dominant script of family life. This is not to attach a political imperative to rework ‘the family’ on behalf of queer parenting, which would not itself be everyday, but rather to complicate the idea that ordinariness is only ever assimilatory in the sense of being unproductive, passive, or stagnant. In fact, for Ahmed, “the closer that queer subjects get to the spaces defined by heteronormativity the more *potential* there is for a reworking of the heteronormative, partly as the proximity ‘shows’ how the spaces extend some bodies rather than others” (*Emotion* 152). The day-to-day visibility of encounters with queers, in other words, may unsettle the public comfort afforded to heterosexuals by heteronormativity. Such proximity may open up space for uncertainties about what, for instance, ‘the family’ might be.

In hindsight, Wren’s (30, agender/transmasculine, pan-/bisexual/sexually queer) response to my routine question about why they decided to participate in this study, which was framed as addressing the cultural infrastructure of queer lives in the context of debates about same-sex marriage, the lockout laws, and the defunding of the Safe Schools programme, seems particularly telling. They replied:

The reason I think your project resonates with me more now is probably less to do with looking backwards and more [to do with] looking forward. Like, looking at the kind of life that I want to lead and the kinds of queer homes and family spaces that I want to be cultivating and how to go about doing that and what does that look like.

Although all participants, including Wren, had something to say about how the above debates and policies affected their own and/or other queer people's lives, they were all also imagining a future life. The mapping exercise thus afforded deeper insights into what McGlotten calls the 'affective ordinariness' of LGBT existence than my questions about the limitations imposed by policy and legal changes.

The mapping exercise and the verbal interview, as complementary components of this research, together privilege feelings of (un)belonging, solidarity, hope, optimism, shame, and exhaustion as defining these participants' experiences of shared social realities. A primary focus on the systemic effects of regulatory interventions, in turn, can only partially describe the affective infrastructures of queer lives. In contrast to what Provencher would call a "canonical model" (*Queer French* 164) of gay Sydney, the various geographies charted by the participants in this research may be understood as subjective representations of diverse socio-spatial clusters or, what Ghaziani calls, "cultural archipelagos" (4). Rather than manifesting a demise of the gayborhood, these maps point to a diversification and pluralisation of spatial expressions of queer existence and complicate models of queer life that posit assimilation and transgression as oppositional *choices*.

Conclusion

On the significance of the queer ordinary

This thesis has mapped the everyday infrastructural inventory of spaces, objects, relations, and practices queer people and communities draw on as they navigate forms of governance and social regulation in contemporary Sydney. To this end, in chapter two, I assessed the Sydney lockdown laws' impact on queer party cultures alongside the changing spatiality of queer life in the city. In chapter three, I considered debates about the legalisation of same-sex marriage in the specific context of the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey with reference to what same-sex marriage is understood to offer and challenge; and, relatedly, analysed new forms of heteroactivist resistance articulated particularly around young people's access to sexual knowledge. Rather than accounting for these policies, debates, and discourses in terms of reductive power/resistance, straight/queer, or normative/transgressive dichotomies, I have aimed in this thesis to shift attention to the more concrete and complex operations of forms of governance in everyday life in both these cases.

In shifting attention to the everyday infrastructure sustaining queer lives, this research is about empirical rather than imagined or idealised lives of non-heterosexuals—about “the real complexity of actual [everyday] situations”—exemplifying why, as Heather Love puts it, the queer ordinary offers “an important challenge to theory” (Love and Peltonen 4). The queer lives under discussion in this thesis are not examples of resistance or precarity but examples of ‘doing being ordinary’. Emphasizing the ordinariness of everyday queer life in this way affords an opportunity for reparative analyses of the queer encounter with forms of governance, and this also attends to how queer people build *affirmative* relations to the social despite and/or because of sometimes adverse circumstances. In other words, there is a lot more going on in everyday encounters with forms of social regulation that the binary thinking characteristic of paranoid reading cannot capture. As such, the queer ordinary offers an empirical challenge to queer theory's certainties about the relationship between ‘normal’ culture and contemporary queer existence. Attending to how queer people are actively involved in creating the

conditions of their lives complicates neat and tidy analyses of the negative impacts of social regulation.

Love discusses Bruno Latour's work—which I also referred to in my introduction—as a model for “a more positive account of how the world is made, how it works” (Love and Peltonen 1). Following Latour and Love's challenges, I have attempted to avoid appeals to social domination, which run the risk of *using* power without carefully (by which Latour means empirically) *explaining* it (Latour ANT 85). I have prioritised the multiplicity of objects, relations, and dispersed effects of power over a focus on abstract conceptions of domination, and in this respect also offered a critique of the dominant mode of queer theory's certainty about the regimenting force of normativity. Where queer scholarship is understood as an activist form of critical, anti-homophobic inquiry oriented toward social transformation, offering a critique of politics through an engagement with queer everyday life that does not prioritise distinctly non-complicit, radical modes of existence might seem ineffective or weak. Yet what is at stake in focusing on the everyday is the important question of how, practically, queer people produce positive connections of belonging and validation, find sources of comfort and solidarity, and create opportunities for happiness in their lives. The everyday enables queer people to develop affirmative social relations even where political realities may appear to obstruct them. The everyday is both the site on which, and the means by which, queers draw, affirm, and build the infrastructures that sustain their lives. In framing this conclusion as a reflection on the significance of the queer ordinary, I will draw particularly on Kathleen Stewart's concluding remarks in her book *Ordinary Affects*. Here, Stewart interprets the everyday phrase, “I could write a book,” as a moment when people gesture toward the cluster of “stories, substories, tangles of association, accrued layers of impact and reaction” that characterise their everyday lives (129). We know that people who use this phrase do not routinely intend to write a book but, rather, are alluding to the rich inventory of feelings, memories, and relations which make life significant—which make a life add up to something of significance. The queer ordinary is to signify similarly here.

We can measure the impact of the lockout laws with reference to the number of bars that closed following their introduction; by considering their effectiveness in reducing recorded violent incidents; or by assessing their role in further driving up residential real estate prices in inner-city areas, including the gaybourhood. Similarly, we can ask what it means that almost 40 per cent of eligible Australians voted against the legalisation of same-sex marriage in the postal survey, including by mapping where the No vote clustered; measure the survey's impact with statistical data about levels of psychological distress for queer people associated

with increased exposure to negative representations of them; consider the potential harms of the Religious Freedom Bill for non-heterosexuals; or attempt to quantify the continued resistance to young people's access to sexual knowledge through rhetorical campaigns associating this with sexual and gender 'deviance'. However, the everyday lived experience of governance and social regulation and people's various attachments to party cultures, queer spaces, gaybourhoods, family life, or marriage are much messier, uneven, optimistic, and hopeful than such statistics and questions could capture. In fact, such an approach to researching the realities of contemporary queer lives echoes the 'repressive hypothesis' implicit in antinormative stances, as it assumes sexuality to be, first and foremost, restrained by repressive legal and social infrastructures (Foucault *History* 10-11; Wiegman and Wilson 13).

The relevant 'accrued layers of impact and reaction' for each of these sets of questions are more effectively observed in stories about everyday life. While interviews and cartographic mapping techniques lend themselves well to studying day-to-day practices and experiences, we can see the everyday manifest in other projects as well. The selection of stories published as *Going Postal*, for example, collects a wide range of queer experiences of being and feeling under attack during the same-sex marriage postal survey period. Yet these stories are also about solidarity, community, activism, and care. "There are moments of beauty under pressure," writes satirist and drag queen Simon Hunt in the foreword, "that enable us to move ahead" (ii-iii). These are moments of hope and optimism in which queer people "find solace in love from others" (ii).

The queer ordinary is also the site of that which Lauren Berlant mocks as 'the good life', the "inherited fantasy" of a certain kind of life we attach to because of the promises we believe it will deliver (*Cruel Optimism* 31). This fantasy manifests in the optimism of an attachment—to people, places, things, or norms—which Berlant describes as cruel when at once "profoundly confirming" and an impediment to attaining "the expansive transformation for which a person or a people risks striving" (*Cruel Optimism* 2). Berlant finds archetypal examples of this "cruel optimism" in people's attachments to "conventional good-life fantasies," such as romantic love, the couple, or the family (3). *Cruel Optimism* thus echoes what we might call the 'ethics' of the queer project Berlant and Warner imagined and advocated before the turn of the century. Such attachments to good-life fantasies are relations of cruel optimism not only because there is ample evidence of those fantasies wearing us out, but also because these 'normal', 'conventional', or 'complicit' practices and relations to which people attach optimistically are not what Berlant thinks is needed to advance expansive

political, social, cultural, and economic transformation. Framing optimism as cruel, to paraphrase Kath Albury (who here advocates reparative critical models for feminist porn studies), is to reject in advance any ordinary or 'normative' attachment "that offers less than complete social change" (650). Even if we are certain that forms of social regulation, dominant norms, or 'national heterosexuality' *can* wear out queer people and communities, what does such a reading of contemporary queer life tell us that we do not already know (see Sedgwick 124)? Inspired by my interviewees, I aimed to offer a different queer reading and resist the idea that good-life fantasies necessarily impede cultural change or queer people's flourishing. I want instead to recover optimism and optimistic attachments to the normal, the everyday, the ordinary as positive and enabling social forces.

While recognising the value in studying sexual cultures and sexual politics critically, this thesis responds to sustained calls to "move away from placing 'the normative' at the centre of 'queer' critique" to account for the plurality of intimacies and spatialities characteristic of contemporary queer existence (G. Brown "Queer City" 66). This means interrogating 'queer' spaces and communities for their own processes of establishing and affirming normative ways to *be* and *do* queer, and it also means interrogating queer critical habits for their complicity in the same racialized and classed hierarchies and in "redrawing the boundaries of 'the charmed circle' of sexuality in contemporary society" ("Queer City" 66; see also Oswin "Critical Geographies" 91). Queer cultures, as much as queer theory, tend to construct good (transgressive) and bad (normative) queers where 'the normative' remains the main object of both queer critique and to a significant degree the relative object of queer identification. Gavin Brown's argument that queer critique redraws the boundaries of 'the charmed circle' of sexuality (see Rubin 152) both highlights the way sexuality is sectioned off as its own coherent and specialised activity, and points to the ways in which non-heterosexuals often end up being placed on a hierarchy of queerness where they may fail the test of being queer enough to count. It seems politically as well as culturally imperative, however, that queer people are not required to pursue only authorised modes of living queer lives, regardless of what their circumstances afford, or risk being dismissed as not "useful" for queer futures (Oswin "Radical Geographies" 85). Indeed, as I have pointed out in chapter four, the imperative to always resist and oppose what gives comfort and pleasure if it seems continuous with ideas about heterosexual lives also fails to acknowledge the potential for rupture when queer people are intimately entangled with 'the good life', "partly as the proximity 'shows' how the spaces [of heteronormativity] extend some bodies rather than others" (Ahmed *Emotion* 152).

In reaching my conclusion to this thesis, I want to consider two representations of queer life from outside my empirical research. These examples look very different for a queer perspective that decentres ‘the normative’ or ‘normal’ life as its privileged object of critique, or which is attentive to the everyday attachments to and imbrications with ‘the normal’ that characterises non-heterosexual people’s lives. These examples are creative projects which, whether intentionally or not, show what it may mean or look like to do the work of recovering the normal for queer life.



Figure 8: *Lesbian Land* by Leah DeVun, Chromira print, 40" x 30", 2010, www.leahdevun.com/photographs

The first example is a photograph by artist and historian Leah DeVun, which formed part of an exhibition at the Women & Their Work visual and performing arts gallery in Austin, Texas in 2010. Entitled *Our Hands On Each Other*, the exhibition featured photographs of young women in the woods as well as of landscapes of buildings and shacks built by lesbian separatists

living in intentional feminist communities visited by DeVun. *Lesbian Land* (Figure 8) pictures the inside of one of those shacks. The viewer is positioned in front of a round dining table, covered with a light-blue table cloth, fresh flowers, a salt shaker, a jar of cutlery, and a still steaming plate of what appears to be scrambled eggs and rice positioned in front of the one chair at the table. The table is positioned in a corner, flanked by two windows through which we can perceive tree trunks, bushes, and one or two caravans. Without knowing the context or title of this photograph, it captures a very mundane moment in someone's everyday life. Beyond what is pictured, we might imagine the sound of a ticking clock amidst the silence of the woods, expect a routine of cleaning and dishwashing to ensue after the meal, picture a person living here stepping out to seek the company of other community members, and presume a sense of comfort, belonging, boredom, joy, or loneliness that someone living here might feel. Only the rainbow-colored, upside-down triangle hanging in one window suggests that a person here could be queer.

One way of looking at this photograph is, of course, as an artwork featured in an exhibition about intentional feminist communities. As such, writes art historian Andy Campbell, it may be read as paying homage to the radical and transgressive lineage of queer communities and the efforts of lesbian separatists to leave patriarchal systems to establish woman-centric communities (Campbell). Another way of looking at this photograph, however, is to focus more intently on its content. As a documentary photograph, *Lesbian Land* captures one of those everyday scenes, “through/in which,” as Stevi Jackson insists, “most people live their lives” (Jackson 34). Queer people's sexuality, here signified by the rainbow triangle, may be visible and significant in the everyday to different degrees from different perspectives, but it alone does not define how queer people choose to organise their intimate lives. Perhaps every resident in this intentional feminist community was a lesbian (or perhaps not), but this *alone* does not determine where they choose to live at a given point in their life, whether or not they have or form an attachment to the idea of married life, whether or not they have a desire or need to be seen as ‘just like any other family’, or whether or not they like eggs and rice for breakfast. From this perspective, *Lesbian Land* conveys, first and foremost, the ordinariness of the life it captures—including the ordinariness of queer life.

Another example that may serve to reinforce this point about queer attachments to and imbrications with ‘normal’ life is the digital archive of queer memories, stories, moments, and histories offered by *Queering the Map* (Figure 9). Launched in May 2017, this website allows anonymous users to drop pins anywhere on a map of the world and to attach a note to a given location. Lucas LaRochelle, the creator of *Queering the Map*, describes it as “a community

generated digital counter-mapping project” (LaRochelle 255). LaRochelle understands queer spaces as “produced through the actions of queer bodies resisting or even simply existing in the face of dominant power structures” and conceived *Queering the Map* as a spectacular new view of the world—the *queer* view of the world (255). This map records and remembers queer moments and encounters, and on this map, LaRochelle suggests, spaces and places can take on alternative significance. This project fulfils queer theory’s interests in the queer extraordinary and an alternative, often resistant, ‘world-making project’: “The intent ... is to ‘queer’ as much space as possible from park benches to parking garages, to mark moments of queerness wherever they occur” (LaRochelle qtd. in Echenique and Boone). Nevertheless, many of the contributions offered on *Queering the Map* also document rather ordinary scenes, moments, and memories.

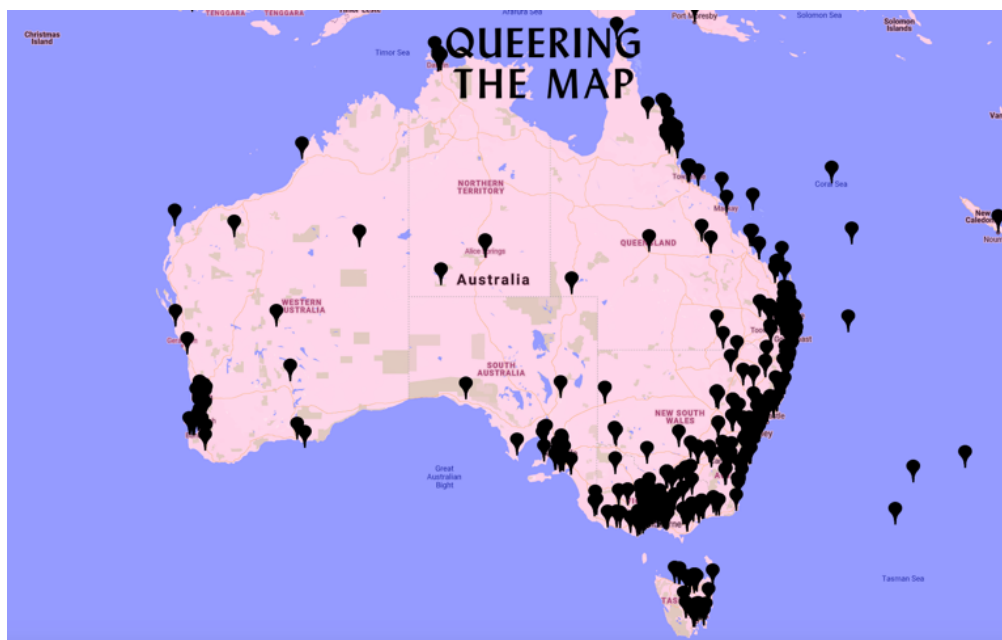


Figure 9: Queering the Map, overview of Australia, www.queeringthemap.com

I will conclude by focusing on just one plot point from this vast archive of queer representations. The ‘queer’ moment in question (Figure 10) occurred in a place called Burra, a locality of rural smallholdings in New South Wales with a population of 794 people, approximately 300 kilometres southwest of Sydney: “My dad and I taught my partner to drive in my late grandpa’s red 1980 subaru ute on my family’s farm,” this memory reads. This ‘queer’ moment remembered here no doubt describes an ‘intimate’ scene as it references, to speak with Berlant, “kinds of connections that *impact* on people, and on which they depend for living” (“Intimacy” 284). Berlant states a preference for intimate connections, which do not “respect the predictable forms” (284) or emulate the “‘expressive’ relations” promoted by normative ideologies, such as “love, community [and] patriotism” (285). I, however, follow McGlotten in

working toward “recuperating ‘positive’ affects” (48) by treating optimistic and hopeful attachments to cultural infrastructures, such as the couple, the family, marriage, or the home as enabling: “Optimism and hopefulness, or pleasure and joy,” McGlotten argues, “aren’t only cruelly permitted or enforced by religious, political, or economic hegemonies, but are sincerely employed and lived” (McGlotten 48). I am highlighting this particular moment because it demonstrates that Berlant’s cynicism about romantic love and the family cannot acknowledge the importance of optimism and hope as necessary and stabilising personal and social resources. Irrespective of the future of the relationships invoked in this memory, its significance cannot be invalidated, and its recording here suggests an everyday world-making terrain of such moments.

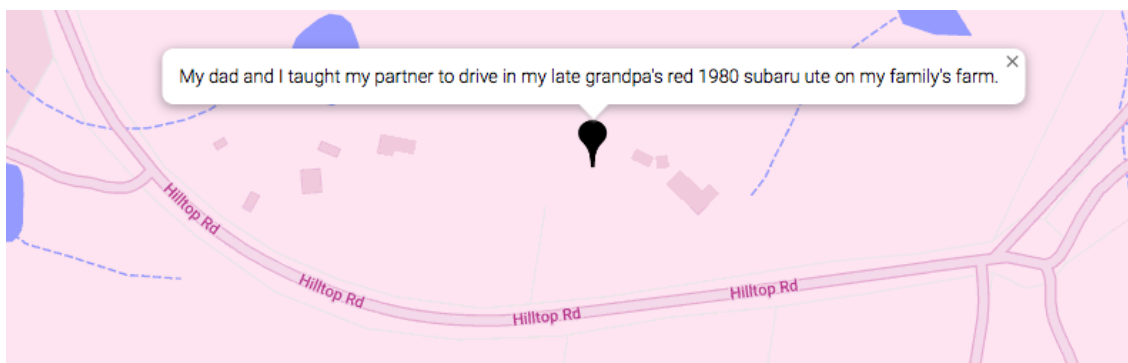


Figure 10: Queering the Map, Hilltop Rd, Burra, NSW, www.queeringthemap.com

Revolving around a father teaching their non-heterosexual child’s partner how to drive a car, the memory at hand describes an ordinary facet of coming-of-age. And yet while driving a car from one place to another—much like the practice of walking in the city—is distinctly everyday, this moment is no less important or valued but bestowed with significance and, indeed, cherished. Details, such as the fact that the partner is learning to drive on the family farm (Figure 11) and in a red 1980 Subaru ute that belonged to the author’s late grandfather, are deliberately included to signify a folding in of the partner into this family’s history, home, and geography. The father teaching their child’s partner how to drive in this specific car and in this specific place symbolically affirms this non-heterosexual relationship and intertwines it with generational narratives, though without forcefully or ‘cruelly’ demanding alignment or assimilation to such narratives.

Queer scholarship, which places the ostensibly overdetermining social and political force of ‘the normative’ at the centre of its critique, to paraphrase Brown, leaves little room for attending to the positive affects (of affirmative and sustaining experiences like this memory) as well as to the diversity of queer lives and locations (“Queer City” 66). *Queering the Map*,

especially taken alongside *Lesbian Land*, also illustrates the argument I make in the second chapter about the dispersed nature of queer life beyond gaybourhoods. *Queering the Map* shows that queer lives and the infrastructures that sustain them are not bound to specific urban locations. Instead, the environments in which we live, to paraphrase Kath Browne, “are reused, found, and occupied well beyond the heterosexual, male/female norms that are built into [them]” (“Making Place” 23). Indeed, *Queering the Map* as well as the space of the art gallery exhibiting DeVun’s work offer alternative infrastructures for articulating queer lives within and across the divide between ostensibly queer-friendly spaces and the places of ordinary (queer) life. The memory of driving in Burra is but one of many examples calling into question the sexual geography invoked by the ‘gay imaginary’ (Weston). Rather than being an undifferentiated ‘elsewhere’ to a supposedly queer-friendly urban centre, queers can find a proper home in Burra.



Figure 11: Queering the Map, Street View of Hilltop Rd, Burra, NSW (facing west), www.queeringthemap.com

What is at stake in noticing ordinariness when looking at *Lesbian Land* and at *Queering the Map* as well as my interviews and people’s maps? The participants in my research would generally fail Berlant and Warner’s test of being properly queer because their lives are not permanently animated by a political imperative of resistance and, indeed, sometimes indifferent to transgression. In practice, people relate to transgression, as an aspiration or as an exclusion, in very different ways. Some queer-identified people certainly are very invested in a positive relation to transgression. But it is crucial to notice how that investment is enabled by what

those people's everyday infrastructures afford. Noticing ordinariness in the two examples I have foregrounded in these concluding remarks, as well as in the interviews and maps produced by participants in my research, requires making room for forms of life that are not reducible to a single opposition between conformity and critique. These examples and the findings of my fieldwork cannot be accounted for by a model of queer life, which constructs all experiences of being unremarkable as an inevitable impediment to our flourishing based on an understanding of the 'normal' as static and thus not allowing for transformation. With this in mind, this thesis is both an argument for and an example of what may be gained from a mode of scholarly attention, which attends more centrally to and recovers the inherently productive and sustaining relations and practices of living an ordinary queer life.

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