Selling My Queer Soul or Queerly Quantitative Research?

by Kath Browne
University of Brighton

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Abstract

Sexualities research is increasingly gaining prominence within, and outside, of academia. This paper will use queer understandings to explore the contingent (re)formation of quantitative data, particularly those that seek to gain insights into Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans populations and lifestyles. I use queer critiques to explore the creation and normalising impulses of quantitative sexualities research and argue that research that addresses 'deviant'/other/(homo)sexualities brings categories (mainly lesbian and gay) into being. Using three key research events from a large scale quantitative research study of 7,212 respondents, 'Do it with Pride', the paper examines the (re)formation of quantitative research between researchers, respondents and the questionnaire. In particular the paper: reveals the contingency of research design by discussing the exclusion of the term 'queer' from the research design, and then questions categories of sexualities as fixed variables by examining; the piloting of a non-normative gender question, and the re-coding of sexuality categories in the analysis phase. This points to the (re)creation of research categories that are not simply instruments of measurements but are actively engaged in the (re)construction of sexualities (including but not limited to sexualities research) within normative frames. The paper finishes by taking this queer critique in a different direction juxtaposing the apparently stable products of quantitative research (questionnaires and reports) with an examination of the transgressive potentials of queer moments in (re)making such research.

Keywords: Research Methods, Quantitative, Queer, Lesbian, Gay, Gender, LGBT

Introduction

1.1 There is an increasing desire to know about the demographics of gay (and increasingly lesbian) populations. This can be evidenced by the media coverage and academic attention paid to statistical data which seeks to measure and account for 'deviant'/other/(homo)sexualities, but mainly targets lesbian and gay populations in 'the West'^[1]. Combined with this is the explosion and proliferation since the 1990s of health studies regarding sex - sexual behaviours and sexual activities- particularly (but not exclusively) amongst gay men, bisexual men, and men who have sex with men (a very small sample includes, Chen et

al., 2002; Del Casino, 2007; Jewitt, 1997; Kesteren et al., 2007; <http://www.sigmaresearch.org.uk/>). Moreover, with buzz words such as 'diversity', 'equality' and 'inclusion/exclusion' gaining popular currency and economic backing in particular cultural contexts such as the UK, the (exotic) 'sexiness' of studying lesbian and gay (sic) populations is clear. The recent proliferation of studies that explore gay (and increasingly lesbian) sexualities in once hostile disciplines and subject fields testify to the partial 'mainstreaming' of this once taboo subject (Hubbard, 2002; Smith and Holt, 2005; see also Bell, 1991; 2007; Binnie, 1997; Browne *et al.*, 2007; Hubbard, 2007). Perhaps more indicative of the appeal of sexualities research is the sporadic, yet increasing, recognition of (homo)sexuality as a salient category of difference. However, in paying attention to 'gay', and 'lesbian' lives, lifestyles, markets, holiday destinations and 'scenes' particular commonalities, or at least collectivities, are often assumed (see for example Hughes, 2002a, b; Pritchard et al, 1998; Valentine *et al.*, 2003)^[2]. Following from this, there is a related assumption, (that can implicate all sexualities and often goes unquestioned) of a pre-given identity/lifestyle/behaviour that can be (objectively) measured and (statistically) studied^[3]. This paper begins discussions of how such sexualities research (re)creates (rather than objectively measures) identities and categories.

1.2 Badgett (2003) explores the problems of undertaking quantitative research with lesbian and gay individuals, including accessing these groups and the problems of 'hidden populations' (see also Browne, 2005; Faugier and Sargenat, 1997). Although interesting, questions that relate to 'accessing' LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans) populations and undertaking research with LGBT individuals and groups have yet to be addressed in depth. Here I am interested in how, through the processes of quantitative research, categories of sexualities come to be (re)created. Thus, I will draw on contemporary queer epistemologies to explore the construction of the assumed, and seemingly fixed, categories that are often deployed in measuring sexualities^[4]. In seeking to disentangle sex, gender and sexuality, these epistemologies point to the (im)possibilities of measuring plural, fluid and contingent identities, by exposing how these are always becoming (in this context, through research practices and interactions)^[5]. My purpose is to reveal both the constructedness of questions that ask for sexual and gender identities within the tick-box frameworks necessary for large scale quantitative research and how these processes reproduce the identities they supposedly 'measure'. By exploring quantitative research in this way, I challenge the uncritical use of sexual identity/orientation/behavioural categories and their reproduction in a proliferating variety of disciplines and subject fields.

1.3 This research I will draw on in this paper consisted of a tick box questionnaire with 7,210 responses conducted during the park aspect of Pride in Brighton & Hove in 2004^[6]. Following a brief outline of the queer epistemological frame I will deploy in this paper, I will outline how this research was constructed. I will then seek to reveal the contingency of research design, the production of questions and the (re)categorisation of 'statistical significant' categories. Queer theorisations are useful, not only in exploring the normativity of categorisation, but also in allowing for the possibilities of 'queering' moments (see Seidman, 1997), such that disjunctures are not necessarily lost in the linear narratives of research design, categorisation and 'finished' products. The paper, in its afterword, will look briefly at such queering moments in this research process, and use this to challenge the main focus of many discussions of research design, deployment and outcomes.

Queer theory and methodologies

2.1 Despite the proliferation of literature in both queer theory and social research methods, there remains a dearth of enquiry that addresses the implications of queer research in understanding social research methods. Here I will not engage in extended discussions of the nuances of queer theories (see Browne, 2006, Browne et al., 2007; Oswin, 2007), or address the vast literature regarding social research methods. Nor could I possibly address the multitude of possibilities that an extensive discussions of the intersections between queer theories and social research could enable. Rather, I seek to highlight some of the deconstructive potentialities (and limitations) of queer epistemological engagement with sexualities in relation to quantitative social research methods that address LGBT populations.

2.2 The development of queer within, and beyond, lesbian and gay studies has nuanced and complex intellectual histories (see Ahmed, 2004; Corber and Valocchi, 2003; Green, 2002; Halberstam, 2005; Valocchi, 2005). Although 'queer' is a contested term (Luibhéid and Cantú, 2005), recent queer theories/theorists have rendered categories of sexuality and gender fluid (Knopp and Brown, 2003). Despite the use of 'queer' as shorthand for lesbian, gay, bisexual and, at times, trans (LGBT) people and communities, queer theory is interested in 'non-normative forms of identity or forms in which sex, gender and sexuality do not line up in the socially proscribed way' (Corber and Valocchi 2003, 1). Therefore, lesbian and gay studies do not necessarily 'equal queer theory' (Giffney, 2004, 73). Gay and lesbian identities, lives, politics and practices can be used to hierarchise particular forms of (homo)sexuality so that the 'deviant other' can no longer be simplistically located in the heterosexual/homosexual divide (see Bell and Binnie, 2000; Halberstam, 2003; 2005; Davis, 2005). 'Queer' can also include those who identify as heterosexual; as Davis argues, it is the 'refusal of queer culture to draw distinct boundaries around who qualifies and who doesn't that most radically separates it from heterosexual and homosexual culture' (Davis, 2005, 23). In this way it can be argued that queer theories and politics intend to expose normalising practices and politics in both straight *and* gay and lesbian mainstreams (Seidman, 1997, 140). This paper develops this discussion by considering how these categories come to take shape and become normalised.

2.3 If we take contemporary queer theorisations in part to mean the exploration of fluidity pertaining to gender and sexuality of embodiment and identities, then studies that (perhaps necessarily) (re)create categories of gender and sexuality, in order to examine spatial manifestations and contestations may not be 'queer' (see for example Castells, 1983). Moreover, if we understand 'queer' as the mode of inquiry and politics that seek to contest normalisations (Browne, 2006; Davis, 2005; Giffney, 2004; Halberstam, 2005), then the desire to render gender, sexualities and other identities and embodiment as fluid can be seen as a contemporary manifestation of this epistemology. It is in the (current) moment where categories of sexualities and gender are being contested, and their contingency revealed, that I place this paper, recognising the limits of this temporality.

2.4 This is only one aspect of contemporary queer theorisations, yet it is productive to explore the practices of research using this aspect of queer epistemologies. Empirical work in queer theory has focused on qualitative inquiry and research, which enables the exploration of difference and the contestation of rigid categories. Valocchi (2005, 751) argues that queer insights are significant and that we must find ways 'to make these insights amenable to empirical analysis'. Whilst textual and discourse analysis form the majority of this area of inquiry, Valocchi (2005, 763) contends that ethnography can examine 'incoherencies and ambivalences' central to queer understandings. In this vein, social research, using participant observation, interviews and qualitative questionnaires, has been undertaken using queer theories to investigate the fluid construction of bodies and spaces (see for example Brown, 2004; Browne, 2004; 2007; Johnston, 2005). These research methodologies enable authors to read moments of disruption, ruptures and fluidities. Arguably, they also enable the possibilities of queer readings more than in certain strands of applied social research. In such contexts, the products (reports, questionnaires) not only need to be (re)placed within 'understandable' terms, they must have particular 'use' within specific structures and discourses (which themselves could be examined to explore their contingent (re)formation).

2.5 Concentrating on methods, but emphasising the contestations of normativity that characterise 'queer', it is possible to address such epistemological debates and how they intersect with particular research methods. Seidman (1997, xi) argues that 'queering does not mean improving upon or substituting one set of foundational assumptions and narratives for another, but leaving permanently open and contestable the assumptions and narratives that guide social research'. This does not only relate to how queer research can be undertaken but also how queer can be used to reveal the contingency and formation of 'normal' and 'normative' research, including quantitative research. To reveal some of the (re)formation of quantitative research, I will now outline *Do it with Pride* research before moving to focus on the process of undertaking the research. This will explore the design of the questionnaire, the piloting of the questionnaire and finally to the analysis that recreated sexuality and gender categorisations that are inherent to the results of the research.

Do it with Pride? Or Selling my Queer Soul?

3.1 Although I^[7] would not define myself as 'queer' and my practices and lifestyle are more normative than the queer frame I will deploy here, my work has always been informed by queer theory. I employed what could be described as a 'queer questionnaire' (Johnston, 2003) in 2003 at Dublin Pride and Pride in Brighton and Hove, designing a questionnaire that was qualitative, open ended and allowed women to express their viewpoints, enabling explorations between categories, recognising the temporality and fluidity of Pride spaces as negotiated sites of political parties (see Browne, 2007). Having reporting the findings of these results to the Pride in Brighton and Hove chair in October 2003, I was surprised with the direction my work took. David Harvey the Chair of the board of the trustees Pride in Brighton and Hove at the time became interested in research that would help the organisation. He wanted research that would ensure the longevity of the festival and saw a large-scale questionnaire as the most useful means of collecting data. The Brighton and Hove Visitor and Convention Bureau, who co-funded the research, saw this as an opportunity to establish the returns on their investment in Pride. As this was a joint project between the University and 'the community', the University's Community University Partnership Programme supported the project financially. The enthusiasm for such a project relied on the production of 'usable' evidence, particularly statistically significant evidence. My motivations were slightly different. I was keen to get involved in the local Brighton & Hove LGBT 'communities' and 'give back' in offering research that would have a 'use'. Therefore, I led this research project and we (the research team and the Pride in Brighton and Hove trustees who were advising us) created a large-scale questionnaire and dataset.

3.2 The research piloted at Dublin Pride in June 2004 and it was conducted at Pride in Brighton and Hove in August 2004. It sought to examine who attends Pride in Brighton and Hove and assess the impacts of the Pride festival economically, socially and culturally. The questionnaire was a quantitative tick box questionnaire and had 7,210 responses. The questionnaire was machine readable and loaded into SPSS for quantitative analysis. A report was issued in February 2005, outlining the results (Browne et al., 2005). The figures from this report and subsequent press releases continue to regularly appear in the local media and are used by Pride in Brighton and Hove to secure sponsorship and lobby for money from local government bodies and through grant funding.^[8]

3.3 During the processes of undertaking this quantitative research, I arguably had to 'sell my queer (academic) soul'. I want to use the remainder of this paper to reflect on quantitative social and applied research and queer understandings of the fluidity of gender, sex and sexuality. I have chosen three events within this research process – excluding the term 'queer' in research design, piloting the gender question and re-categorising sexualities- to examine the paradoxes of queer quantitative research and also use queer understandings to deconstruct the process of undertaking quantitative research.

Questionnaires and queer: (Re)forming solid subjectivities

Designing Queer Out?

4.1 Although 'queer' has been used as a generic label for sexual deviancy and shorthand for LGBT, the term 'queer' was never used in the study of Pride in Brighton and Hove. The use of the label was vetoed in initial meetings by the two members of the Pride committee, with whom we, as academic researchers, liaised with to form the questionnaire. These men associated the word with schoolboy (sic) taunts in the playground and felt that they were not alone in this (see Walters, 1996 for a discussion of the problematic reclaiming of 'queer'). They argued that using this term could be alienating to those who suffered this form of homophobic abuse. Therefore, whilst the term 'queer' has been reclaimed in academic theory, and is embraced by other Prides (for example in Dublin), those with whom we were working at Pride in Brighton and Hove did not see it as suitable for this research.

4.2 Research design, whilst striving to adhere to robust, valid and generalisable standards, is always constructed (as has long been argued by feminist researchers). In this context, the use of the term 'queer' and its exclusion from the research in the design phase illustrates the (re)production of research within

discourses on particular sexualities. The reclaiming of categories such as 'queer', 'dyke' and other derogatory phrases, is secondary to the discussion here (see Walter, 1996); what is at issue is how certain terms (lesbian, gay, bisexual) become validated whilst others are rendered 'unacceptable'. These are not value neutral judgements, nor are they in some way distant from contemporary contexts and lives. In this example, the research was designed in relation to remembrances of the Pride trustees of homophobic bullying and continued harm that could be related to these experiences. It can be contended then, that rather than being located beyond the powerful (re)creations of sexualities (as is the assumption underpinning demands for quantitative research on sexualities, such as the census), knowledge is in part constituted through the emotive value labelling of sexual identity categories. Not only does this contest the assumptions of 'neutral measurements' and 'objective labelling', it also illuminates the contingent (re)formation of research frameworks, paradigms and tools.

Relations and revisions: piloting a non-normative gender question

4.3 Despite the absence of 'queer' in the research design, there was some attempt to 'queer' the questionnaire by recognising the diversities and nuances within gender and sexuality. In the pilot study undertaken at Dublin Pride in 2004, the gender questionnaire read:

How would you define your gender

- Bio- Male
- Bio-Female
- Trans-male
- Trans-female
- Intersex
- Transvestite
- Other

4.4 This gender question was in part designed to address the proliferation of theory that recognises the social construction of biological characteristics (Butler, 1993; Ussher, 1994). The question was written following an engagement with trans and queer activists, but clearly has limitations (there are problems with 'bio', as when does one become 'biologically male/female'. The term 'born male/female' is also problematic as some trans people feel that they are born into the wrong body but have a specific gender from birth, see Carol, 1997; Whittle, 2000). The short hand of 'bio' (rather than biological) was necessary due to the lack of space on the questionnaire and is used in some queer social networks. The gender question itself caused huge confusion during the pilot study. This was identified by qualitative feedback from the respondents at Dublin Pride, many of whom ticked 'other' or did not complete the question. Respondents did not understand the concept of 'biological male/female', as something that emphasises the taken-for-granted assumptions of gender, where male and female is left often unqualified. The question was a compromise as the initial draft of the questionnaire included further categories such as 'drag king', 'drag queen', 'neither male nor female' and 'both male and female'. (The extent to which 'drag' and 'transvestites' constitute 'gender identities' is debateable but in order to recognise and in some way account for diversity, the transvestite category was included.) However, the Pride organisers that we worked with, recognising the limitations on space and the lack of understanding within the (lesbian and gay) communities, asked for these categories to be removed and a simpler question formulated. Following the confusion at the Dublin pilot study it was clear that, whilst gender theorists may have deconstructed categories of gender often rendering male and female fluid and mutable, the presumption that wider LGBT populations have engaged with these deconstructions is problematic (even when queer is used in the title of the festival, as was the case at Dublin Pride).

4.5 This event highlights the 'common sense' formation of gender categories which categories of sexualities often (and in this instance did) rely upon. In addition, the process of category formation is not simply undertaken by the researchers. In the Dublin pilot study those reading, completing (or excluding) the gender question in part (re)constituted its form in the questionnaire (both in the pilot study through specific readings

of gender categories, and in the main study which adjusted the questionnaire tool to something which was both recognisable and recognised). Although this can be read as 'good research practice', this process forced a (re)consideration of gender categories and potentially common-sense issues of gender by the majority of those who filled in the questionnaire. Gender questions (in surveys, monitoring forms and so on) are not simply validated or invalidated, they are in part (re)created through these normative practices and taken-for-granted reiterations often of male/female binaries. Moreover, although (re)placing themselves within normative structure of male/female, this moment of disjuncture emphasises the contingency and mutual (re)formation of gender categories and gendered identities within specific frames (see Browne, 2004 for a fuller discussion of the re-creation of gendered bodies through moments of disjuncture).

'Measuring'/(re)constructing sexualities

4.6 Questions of sexualities require further nuanced considerations. We did not wish to solely impose our definitions of identities on the basis of sexual behaviours as this hides disparities between self-awareness of sexual identities and relationship/sexual behaviours. (This is borrowed from HIV research which contends that sexual identities may not be linked to sexual behaviours, see Glick et al., 1995 and Young and Meyer, 2005). Therefore, we constructed a series of questions that addressed sexual behaviours/relationships, self identification and gendered understandings (as above). In delinking relationships and sexual desires from behaviours and self-identification, the questionnaire was designed to recognise the complexities of sexual practices and behaviours, to acknowledge the intricacies of more than two sexes and to be aware that 'opposite' may not exist in some people's conceptualisation of sexuality (see Butler, 1990; 1993; Seidman, 1997; Ussher, 1994).

The three questions that were used were:

- Q23 I define my sexuality as:
 - Gay
 - Lesbian
 - Bisexual
 - Heterosexual
 - Other
- Q 24 I mainly have sex/relationships with:
 - The same-sex
 - The opposite sex
 - Both sexes
 - All sexes
 - Celibate
- Q 25 Are you in relationship?
 - No (GO TO QUESTION 28)
 - Yes, same sex
 - Yes, opposite/different sex
 - Yes, more than two people

4.7 These questions, to a certain extent, allowed for alternative forms of relationships, such as those who have relationships with more than two people and the often under-recognised celibate individuals. Moreover, it was possible to enter a variety of responses that do not necessarily link identity-desire-relationship in a coherent or recognisable fashion (see Ussher, 1994). At the questionnaire stage then, same-sex desire/relationships were not assumed to match to lesbian/gay/bisexual identities. However, within queer theory, even this proliferation of sexes and categories is problematic (Hird, 2000). When understanding sex, sexualities and genders as fluid, queer theorisations do not seek to redefine more 'open'

categories but to contest the very existence of such boundaries and divisions. Yet, through exploring the process of (re)creating tick box questions and answers, it is possible to illustrate how categories such as 'lesbian' or 'gay' are reused, reiterated and recreated.

4.8 The power relations that (in)formed the questionnaire design are materialised in the questionnaire itself. In order to target 'gay orientated business' for sponsorship, the members of the Pride committee that we consulted with were interested in the 'gay consumer' and not particularly those who have sex with members of the same sex. This questionnaire sought to access a large group of people and generate data that would be useful to the continuation of the Pride festival. Therefore, the priorities lay in establishing the economic impact of the event by surveying a large number of people to give 'statistical validity' to the findings. Thus, the questionnaire was balanced between a short, easy and quick questionnaire and the complexities of 'measuring' sexualities.

4.9 The drive to generate usable findings meant that, despite the potential for delinking identity, desire and relationships that was possible from the questions posed, there was pressure to re-establish the institutional discourses of sexualities which have validity when seeking support from sponsors, local authorities and grant awarding agencies. Prior to the analysis, in the data 'cleaning' stage, we grouped categories together within questions (for example those over 65 were grouped together because of the small numbers) and recoded some questions (for example residents and visitors were given separate codes). In addition, we recoded sexuality. Consequently, for example, after recoding lesbian/gay woman, became defined as:

- Those who defined their sexuality as lesbian/gay and their gender as female or those who defined as lesbian and transfemale/other and said they mainly have/seek relationships/sex with the same sex/celibate.

4.10 Gay male was defined as:

- Those who defined as 'gay'/other and male/transvestite; gay and transmale/other and said they mainly have/seek relationships/sex with the same sex/all sexes/celibate.

4.11 These definitions were functional and enabled recoding in the SPSS software. However, not only do these definitions rely on particular hegemonic understandings of gendered and sex categories, through the (re)categorisation of sexuality, we essentialised and fixed particular boundaries for the purpose of the study. This remade certain variables and allowed for analyses that used these variables. Consequently, we asked people to define their sexuality within our proscribed categories, although we did attempt to account for practices, and we then reconnected gender, sex and sexuality in specific ways that reified boundaries bringing specific categories into being. For the Pride organisation this was essential, as it made the data useable and relevant for their purposes.

4.12 We did not initially reclassify all respondents into the categories lesbian, gay or bisexual and we did allow for those on the margins. We either created new categories for those that did not 'fit' specific reconnections that created the categories lesbian, gay, heterosexual or bisexual or defined them within the category 'other'. Thus, for example, 'heteromales' and 'heterofemales' were:

- Those who define as heterosexual and male or female and said they mainly have/seek relationships/sex with the same sex or are currently in a relationship with someone of the same sex.

4.13 Nevertheless, through the processes of questionnaire design and data cleaning we ^[9] (re)created specific categories, boundaries and identities that made the data functional. This produced large groupings that could be reliably and statistically compared to each other (for example, gay men consisted of 33% of the sample, lesbians/gay women 30% and heterosexuals 29%) and deemed recognisable for Pride trustees, sponsors and those with other interests in the charity. A large proportion of respondents fitted into these categories and they were the focus of the research, illustrating the formation of research products (in this case the report) through relations between researchers, respondents and the questionnaire. In doing this, the small proportions of those who did not 'fit' were lost. The categories heteromale (1%), heterofemale

(2%) and perhaps those in the most 'queer' (in terms of non-normativity) category 'other' (1%) were grouped together with bisexuals in order to make a statistically viable category termed bisexual/other. As a consequence, I would argue that by necessarily (for the purposes of the study and the data required) eliminating the margins, our use of a large scale quantitative research technique, homogenised the categories of lesbian/gay woman and gay (as well as heterosexuality).

4.14 From the groupings, a report was produced that compared and contrasted different elements of the mainly lesbian and gay sample, examining visitor/resident patterns as well as 'lifestyle' parameter (household composition, number of children, number of holidays taken). The report writing was a negotiated process between Pride, Brighton & Hove City Council and the project researchers. Several drafts of the report were produced and these were modified, commented on and adjusted by Pride committee members and the council research officer. Throughout this process, there was little interest in the fluidity of the categories and general agreement was that the recoding, and the eventual use, of large categories was sensible and necessary.

4.15 The focus of the report was on the findings of the research, which have proved to be useful to Pride in Brighton and Hove and Brighton and Hove City Council. The research findings have appeared in the national lesbian and gay media (magazines, newspapers and websites, such as the *Pink Paper*, *Gay.com*) and the local mainstream media including the radio, (such as local morning programmes on *Southern Counties* and *Juice FM*) and newspapers (*The Argus*, a local newspaper, regularly quotes these figures). Thus, whilst the questionnaire, analysis or report writing was/is influenced by queer epistemologies and the outcome is not in my estimation queer, it has contributed to the continued success of Pride in Brighton and Hove and, arguably, augmented assumptions of the economic importance of the lesbian and gay population in Brighton and Hove. (These 'positive results' some might argue are themselves decidedly 'unqueer' and perhaps undesirable).

Conclusions: Queering Quantitative Sexualities Research

5.1 Giffney (2004, 75) contends that 'queer theory's task lies in visibilising, critiquing, and separating the normal (statistically determined) from the normative (morally determined)'. Quantitative methods (re)create a 'normal' that is statistically determined, but I would argue that just as research is contingent and subjective, these statistical determinations are also normative. In other words, the 'normal' that is statistically determined is also created and morally determined through decision making processes, inclusions and exclusions. This paper has shown that this 'normal' is, therefore, not merely defined or definable, it is reconstructed through the acts of making statistics.

5.2 It has long been argued that classifications of sexual orientation are geographically and contextually based (see for example Browne et al., 2007; Faderman, 1981; Weeks, 1995). Yet Green, in arguing for the importance and pervasiveness of categories of sexualities, contests such temporal and spatial contingencies and suggests that:

'...classifications of sexual orientation have been shown to possess an active, enduring, and consequential presence in contemporary Western societies' (Green, 2002, 530).

5.3 He (2002) indicates classifications of sexual orientation are consequential in 'contemporary' Western societies- but if this is seen as contingent in this historical, period such classifications cannot be simultaneously 'enduring'. Therefore, I would argue that, contrary to Green, categories of sexualities are always becoming. Here, discussions of 'queer' in the research design, and gender questions that rely on specific intelligible frameworks, testify to the requirement for particular reiterations of sexualities within power-laden discourses. Although, classification systems employed by quantitative research are not necessarily developed prior to the research (see Valocchi, 2005), when these are constructed, they could (perhaps should) continue to be read as constantly becoming, needing repetition and reinforcing particular discourses. Therefore, sexuality categories in quantitative research could be understood as contextually based and not as fixed signifiers (and this, of course, has implications beyond methodological

considerations to the reading of the analysis, results and recommendations)^[10].

5.4 Seidman (1995) argues that queer theorists need to address their own ethical and political standpoints, giving accounts of the social contexts of their own critique (this follows a long traditional of calls for researchers to position themselves in relation to their research participants, see Haraway, 1991). I would argue that it is not just queer theorists who need to engage in this. Broader quantitative research and researchers also needs to be deconstructed to reveal its/their social, economic, epistemological, ontological and methodological (re)formations and contexts. The tools that queer theories have afforded us could be used in part to this end. Recognising the partiality of all knowledge (see for example Haraway, 1991, Rose 1995), here I have used queer theory to deconstruct the categories of sexualities that are often presumed in quantitative research that quantifies, records, and measures sexualities^[11]. Moreover, I have pointed to the network of relations (including interactions between researchers, community partners, respondents, questionnaires, modes of analysis and reports) which (re)constructs such research within specific discourses and normative frames. The latter are themselves continually being remade through such relations and reiterations.

5.5 Whilst queer analyses can deconstruct quantitative research, in order to retain queer's power 'to challenge (if not always subvert) all norms relating to desirous identity' (Giffney, 2004, 75), there is a need to recognise queer as always becoming, inherently critical of norms, and resistant to categorisation that limit sexual identities to 'gay male and lesbian genders and sexualities alone (or primarily)' (Giffney, 2004, 73, see also Browne, 2006; Oswin, 2007). In this becoming lies queer's power to critique, but also, and perhaps simultaneously, the potential to deconstruct in ways that are not always politically prudent or desirable. In stating that I have been 'selling my queer soul', I am not arguing that the research described here or other quantitative research which I am involved in (see <<http://www.countmeintoo.co.uk>>) was/is not important, nor that it did not progress particular socially progressive agendas. This research was empowering for those who sought to legitimate the Pride festival and reinforce its status as a powerful economic driver with social benefits (see Browne et al., 2005^[12]). Thus, I agree with Walters (1996) that queer deconstructions and research undertaken within queer epistemologies, should not solely be employed or deployed in sexualities research (see Seidman, 1997; Walters, 1996 for further discussions of this in political and epistemological contexts)^[13]. Yet this paper has illustrated the usefulness of particular forms of queer research in understanding the contingency of research methods and the construction of often taken for granted identity categories. I seek to use the afterword to explore some further possibilities, potentialities, excesses and limitations of queer engagements with social research processes.

Afterword: Queer readings

6.1 It could be contended that from its very conceptualisation our study existed within the boundaries of a (homo)normativity and that this marginalised and regulated 'queer' sexualities. This research did not seek to find only the 'queer margins'. Indeed, queer identities, performativities and lives can be marginalised or (perhaps worse) subsumed and (re)created within specific (lesbian and gay) categories through quantitative research that focuses on the 'normative majorities'. However, I have emphasised throughout the paper that the dynamic processes of bringing research into being can be subjected to queer critique and in undertaking such deconstructions the fluidity and normativity of quantitative research is revealed. This allows us not just to critique categorisation (and invisibilisation that results from such processes), but also to explore the normalisation of the categorising act that can solidify into research products. I want in this afterword to introduce a further 'queer' analysis of this research process, focusing not on the products in the form of questionnaires and final reports, as this paper has done, but on 'queer moments'. Specifically, I want to emphasise the dialogical moments where the fixity of gender and sexuality categories was contested and enforced, and the excesses of the research process that may be beyond representation (Anderson, 2004; Doel, 2001; Laurier and Philo, 2006; Lim, 2007; Thrift, 1999).

6.2 The prominence of the artifices of the Pride in Brighton and Hove research (report and questionnaire) throughout the previous sections was necessary to highlight how sexuality categories were fixed and

brought into being. This illusion of permanent and fixed products could be contested in many ways. Throughout the research process, there were moments of disjuncture, incidents where irrationality (briefly) prevailed, where the excess of dualisms was (partially) revealed. In the discussions of the gender categories for example, the incongruity of drag as a gender identity, led to a certain amount of questioning prior to the (re)naming of specific genders. Similarly, sexuality categories beyond gay, lesbian, bisexual and heterosexual were discussed and the questionnaire went initially beyond these, but the dominant categories were recreated in the analysis. In addition, whilst I contested the existence of only three genders (male, female and trans) and four sexualities, I referred to multiple categories rather than contesting the existence of these categories themselves. This was because the nature of the questionnaire required boxes that could be ticked. I seek to emphasise, that this process whilst it fixed particular identities and categories had moments of disruption that were potentially transgressive but these were recuperated and solidified into particular products of research. Focusing mainly on the recuperated categories hides the queer moments that were introduced into the research process (for example the delinking of gender, sexualities and behaviours). Perhaps then, such moments of interference can be read as important because they contest and render visible the illusion of fixed categories.

6.3 It may be that there is what Doel (2001) calls 'an indeterminable buzzing' of the excess of the *processes* of this and other 'queer' research. Doel (2001) argues that this 'buzzing' can be productive as it resists classification and rational thought. It necessarily exists beyond such borders and to reduce it to conscious thought or written words and place it within specific frameworks would alter the buzz, changing it into something else, removing its potential. The affect of being involved in this research (for the many subject positions- as a Pride board member, a data collector, reader of the report and so on) may never be told or even rationalised. Perhaps it is the buzzing itself that offers the queer affect and for this research the 'beyond knowable' queering.

6.4 I wish to finish on a note of self criticism and caution. This paper is quite 'unqueer' and having 'sold my queer soul', I have in part (re)established the orthodoxies that queer theory contests. By writing of 'queer', labelling, categorising and arguing that one form of research methodology lies beyond these boundaries, I have created a false dichotomy and image of permanency, agreement and fixity, where this does not exist. However, in using this form of theory to deconstruct quantitative research, I am challenging what often is presented as neutral and objective research on both lesbian and gay consumption and gay (mainly) sexual practices. Focusing on the transgressive moments within the research the fluidity and presumed fixity of research products was brought into question. Yet, the purpose here is to allow for the possibilities of queer critique without foreclosing important lesbian, gay (and potentially) trans and bisexual research investigations.

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Notes

¹ For example, the 'gay census' exists in America and also includes the (ac)counting of/for sexualities in nine other countries (see <<http://www.gaydemographics.org>>). This 'census' and other surveys of their kind, have specific purposes and their existence can, in part, be attributed to (and as this paper will argue (re)constructing) stereotypes of affluent gay men who have large disposable incomes, a desire for particular consumables and no economic dependants (see <<http://www.outrightresearch.com>>);

<<http://www.outnowconsulting.com>>). The UK census has also been used to map 'same-sex couples' (where same-sex couples have dubiously been defined as households with two members of the same sex living in them), see <<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/PO/releases/2004/june/samesex.aspx?ComponentId=2071&SourcePagelD=1405>>.

² Or in the case of labels such as MSM and WSW, are problematically presumed NOT to link into particular identities, social networks or support systems (see Meyer and Young, 2005). In this context the re-use of labels to construct particular behaviours within understandable (if often policed) categories, still partially falls within the remit of this article, in examining the fluidity and normalising practices of category creation in quantitative research.

³ This assumption is at the heart of campaigns such as those that seek to include sexualities on the British census (see for examples stonewalls' UK campaign <http://www.stonewall.org.uk/documents/stonewalls_getting_equal_response_final.doc>).

⁴ The discussions of the disjuncture between orientation, identities, desire, relationships and other forms of measurements deployed will not be addressed in detail here. Suffice to note that terms such as 'sexual orientation' and 'sexual identities' can have multiple meanings and uses, yet these are often assumed to be homogenous.

⁵ This has parallels with other attempts to quantify 'groups', most obviously by ethnicity and nationality (see for example Gunaratnam, 2003; Kertzer and Arel, 2002; McKenny and Bennett, 1994; Nagel, 1994). Although ethnicities, race and sexualities are distinct, deconstructing the modes of categorisation is a relevant and important exercise for both. In focusing here on sexualities, I will not address the extensive debates regarding race and quantification. However, it is important to recognise tendencies to racialise sexuality categories and sexualise of ethnicity categories, often within specific concepts of white/non-white and Anglo-American concepts of gay, lesbian and LGBT (see Luibhéid and Cantú, 2005; Morgan and Wieringa, 2005). It should also be noted that queer theorists have worked to question these boundaries, borders and categorisations (see for example Ahmed, 2004; Puar, 2006). (Thanks to the anonymous referee for highlighting these parallels.)

⁶ Pride in Brighton & Hove is a festival that occurs annually (see <<http://www.brightonpride.org>>). Although Pride is a week long event, it is often associated with a march/parade through the streets of Brighton & Hove and a park event which consists of dance/music tents, a funfair, a market area for stalls and community groups. In the survey year 100,000 people attended this event. It began as a lesbian and gay protest movement and in its contemporary form was initiated in 1992 (see <<http://www.brightonourstory.co.uk>>). The festival now considers itself a LGBT 'celebration', however as I have contended elsewhere the 'political' roots of this festival are still important for those who attend the festival (see Browne, 2007 and Johnston, 2005 for further detail).

⁷ Throughout the paper 'I' is used to describe the work and decisions undertaken by the author. This however was a collaborative project overseen by Professor Andrew Church with Dr. Kirsty Smallbone assisting in the data cleaning and analysis. This paper is based on my reflections on the research process, however where I use the term 'we' I am describing the academic team involved in the research.

⁸ This project from its outset could be seen as re-inscribing a particular form of homonormativity one that was validated by state bodies such as the Visitor and Convention Bureau and a powerful lesbian and gay (as it was then, now LGBT) organisation in Brighton and Hove, Pride. Yet, as the final section briefly addresses, there were 'queer moments' throughout the project.

⁹ This process was undertaken by the academic researchers.

¹⁰ There is of course interesting work yet to be done on the research tools as non-human actants in the research process. This would draw on recent theorisations which explores and contests the human/non-

human divide in the construction of everyday spaces and lives (see for example Anderson, 2004; Murdoch, 1997; Thrift, 2003).

¹¹ This can be seen as one step before Badgett's (2003) discussion of how these categories are used.

¹² The contestations of Pride as a powerful lesbian and gay organisation should also be considered here, (see Brown 2004).

¹³ Perhaps there is a need to distinguish between progressing lesbian and gay agendas, and queering normative societies. The former project is increasingly critiqued by the latter for (re)iterating heterosexual norms, most recently around issues of 'gay marriage' (see for example, Auchmuty, 2004; Davis, 2005; Donovan, 2004; Halberstam, 2004). Yet in this impasse is the potential for multiplicities and diverse engagements that do not seek to fix, refine or create permanency. This discussion is beyond the scope of this paper.

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