Staying in, tuning in, and coming out:

Music as imagined space in lesbians' coming out geographies

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Abstract

This thesis examines the mutually constitutive relationship between lesbians, music, place and space. It is argued that music creates safe spaces for a small group of lesbians during their coming out process. Feminist, post-structuralist and queer theories and methodologies provide the framework for this research. In particular Foucault's concept 'heterotopia' is utilised to argue that music can subvert hegemonic sexualised spaces and create temporary utopic imagined spaces for lesbians. Based on a series of semi-structured interviews and music elicitation with ten lesbians (aged between 27 and 34) in the United Kingdom and New Zealand, the findings show how imagined spaces created by music play a significant role in the performance of lesbian sexual identities, coming out, and feelings of belonging.

Three themes frame my analysis of lesbian music heterotopias. First, I argue that music can create safe spaces for lesbians who experience feelings of shame, fear, and embarrassment. Acting as a type of mobile and symbolic 'closet', music may shield young lesbians from homophobic attitudes and reactions. Second, music may be understood as intimate space in which same-sex longing, loving and heartache can be explored and expressed. Music becomes a technology of memory whereby the listener creates a heterotopia of time to reminisce past same-sex desires and heartache. Third, I consider the way in which music can be understood as connecting space. Places such as bars and concerts are transformed by music and become places in which lesbians may connect and socialise. Feelings of isolation dissolve when connections are made in both imagined and real spaces of music. These findings illustrate that both the private and public lesbian geographies of music helps create communities of belonging.

This thesis responds to the lack of attention paid to lesbians' coming out geographies and demonstrates the power of music in subverting the sexual hegemony of everyday imagined and real spaces. Considering lesbians' coming out music heterotopias may encourage a more critical understanding of power, sexualities, music, space and place.

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Chapter I: Prelude

> It's very odd to think of the places my music can go once it leaves my hands. If it gave her some solace, I have to be grateful.
>
> Merchant (2003)

Singer Natalie Merchant is responding to reports that mass-murderer Aileen Wuornos listened to her song *Carnival* for hours on end whilst on death row (ibid). I have begun my thesis with this statement because it acknowledges the deeply felt nature of meanings attached to music consumption, and the power of music to transport listeners to imagined spaces. These two key concepts – personal feelings and imagined spaces – are created through music and are central to lesbians' coming out geographies.

When women first identify as lesbian – come out – they often seek places and spaces where they may find other lesbians. Yet lesbians – and the multiple ways in which their identities are expressed - are still marginalised. In other words, lesbians do not always feel they belong in many physical places. Imagined spaces – such as those created through music – therefore play a significant role in feelings of belonging. In this thesis I explore the concept of music as imagined space for lesbians, and in doing so highlight the importance of music in constructing lesbian geographies during the coming out processes.

In undertaking my research, my aim has been to show that music can create spaces that are as influential as any physical environment. As Valentine (1993: 243) states:

> when women first identify themselves as lesbian one of the most frequent ways to reduce the risk of family and friends finding out is to establish geographical boundaries between past and present identities by moving away from places where they have an established heterosexual identity and creating a lesbian identity (at home, work and in the community) amongst strangers.

Space matters in lesbians' coming out geographies. Key to coming out is finding ways to validate a sense of shared identity; which for some people leads to spaces beyond the closet that exist outside of the home, in new cities, and in some cases in new countries (see for instance Brown,'s book *Closet Space* (2000) in which he examines the metaphor of the closet at at variety of spatial scales).

In order to understand shared senses of identity it is important to consider the relationship between imagined and material spaces. Panelli et al (2002) not only demonstrate how community has both imagined and material forms, but argue that it is within imagined spaces that meanings of community are constructed and contested. These meanings are then applied to material spaces. In her research of lesbian communities and women's basketball for example, Muller (2008) shows how the collective imaginings of lesbian identity materializes into a performance of lesbian community. Similarly, in this research I show how lesbians' coming out geographies are both imagined and material. Whilst the focus will be on imagined

spaces, it should be noted that these both inform and are informed by the material spaces within which they are situated.

To further contextualize music as imagined space that remains connected to material space, I use Foucault's (1986) term heterotopia. In "Of Other Spaces" (1986: 24), Foucault states that heterotopias exist:

> in every culture, in every civilization, real places – places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society – which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias.

Huxley (2009: 255) defines a heterotopia as a "form of space different from the everyday routinized spaces surrounding it and embodying potentials for subverting dominant dispositifs of power, knowledge, and space". Essentially, a heterotopia is a space where the line between public and private is blurred (Nelson, 2010: 12). Foucault (1986) discusses various forms of heterotopias in existence across all societies. Heterotopias of crises are "privileged, or sacred, or forbidden places, reserved for individuals who are, in relation to society and to the human environment in which they live, in a state of crisis" (Foucault, 1986: 24).

Heterotopias of crisis – Foucualt (1986) argues - include boarding schools, alternative sites for menstruating women, and the traditional honeymoon where virginity is lost (ibid). Another – perhaps more relevant – form are heterotopias of deviation. These are sites where "individuals whose behavior is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed" (ibid: 25). Prisons, hospitals, and retirement villages all fit within this form (ibid).

Heterotopias serve a temporal function (Nelson, 2010) and are thus a reflection of and reaction to time as much as they are to physical space. Just as heterotopias can exist both within and without of space, so too can they simultaneously exist inside and outside of time. These heterotopias of time – such as museums and cemeteries – exist in real time yet remain situated in a particular moment in the past.

By applying the concept of heterotopia it is possible to develop a deeper understanding of the relationship between real and imagined lesbian music geographies where imagined spaces exist within and reflect material spaces. Likewise, material spaces are themselves manipulated through imagined creations. I show how heterotopias created through music can play a significant role in feelings of belonging for lesbians when they are coming out.

Research objective

The aim of my research is to explore the mutually constitutive relationship between music, place and lesbians. More specifically, I am interested in the role of music when women first self identify – or begin the process of 'coming out' – as lesbians. The overall objective of the research is to demonstrate the importance

of music in the construction of place for lesbians during their coming out process. Three research questions guide my thesis. First, I ask: how does music create safe coming out spaces for lesbians? This line of enquiry brings together the concepts of heterotopia and closet spaces. My second question – how are spaces of lesbian intimacy formed by music and memory – is grounded in heterotopias of crises and heterotopias of time, as well as recent research on emotional and affectual geographies. My third and final question is: how and in what ways does music connect lesbians in both imagined and 'real' spaces? This question draws from, and extends, the work by geographers who discuss how space matters in the production of lesbian geographies.

The exploration of sexualities within geography has grown steadily over the last three decades – particularly since the turn of the millennium (Bell and Valentine, 1995; Browne, 2009). Much of the earlier work concerns itself with locating gay spaces, such as gay bars and neighbourhoods (see for instance, Bell and Valentine 1995; Brown 2000). However, in more recent years, geographies of sexualities has gone from mapping gay men to more nuanced studies, including womyn's music festivals (Browne, 2011) and heterosexuality in home spaces (Morrison, 2012).

In terms of the relationship between music and gay identities, particular lyrics or tracks can take on queer significance and that the associations and memories tied to music can play a part in imagining gay community (Buckland, 2002). However, the role of music in creating places/spaces appears to be absent in this work. Technological advances have made possible a privatisation of music through the

use of portable music devices (MP3 players, iPods, etc). Through these means, music is hidden from others, and the very 'hiddenness' allows the listener to create a ‘safe space’ (Chow, 1993). Music can be used to create or reinforce place specificity. Most notably, music has the ability to affect mood, atmosphere, and emotion. Hence, music not only reflects but also produces place and influences people’s experience of place. The music–place relationship is therefore a powerful source of belonging or alienation.

The mutually constitutive relationship between people, place and music allows me to explore, in particular, how and in what ways the consumption of music in a variety of spaces facilitates the coming out process for lesbians. Home spaces, for example, are crucial to people’s sense of belonging and construction of identities (Johnston and Valentine, 1995). They may be safe spaces in which heteronormativity can be contested away from public views. Moving beyond the space of the home, lesbian bars and pride festivals may facilitate a collective sense of belonging and identity for lesbians.

In a seminal piece of work in the field of the geography of sexualities, Valentine (1995) argues that everyday spaces are assumed to be heterosexual, but the public and private consumption of the music of lesbian icon k.d. lang shows how ‘heteronormative’ spaces can be contested. This work provides a basis as to why music may be an essential component of sexuality and space: because music has the potential to transform space to one that is congruous with one's lesbian identity and vice versa. Although Valentine's paper was published over 15 years ago, there is still little work on the relationship between lesbians and domestic

spaces, and indeed on the private consumption of music in creating safe queer 'coming out' spaces. Research on lesbian geographies tends to focus on the heteronormativity of everyday physical spaces, yet little attention is paid to the construction of non-normative imagined spaces where sexuality is explored. Likewise, research on music, space, and subjectivity is too reliant on physical spaces of belonging. My research aims to fill this gap.

Situating the research

I identify as a white/ Pākehā lesbian from New Zealand. Recently I traded my residence from Wellington – New Zealand's capital city, to Brighton – the United Kingdom's gay capital. The total population of both cities is relatively similar – with Brighton having an estimated 256,000 residents in 2011 (Office for National Statistics, 2011) compared to Wellington's 200,100 residents (Statistics New Zealand, 2011). Rights for gay and lesbian couples are fairly similar, but in terms of a visible queer community the cities are worlds apart. Brighton has an estimated 35,000 residents identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (Browne, 2007a:9). The New Zealand Government does not collect any official statistics on the size of the queer population, but they do estimate that around one percent of cohabiting couples in Wellington are same-sex (Statistics New Zealand, 2010). Perhaps a more fitting comparison that could be made is the turn-out at each city's annual pride event. In 2011, Brighton Pride attracted more than 100,000 revellers (Pink News, 2011). Wellington's Out in the Square event in the same year attracted approximately 15,000 people (Out in the Square, 2011). Furthermore, Brighton has more than 30 gay and lesbian bars (Visit Brighton, 2012) compared to Wellington's two (Rainbow Tourism New Zealand, n.d.).

The statistics are indicative of the fact that performing my lesbian identity in Brighton has felt far less restrictive than it did in Wellington. The relationship between sexuality and space therefore seems far more pronounced in Wellington, as heteronormatively is so dominant it goes unnoticed. For instance, holding hands with my girlfriend along a main road feels far more accepting in Brighton than Wellington.

Outlining the chapters

In the next chapter I outline the key pieces of literature that have informed my research. This chapter is divided into four sections, with each section focusing a different field of research: geographies of sexualities, geographies of music, geographies of emotion and affect, and heterotopias. Chapter III outlines the methodology used in this research, and includes information on the research participants. Chapter IV is the first of the three discussion chapters, and explores the first key theme of music as safe space. The second key theme discussed is music as intimate space, where particular attention is paid to the concepts of desire and memory. The third discussion chapter (Chapter VI) focuses on music as connecting space. Finally, in Chapter VII, I summarise the findings and suggest a way for future studies to address some of the limitations found in this research.

Chapter II: Literature Review

This chapter provides a context of where this research sits within geographical thought and overall the thesis adds to the extensive bodies of literature across four areas. These are: lesbian geographies; music, space and subjectivities; geographies of emotion and affect; and heterotopias. This chapter is organised by these four themes, with each section outlining the key studies relevant to this research. What this chapter also illustrates is that there appears to be no one piece of work that has explored the inter-relationship between the geographies of sexualities, music, and emotions. The key link between these themes is that identities are social constructions that are performed through embodied, material, and imagined spaces. Particularly for those who do not fit hegemonic norms, imagined spaces – such as those created through music – play a significant role in the performance of identity and feelings of belonging.

Lesbian geographies

The exploration of sexualities within geography has grown steadily over the last three decades – particularly since the turn of the millennium (Browne, 2009). The focus has tended to be on the relationships between sexuality, space, and place – most notably with respect to specific and established sites where homosexual identities are expressed and accepted. Johnston (1997) for instance explores the connection between body and place in New Zealand's HERO gay pride parade. Through her research Johnston (1997) demonstrates the dichotomous relationships between heterosexual and queer, public and private, everyday and exotic. In doing so she shows clear power imbalances in what is considered appropriate

performances of sexual identities in public spaces. In another example, Taylor (2008) looks at the more established sites of gay bars in her study of working-class lesbians. In this study, Taylor (2008) – like Johnston (1997) – demonstrates the power imbalances in the performance of identities in certain spaces, and argues that sexual identities are far more complex and multi-layered than perhaps has been previously generalised.

Johnston and Valentine (1995) discuss the spatial dimension of sexuality with respect to the meaning of 'home' for lesbians. The concept of home, as presented in this research, highlights the privacy and secrecy of sexuality. Although home is considered here as a physical space, the emotional expressions of this space could perhaps be extended to imagined safe spaces outside of the home, such as those created through music. As Valentine (2000) purports, to understand lesbian spaces we need to explore how heteronormative spaces are challenged. Creating home as a lesbian space can be interpreted as one way to challenge heteronormative spaces; and likewise, so can the construction of imagined spaces through music.

Peace (2001: 40) argues that the challenge lesbians pose for geography is how researchers can "cope with a subject that has no fixed, natural, assignable, mappable essence". Peace was referring to the fact that geographers have mainly focused on identifiable lesbian spaces, such as the home (Johnston and Valentine, 1995), lesbian neighbourhoods (Adler and Brenner, 1992) and nightclubs (Forsyth, 1997). However, studies on the geographies of emotion, such as Valentine et al (2003), show that non-mappable subjects can indeed be interrogated within geography.

In 2007, a special edition of the *Social and Cultural Geography* journal addressed how space matters in the production of lesbian geographies (Browne, 2007b: 1). Gorman-Murray (2007: 114), for instance, argues the importance of both place and the body in queer geographies, stating that "the queer identity quest is about testing and experimenting with new ways of being in unencumbered contexts". In the same issue, Muller (2007) discusses imagined lesbian communities with regards to a women's basketball team. The article notes the importance of reclaiming typically heteronormative spaces in the creation of safe lesbian spaces. More importantly, Muller (2007) demonstrates the relationship between imagined and material spaces, where the team serves as a discursive device that signifies the existence of lesbian community, whilst game attendance serves as a materialisation of community performance. The mutually constitutive role of discursive and material spaces in the performance of lesbian identity as evidenced in Muller's (2007) article could similarly be applied to my research.

Closet space is another topic that has been explored within the geographies of sexualities, albeit with most attention being paid to gay men as opposed to lesbians. Browne (2009) notes that just as there are multiple ways of coming out, so too are there many forms of closet space. For instance, Brown (2000: 137) presents the closet on multiple scales – from the body to the globe – and suggests that the closet is a "spatialisation ... that are integral to gay and lesbian desire". The gay bar, for instance, could be considered a closet in that it remains relatively hidden from public view by being situated down dark alleyways compared to 'straight' venues that tend to be situated along main roads with prominent signage

(Brown, 2000: 71-73). Within such closet spaces, the performance of queer identities can remain hidden from public view. Brown (2000: 78) also notes that closet spaces are actively produced by those within them "in reaction to heteronormative structures". In this sense, the closet serves as a coping mechanism within everyday geographies. My research demonstrates the role of closet spaces for lesbians, and to extend this by arguing that music may be considered a form of closet space.

Music, place and identities

Historically, geographers have been rather neglectful of music (Kong, 1995; Smith, 1997; Arnold, 2004). This is despite the fact that Nash (1968) established a framework from which to examine music within the geographical domain. What little focus was paid to music by geographers has been criticised for being both methodologically and theoretically unsophisticated (Kong, 1995). A key gap identified by Kong in music research by geographers was that space is "accepted as a given", rather than being acknowledged as a social construction (ibid: 186). In recognising its relative neglect, Smith (1997: 504) purports that music "offers an appealing route into those geographies which lie beyond the visible world". Her study of shows how music can be considered a space in its own right, and that "it can evoke a sense of space and of society that differs from, and is complementary to, that evoked by sight" (ibid: 524).

Music spaces have been considered in relation to building and affirming a sense of community. This is an area of music geographies that continues to receive

attention is the relationship between music, place and identity. Hudson (2006: 626) for example states that:

> in recent years a range of human geographers have become increasingly interested in issues of music, place and identity in a range of empirical settings, theoretical frameworks and policy contexts.

A key reason for this increased attention is the recent recognition that music is "an important cultural sphere in which identities are affirmed, challenged, taken apart and reconstructed" (Connell and Gibson, 2003: 117). In addition, Shelemay (2011: 368) attests that music is not simply symbolic of identity but can serve as an active component in the "process of community formation to establish, maintain, and reinforce that collective identity". The power of music to galvanise communities is particularly useful for marginalised groups. Smith (1997: 522) for instance shows that music provides a "medium for cultural exchange in even the most rigidly divided societies". Through this cultural exchange, music creates spaces that are simultaneously set apart from and congruous with physical spaces (ibid: 524).

The concept of music creating spaces for the expression of collective 'outsider' identity is illustrated in Boland's (2010) exploration of 'scouser' identity within music. The article demonstrates how songs can take on a particular significance in determining "who is in" and "who is out" (2010: 2). The article supports a notion that identity is not fixed, but rather than performed, and that music can play a critical role in these performances. Geographers have tended to concentrate on music and inclusion with respect to local identity; however Boland's (2010)

article shows that, through lyrics, music spaces can supersede physical spaces when creating sites of belonging.

> The increasing mobility of music technologies, and the seemingly paradoxical emphasis on identity that surrounds analysis of music … reveal how much the ongoing (re)shaping of listening habits is tied to our changing sense of location: where we are, where the music can take us, where we belong (Berland, 1998: 133).

While music can help one understand their shifting sense of place (ibid) music can also transport listeners to an alternate – or imagined – space. Mitchell's study of Icelandic band Sigur Ros demonstrates how music can create soundscapes that take listeners to an imaginary world (2009: 172). The author notes that "the listener's imagination creates a sense of involved narrative, meaning and locality" (2009: 189), which simultaneously removes the listener from their physical surroundings and binds them together with other listeners. Although Mitchell (2009) is referring to imagined topographies, this notion of transportation can also apply to imagined spaces of belonging for those who do not fit the social 'norm'. Valentine (1993) touches on this subject in her study of lesbian consumers and the music of k.d. lang. She argues that the act of conscious listening is commonly used as a way to take the listener to a temporary or imagined world. Even the act of listening at a concert provides a sense of imagined lesbian community. The temporal nature of the community is further reinforced with the singer playing down her lesbian identity outside the concert hall (ibid).

More recently in geography, attention has also been paid to the relationship between rhythm and bodies. By analysing their own experience at festival spaces, Duffy et al (2010: 23) present a number of cases that show how "embodied responses to rhythm are crucial to the marking out of a space of communal identity". This links with Valentine's (1995) analysis of lesbians' experience at a k. d. lang concert in that the shared experience of feeling part of something creates an imagined sense of community. Research in this field presents another dimension in understanding the relationship between music and space.

Emotional and affectual geographies

The ability of music to alter one's experience of place and to elicit feelings of belonging links closely with a growing body of literature regarding emotional and affectual geographies. Geography's 'emotional turn' could be interpreted as an attempt to consider more abstract and symbolic forms of space, and to represent the emotional aspects of everyday life (Smith, et al, 2009: 4). Curti et al (2011: 591) differentiate between emotion and affect by considering the terms in relation to identity: "emotional geographies is about identity as something recognised, filled, defining and producing, whereas for affectual geographies identity itself is what is continually produced.

Despite many geographers seeing a clear distinction between the two terms (see for instance Pile, 2010), others like Bondi and Davidson (2011) argue against such delineations between the two terms. What I outline in the coming paragraphs is neither an argument for nor against these two camps, rather I aim to draw out some key pieces of literature within the wider emotional and affectual framework.

Feminist geographers have been influential in the development of emotional geographies, with Pile (2010: 4) noting that:

> feminist geographers were alert not only to the emotions and feelings that women experienced in particular places and space, but also to how emotions framed and circumscribed sexed and gendered experiences of places and spaces.

It is no surprise then that spaces made popular in feminist thought – such as the home – feature heavily in studies on emotion and affect. Blunt (2005: 506) for instance calls the home an "affective space, shaped by everyday practices, lived experiences, social relations, memories and emotions". In addition, Rose (2004: 549) explored the concept of family photos within home spaces, stating that photos "are indeed extraordinarily important, emotionally resonant objects". Just as photos could be considered objects that elicit poignant emotive responses, particular types of music can also elicit such an affect to listeners.

Similarly, research on music contains numerous examples of how feelings of place, belonging, and identity are educed through the practice of listening. Duffy et al (2011: 23) argue that "the affective and emotional response to rhythm is an intricate part of how our bodies and their biographies are co-constituated in and through space". Within the festival space, theses responses create a space of belonging and shared sense of identity. In addition to eliciting emotional and affective responses, music also provides insight into "what emotional well-being is, what happiness, contentment and hope feel like, and they show how powerful these emotions can be" (Wood and Smith, 2004: 544). This aspect is particularly

importance when considering music as an imagined space where aspirational feelings of love and a sense of belonging are consciously built.
(see for instance, Connell and Gibson, 2002).

Another area of research within emotional geographies of particular relevance to this research regards the performance of marginalised identities. In her research on sexualised spaces and emotions for lesbian and bisexual women, Kawale (2004: 565) demonstrates how emotions are socially constructed within the "institutionalisation of heterosexuality". In doing so, Kawale (2004) presents emotions as performative. For instance, the research shows the "performance of surface acting helps to conceal emotions that would otherwise challenge heterosexual norms" (ibid: 570). These controlled performances (whether conscious or unconscious) demonstrate continued "inequalities between sexualized groups in sexualized spaces on an emotional basis" (ibid: 576). What this research does not address is the conscious construction of alternative spaces where emotions can be freely performed. My research aims to fill this gap.

Heterotopias

Foucault's (1986) concept of heterotopias has provided the theoretical basis for studies on spaces were non-heteronormative identities are performed. Hetherington (1997: 31), in his study of gay nudists, shows how a site where social practices deviate from the norm becomes "a free site, celebrated as a space apart in which people can be and act out difference in ways that challenge the social order". Crucially, Hetherington's study demonstrates that a site where

homosexual practices can be freely explored is the ideal setting to apply Foucault's concept of heterotopia.

Although the concept of heterotopias opens a dimension for geographers to explore imagined, public, and private spaces, research has mostly focused on physical spaces that provide an alternative environment to perform outsider identities. This is despite the fact that Soja (2002) presents a third space for geographers where Foucault's heterotopia is the space of "possibilities and perils" (2002: 68). Soja (2000: 11) describes the third space as a "fully lived space, a simultaneously real-and-imagined, actual-and-virtual, locus of structured individual and collective experience and agency".

Heterotopias can also be viewed as private spaces that are simultaneously detached from and embedded within everyday spaces. One example of this is Steyaert's (2010) study of the garden as a heterotopia. Steyaert (2010) argues that non-heteronormative identities are performed through the conscious construction of heterotopias (in this instance, the garden). The garden as a site links particularly well with the private consumption of music due to the fact that it is generally situated within private property and thus closed off to the public. Similarly the consumption of lesbian music tends to occur in private, or within the temporary confines of a lesbian concert.

Recently, social scientists have considered cyberspace as heterotopia. Like other heterotopic spaces outlined by Foucault, cyberspace has "the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect,

neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect" (Saco, 2002: 14). Bury (2005) for instance, investigates online fan communities and in doing so builds an "understanding of such cyberspaces as potentially heterotopic in their reworking and transgressing of normative spatial practices and relations" (2005: 18). Her study explores two virtual heterotopias where women could create sites of "alternative special orderings" (2005: 36) where conventional power relations could be changed in such a way that the women no longer felt as oppressed as they typically do in everyday society. Music, like cyberspace, can also contravene normalised spatial practices.

A third example of the application of the concept of heterotopias in research is the closet (Wheeler, 2007). In an innovative piece of work, Wheeler (2007) creates scope where the homosexual 'closet' could be interpreted as a heterotopia. As with Jones (2009) above, heterotopias can thus ... Wheeler (2007) elaborated that both metaphorical and literal closets "present a related way of defining and ascribing meaning to space" (2007: 95). The homosexual closet, as described in Wheeler's article is a figurative space where "one stores sexual secrets" (2007: 95). It is a private space, a secret space cut off from ordinary spaces. It is through this interpretation that the concept of the closet as a heterotopia can be understood.

Wheeler (2007) also goes further in linking the closet with heterotopia by adopting the mirror concept in his work. Wheeler explains that:

"One must be absolutely real to have the sexual closet or mirror create a reflection of oneself; but the unreality of the sexual closet is that this reflection is not the real self but a manufactured self, devoid of sexual queerness" (2007: 96).
Put simply, the sexual closet only exists because of the heteronormative culture of society. If homosexuality – and indeed all non-hetero forms of sexuality – were accepted as normal in everyday spaces, there would be no need for individuals to create a heterotopic space where their sexuality can be safely explored and indeed hidden from dominant spaces.

Outside of geography, Jones (2009: 1) agrees that queer heterotopias are "places where individuals can challenge the heteronormative regime and are 'free' to perform their gender and sexuality without fear of being qualified, marginalized, or punished. Unlike the studies noted above, Jones (2009) shows how independent processes and actions with regards to the body can also constitute queer heterotopias. The process of getting full-bodied tattoos, for instance, was linked to her illustration of heterotopic spaces. Like the process of getting a tattoo, the consumptive process of listening to music could indeed constitute a heterotopia.

In my research I use the term heterotopias to describe the imagined spaces created through music consumption. Lesbians' negotiations of everyday spaces sometimes require an alternate space that has no fixed locality (but is sometimes in a particular place) and has the power to transform the meaning of one's immediate surroundings. Music – particularly the personal and sometimes hidden consumption of music – has this power. The concept of music spaces as heterotopias has – to the best of my knowledge – never been explored until now.

Summary

The role of music in lesbians' coming out geographies can be examined from an unlimited number of geographical lenses. In this chapter I have outlined three strands of geographical thought that have influenced the way in which I have taken in undertaken this research. In doing so, I have tried to give a brief account of relevant developments in each field and address how my research aims to fill the gaps identified. It is at the intersections of music, identity, emotion and affectual geographies that my research contributes to. Through the application of Foucault's heterotopias, I extend this scholarship by examining lesbians' coming out geographies and the power of music in the performance of identities and expression of emotions.

Chapter III: Finding a rhythm

Research methodologies

This chapter outlines the methodologies used in carrying out this research. The theoretical framework within which this research is based is post-structuralist, and more specifically adopts both feminist and queer notions of research. Key to these perspectives is that I acknowledge my position as researcher with the subject-matter (Bosco and Moreno, 2009), and that I consider identities to be constituted within spatialised contexts (Jones and Adams, 2010). Working with these perspectives allowed me to think carefully about my role as researcher when recruiting participants. Furthermore, the interpretation and interrogation of my research findings is guided by both feminist and queer perspectives.

Thien (2009) acknowledges that one of the contributions feminist methodologies have given geography is emphasising the importance of outlining why the research is being undertaken and how it is carried out. The sensitive nature of this topic provides one of the justifications for the methods use to gather information. This includes the snowball technique to recruit participants, semi-structured interviews to gather information, and undertaking follow-up interviews with some of the participants. These methods were also complemented with music elicitation and reflecting on my own position as researcher by maintaining a journal. These methods are discussed in depth in this chapter.

Methodological Framework

I have been heavily influenced by feminist geographical methods of data collecting for this research. Feminist researchers have an affinity with qualitative

methods, and likewise, so have I. As Avis (2002) notes, qualitative techniques are particularly useful for studies like this, which examine everyday life or complex social issues. On a more political level, an advantage of feminist and indeed queer strands of qualitative methodology is that they "highlight the instability of taken-for-granted meanings and resulting power relations" (Browne, 2009: 4).

Feminist methodologists not only acknowledge the existence of power relations in the wider social framework, but also the power relations that occur between the researcher and their participants. Both the researcher and participant "directly or indirectly claim points of sameness or difference during interviews based not only on knowledge which is exchanged during these conversations but also on what is read off from each others' performances" (Valentine, 2002: 121).

A vital method I used to mitigate this power imbalance was to connect to participants through a shared level of understanding, such as being a lesbian, or being from New Zealand, or living in Brighton. However, as Valentine (2002) also states, it is possible for to misunderstand across sameness in the research process. Furthermore, people are perhaps less likely to articulate events and feelings to a researcher if they assume the research has deep understanding of the subject-matter (Dowling, 2005). For these reasons, my approach – whilst still qualitative – contained some form of structure with pre-determined interview questions, so that interviewees do not simply skim over topics because they feel I've 'been there, done that'. It also gave me the advantage of sitting both inside and outside of the research, depending on the level of disclosure from each participant.

Recruitment of participants

The snowball method was my primary method of recruiting women to interview. I started with asking people I knew to suggest other lesbians that may be interested in being part of the project. A call for participants was also posted at the Marlborough Pub and Theatre – Brighton's only lesbian bar – as well as posting an announcement on their Facebook page. Another announcement was posted on the Ladyfest Brighton 2012 (a grassroots, queer-based arts and music festival primarily for women) Facebook page, and a third on my personal Facebook page. An email was sent to individuals who expressed interest in taking part (see Appendix One), and attached to this was an information sheet (see Appendix Two) detailing the purpose of the research and their role within it. Participants were informed of their rights and consent will be obtained prior to being interviewed (see Appendix Three).

Figure 1: Facebook call for participants

Participant characteristics

In total, ten people were interviewed for this research. Of those, four took part in follow-up interviews. Participants were either recruited through New Zealand-based contacts or through my English-based contacts. The participants' ages ranged from 27 to 34. Although all the respondents recall having their first same

sex attraction as children or teenagers, most did not 'come out' until they reached their 20s, and often once they had moved away from their hometown. The following table gives more contextual information.

Table 1: Participant characteristics

Name	***Age***	***Origin***	***Descriptor***	***Interview Location***	***Follow-up?***
Alex	*30*	*NZ*	Cannot pinpoint a 'coming out' as such. First girlfriend at 17 and it just went on from there.	Home	Yes
Sarah	*32*	*NZ*	Attracted to girls from about 15. Didn't come out until started working in her 20s	*Skype*	*Yes*
Tess	*28*	*UK*	Was 'outed' when she was 16 when her sister found out about her girlfriend. Doesn't feel she really had a coming out.	*Home*	*No*
Michelle	*27*	*UK*	Came out to herself when she was 13, but did not come out to family until she was in her 20s.	*Home*	*No*
Jess	*29*	*NZ*	Knew she was gay when she was a child, but didn't openly come out until she was in her 20s.	*Cafe, Skype*	*Yes*
Nat	*33*	*Europe*	Was always a tomboy, but didn't really come out until her early 20s	*Cafe*	*No*
Fran	*34*	*NZ*	Knew she was gay when she was 13, but didn't come out until she was 26.	*Home, Skype*	*Yes*
Lana	*32*	*Europe*	Was aware of her same-sex attraction when she was around 12. Did not come out until she moved to London in her early 20s	*Home*	*No*
Megan	*31*	*NZ*	Did have a high school crush on a girl, but didn't come out until her late 20s	*Skype*	*No*
Abbie	*30*	*NZ*	Didn't come out until late 20s when living overseas	*Skype*	*No*

Semi-Structured Individual Interviewing

Information was collected through conducting a series of individual in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Five interviews took place in each respondent's home. Two interviews took place in a café, and two initial interviews took place over Skype. Interviews were transcribed and most were recorded digitally. Participants were advised that they had the right to ask for the audio-recorder to be turned off at any time. One respondent asked not to be recorded. The spaces where the

interviews took place were both an important and at times challenging aspect of my chosen research method. Intimacy is a key concept throughout this research, and I wanted to ensure that each participant felt comfortable enough to open up and discuss what can be for some quite an emotional topic. The home therefore made sense as the preferred interview space.

Approximately two weeks after their interview, I was talking with a participant and they said they had been thinking a lot about the interview and they felt they might have more to add to the research. When discussing this with another interviewee, they too agreed that they had thought about the interview and would be keen to discuss my research more. I then asked subsequent participants if they would be available for a follow-up interview. In total, five respondents out of ten agreed and were available to take part in a follow-up interview. Follow-up interviews are useful in gaining a deeper understanding of research participants (Morrison, 2012). Because the initial interviews were semi-structured and thus fairly free flowing, the follow-up interviews provided me with an additional opportunity to fill some of the gaps I missed in the initial interviews. Participants also commented that the follow-up interviews gave them the chance to better discuss their experience once they gained a deeper understanding of the purpose of the research.

Once the interviews had been completed, participants were sent a copy of their transcribed interview and they will be given the opportunity to make corrections, or request the erasure of any materials they do not wish to be used. Participants were also given the opportunity to receive a summary of the results when the

research is finished. Pseudonyms were adopted for all research participants in order to maintain their anonymity.

Music elicitation

In addition to the interviews, I also asked participants to suggest songs that they would like to contribute to a hypothetical music compilation I was making for someone who was coming out. Six participants provided me with music tracks, which gave me with a list of 15 songs. The reasons given for each song selection were analysed alongside the interviews.

Table 2 List of participants' song choices

Participant	**Artist and Song**
Alex	Bitch and Animal - Feminist Housewives Jem - They The Donnas - Gold Medal
Tess	En Vogue - Don't Let Go Sarah McLachlan - Angel Boyz II Men - I'll Make Love To You
Michelle	Incubus - Are You In The Calling – Stigmatized
Jess	Tegan and Sara - Dark Come Soon Ani DiFranco - Both Hands Pearl Jam - Rearview Mirror
Fran	Heather Nova - Truth And Bone Imogen Heap - Oh Me, Oh My
Megan	Florence + The Machine - Dog Days Are Over The Be Good Tanyas - In Spite Of All The Damage

Studies within the social sciences show how participants' song choices can be used as a research methodology. Allett (2010: 6) in particular presents a compelling case for using music elicitation in qualitative research:

> Because music has a particular connection with our emotions and feelings, and is used to reflect and manage them, music has the

> potential to be used by the researcher as a means to access respondents' feelings. By placing music into an interview setting one may gain an in-depth descriptive account of the affective music experience as and after it is encountered.

Other social scientists have explored music listening experiences in everyday life, and have integrated song choices in their analysis of participants (see for example, Heye and Lamont, 2010). Within the field of geography though, song selection as an information source does not appear to have been utilised. That being said, music has been incorporated in various methodologies in geographical research. Anderson (2004), for instance, has looked into the influence recorded music has in practices of remembering. Similarly, Keightley and Pickering (2009) explore the relationship between music and memory/reminiscing, and consider music as a 'technology of memory'.

Music's worth as a 'technology of memory' validates its use as a method in my research. The reasoning behind each respondent's song choices linked very strongly with their recollection of coming out. Some song choices where about knowing you're not alone, whilst others focused on the empowering nature of coming out. Furthermore, music elicitation gave the participants an alternative medium through which to communicate their experiences of coming out. Their choice of music, at times, intersected with my musical tastes.

Positionality

Key to feminist and queer notions of research is acknowledging one's position as researcher with the subject-matter (Smith, 2008). I am a white/Pākehā woman,

aged 30, who identifies as a lesbian. I recall being attracted to women when I was 16, but did not come out until my late 20s. The private consumption of 'lesbian music' was an essential step in my coming out process as I felt I had changed but my immediate surroundings had not changed with me. Amongst the confusion of where and how to share my sexuality while still maintaining my everyday 'heterosexual' existence in the same house in the same city, I sought the refuge and safety of gay-affirming music to create new spaces to explore what it would mean to move from straight to gay. It was not the gay-themed bars, festivals, or parades that provided me with the space to express my sexuality and feel accepted; rather it was in the consumption of music. I wanted to undertake this research because I do not think my experience was unique, and that many women use music to create queer spaces and 'queerise' typically heterosexual spaces during their coming out process.

Robertson (2002), although rather critical of positionality in that it may oversimplify sameness across personal characteristics (such as sexuality, gender, and age), does say that positionality can be useful if one's position is reflected upon throughout the research process. Throughout this research, I maintained a reflective journal – an authoethnography of sorts. Complementary to the feminist nature of this research, my autoethnographic account has proved invaluable in further interrogating feelings of belonging and the meanings attached to spaces.

The experience has also highlighted to me the concept of a continual coming out and how music comforts me in my negotiations of being lesbian in various spaces. It also allowed me to reflect on what my respondents had mentioned about their

negotiations of spaces. At a more direct level, my reflections fed into continually revising and improving the semi-structured interviews undertaken in this project. I approached the interviews as a process, whereby my reflections on one interview had a subsequent affect on how I approached the subsequent interview. For instance, upon reflection, the level of openness I had during interviews had a significant impact on the level of detail they disclosed:

> "Fantastic interview today! Definitely helped doing the spiel about myself first. Kind of wished I could do the first one again – didn't open up as much as this one. Was I being too leading though? Need to work on that."
> (Reflective journal, 21/09/2011)

The term 'lesbian music' employed throughout this research is used with trepidation. Many of the respondents disliked the term 'lesbian music' despite agreeing that many lesbians share an affinity with much of the same music. Therefore, my use of 'lesbian music' should be interpreted to mean music that affirms and supports one's identification as a lesbian. As shown in the selection of music tracks, the majority of songs picked by respondents are performed by heterosexual artists. That being said, every one of the tracks selected had a strong connection to each respondent's identification as a lesbian (or at the very least, being in a same-sex relationship).

Interview Analysis

The information collected through the interviews was examined through a combination of content analysis and critical discourse analysis. The former was

employed to identify key ideas, words, and phrases. The latter was used to delve further into the key themes so to understand the wider social context that leads people to create imagined spaces in order to explore their sexual identity, place and music.

A key focus of my analysis was identifying the reasons behind the music spaces that each participant created. I also reflected back upon my own coming out and made notes on how each participant's story and creation of music spaces were different to mine. It was through this process that I began to see several different ways that music spaces helped the participants make sense of their lesbian identity as they were coming out. Alex, for instance, mentioned the word 'solidarity' numerous times in her interviews, whereas Tess talked about being able to express and share 'love' through music. In contrast, Sarah talked about creating a 'bubble' through her music listening practises. Overall three key ideas framed my research overall and were strong themes in both the analysis of the interviews and the song choices: music as safe space, music as intimate space, and music as connecting space. These three themes will be discussed in the following chapters.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined both the theoretical underpinnings that influenced my research methodologies, and the practicalities of carrying my research. I have provided an overview of the feminist underpinnings that have influenced the methods used to gather information and how I have placed myself within this research. I have also shown that, due to the sensitive nature of this topic, the

snowball technique to recruit participants, the semi-structured interviews to gather information, using music elicitation, and maintaining a reflective journal were suitable research instruments. The findings arising from the combination of content and discourse analysis of the information gathered will now be discussed in depth in the next three chapters.

Chapter IV: Full of secrets I'm too afraid to tell[1]

Music as a safe space

In this chapter I explore the ways in which music creates imagined (and 'real') safe spaces. I look specifically at the phenomenon of the 'closet', and how music creates symbolic – and at times mobile – closets within both private and public spaces. More than just a metaphorical space, the closet "has an existence in space that has location and situation" (Brown, 2000: 141). This very space is critical in concealing same-sex desires in heteronormative spaces (ibid).

Music has the ability to affect mood, atmosphere, and emotion. Hence, music not only reflects but also produces place and influences people's experience of place. The music–place relationship is therefore a powerful indicator of people's feelings of belonging or alienation. The spatial focus of this chapter is on reconsidering the home as private space, negotiating sexuality within public spaces, and judging the safety of public spaces through music.

The empirical findings in this chapter can be understood as music heterotopias. In other words, all spaces are sexualised – often heteronormatively– yet alternative sexualised spaces may be created through music. From my research it was evident that heteronormativity seeps into all spaces. Even the home – which is considered to be the epitome of private space – is not immune from dominant discourses. Valentine (1995) shows how the consumption of lesbian music can serve as a tool to contravene heterosexual spaces. This work provides a basis as to why music

[1] Lyric from Truth and Bone, Nova, H

may be an essential component of sexuality and space because music has the potential to transform space to one that is congruous with one's lesbian identity and vice versa. The interviews highlight the shame, fear, and embarrassment felt by lesbians when they move through their everyday spaces. However, acts of resistance occur and my research also demonstrates that spaces of safety can be constructed in the most oppressive of environments.

Queer identities are social constructions that are brought into being through embodied, material, and imagined spaces. Particularly for those whose sexual identity does not fit the hegemonic norm, imagined spaces – such as those created through music – play a significant role in feelings of belonging. My aim in carrying out this research is to demonstrate the importance of music spaces for lesbians during their coming out process. I question the heteronormativity of spaces, and the construction of heterotopias – which are simultaneously embedded within and detached from everyday spaces. I combine Foucault's (1986) concept of heterotopias with the notion of 'the closet' (Brown, 2000; Wheeler, 2007) in order to makes sense of the ways in which imagined spaces are constructed by lesbians through music.

Wheeler (2007) links the closet with heterotopia by adopting Foucault's mirror concept in his work. Wheeler (2007: 96) explains that:

> One must be absolutely real to have the sexual closet or mirror create a reflection of oneself; but the unreality of the sexual closet is that this reflection is not the real self but a manufactured self, devoid of sexual queerness.

Put another way, the sexual closet only exists because of the heteronormative culture of society (Brown, 2000). If sexual difference was accepted as 'normal' in all spaces, there would be no need for individuals to create heterotopias where their non-heteronormative sexuality can be safely explored and indeed hidden from dominant spaces. In the next section, I examine the construction of music heterotopias within home spaces.

Hiding in music – redefining private space

> (Home is) a private, secure location, a sanctuary, a locus of identity and a place where inhabitants can escape the disciplinary practices that regulate our bodies in everyday life. (Johnston and Valentine, 1995: 99)

Home is generally considered the epitome of private space. It is an important space in creating a sense of belonging and in the construction of identities (ibid). For some people, however, the concept of home "takes on very different meanings when it is a site where one is beaten, abused, or raped, away from the scrutiny of others" (Johnston and Longhurst, 2010: 45). Furthermore, home space can itself be a space that reinforces heteronormativity. Blunt and Dowling (2006: 101) argue that there exists in the public realm "a dominant or ideal version of house-as-home, which typically portrays belonging and intimacy amongst members of a heterosexual nuclear family". From this perspective home could be perceived as an extension of public space, in that it reflects the heteronormative ideal of home, relationships, and the family.

In each interview participants were asked whether they felt comfortable performing their sexuality in the home when they were coming out. One participant – Michelle – grew up in a conservative religious environment and her father was the church pastor. Their home was not a safe space for Michelle to explore, discuss or perform her lesbian identity, so she resorted to creating secret spaces in her bedroom, at night, to consider what being a lesbian might be like.

> Michelle: I found solace in music until I had confidence (to come out).
>
> (interview, 30/09/2011)

An imagined safe space within the home is both possible and indeed necessary when one feels intimidated or uncomfortable. For closeted lesbians, the home is not a private space, but through music a new private space within the home can be constructed. Private spaces like those constructed through music can be likened to a closet. A closet is situated within a room, but at the same time its contents are detached from the immediate surroundings. Likewise, the consumption of music can both be situated within a room whilst simultaneously detaching the listener from the heteronormative home space. It is through this perception of music consumption that we can ascribe the Foucauldian notion of heterotopia. Michelle further elaborates on music heterotopias when describing one of reasons behind her song choices:

> *Incubus - Are You In?*
>
> *It's so much better / When everyone is in / Are you in?* (Katunich et al, 2001)

> For some reason it just gave me solace at a time where I was going through a lot, mentally. I'd finish work, get home, put on this track and lay on the floor in my bedroom.
> (email communication, 09/11/2011)

Michelle's comment is demonstrative of music creating a heterotopia in that she is detaching herself from her home space by escaping into music, whilst still being situated in her bedroom. It was the space created through listening to music that gave her solace, rather than the home space itself.

Other interviewees also indicate a sense of shame, fear, and embarrassment in even toying with the notion of being lesbian, or even being connected to lesbian cultures. As already mentioned, typically 'private' spaces, such as the home, are not congruous with sexual exploration because lesbians do not feel safe to do so. What is interesting about most of the associations between music and safety is that the consumption of 'lesbian music' is often kept hidden from other people and does not form part of public listening practices. It is through these private heterotopias that performances of lesbian identity are 'tried out', tested and challenged, free from the scrutiny of others. For some respondents, the creation of safe, secretive spaces through music is not necessarily conscious and only in retrospect did they recognise the motivations behind their actions.

> Andie: In hindsight I think that I was careful to not give away that I did (listen to Ani DiFranco) and I hoped it would go away.
> (interview, 04/12/2011)

The space created through private music listening practises remains separate to other everyday experiences. Through this description, parallels emerge with Foucault's definition of a heterotopia being a mirror, in which:

> it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there (Wheeler, 2007: 96).

While the experience of listening to music is real, the space created through consumption is both connected to the home space, but is also imagined in that it is not physically present to anyone else.

Through music, one can imagine a new state of being where lesbian identity can be situated:

> *Imogen Heap – Oh Me, Oh My*
>
> *Quiet now in sleepy dreams / To me it seems the only time to be / Just me* (Heap, 1998)
>
> Fran: I think before you come out you're not sure how people will take you, so you resort to fantasies to live out your crushes. I think it's something we all do when we're 'in the closet'.
>
> (email communication, 11/11/2011)

Music heterotopias within the home are, therefore, also fantastical places. They are spaces to experience a utopian ideal where one is free to express same-sex desires in private. Furthermore, Fran's song choice also hints that this closet space

is the only place where she can perform her authentic self. This further supports the notion that the formation of alternative, imagined, spaces are critical in lesbians' coming out geographies.

Negotiating public spaces – music as a mobile closet

Heterotopias need not be permanently fixed to a certain site. Music is a powerful creator of space in that it can remain invisible to the outside world; and through music one can simultaneously be connected to both real and imagined spaces. When negotiating public spaces, the ability to connect to an alternative space can be particularly helpful when one wants to explore their sexuality in public spaces without the fear of being judged, ridiculed and marginalised.

> Sarah: I still create these little bubbles in music though – like when I'm travelling to work and stuff, but I'm not doing it about my sexuality so much. Well I guess sometimes I do – it's fun to have this secret world around all these straight people sometimes (...) I guess liberating, to break through these conservative walls with a good dose of gay.
>
> Lisa: In these situations then, do you feel more connected to the music bubble than the physical world around you?
>
> Sarah: Yeah, I suppose I do. Yeah. But it's not just that. I guess it's a way for me to feel safe in places that might not really be gay-friendly.
>
> (interview 21/09/2011)

Like home spaces, Sarah shows that public spaces are, in general, heteronormative. Even during her commute to work, Sarah seems conscious of the

fact that her sexuality is not compatible with her everyday spaces. She is consciously creating a heterotopia of deviation through the private consumption of lesbian music, which simultaneously reinforces her lesbian identity, and transports her to an imagined space. What is also interesting is that Sarah also perceives listening to lesbian music as a form of rebellion that reinforces the notion that public spaces are heteronormative and that her lesbian identity does not fit within them.

In a seminal piece of work in the field of the geography of sexualities, Valentine (1995) argues that everyday spaces are assumed to be heterosexual, but through the consumption of lesbian music these spaces can be contested. Creating alternative spaces through private listening practices is a form of resistance against dominant discourses in that it removes the listener from public practices by transporting them to a figurative, mobile closet. Jones (2009: 1) describes queer heterotopias as "places where individuals can challenge the heteronormative regime and are 'free' to perform their gender and sexuality without fear of being qualified, marginalized, or punished. Queer heterotopias tend to be understood in terms of the construction of physical sites – such as gay nude beaches (Andriotis, 2010), gay bars (Huang, 2011), and gardens (Steyaert, 2010). Unlike the studies noted, Jones (2009) shows how independent processes and actions with regards to the body can also constitute queer heterotopias, such as the process of getting a tattoo. Similarly, taking this perspective, we can see from the interviews that the consumption of music also constitute queer heterotopias through the tendency of the research participants' listening practices tend to occur in private, rather than in public spaces.

Music as a mobile closet is also a place one can retreat to when feeling intimidated or unsafe as a lesbian. As it is in C. S. Lewis' (1950) novel *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the closet can transport the listener to a heterotopia, which simultaneously removes the listener from their physical surroundings, and binds them together. Mitchell's (2009: 172) study of Icelandic band Sigur Ros demonstrates how music can create soundscapes that take listeners to an imaginary world. The author notes that "the listener's imagination creates a sense of involved narrative, meaning and locality" (ibid). These ideas are reflected in Sarah's experience of space and place:

> Sarah: I guess because you see straight relationships everywhere and everything seems to be targeted towards that, and so I had to build my own triggers for these (same sex) feelings I had because they weren't visible for me. And in that sense I guess it was hidden.
>
> Lisa: So music was a way for you to connect to those feelings?
>
> Sarah: I suppose it was about building my own little bubble to reminisce and to live out those emotions because I didn't feel I could do that with anyone else. I dunno, well maybe I was ashamed, well I guess I was scared about how others would take me.
>
> (interview, 21/09/2011)

Sarah reveals a common thread in the interviews. Once participants had accepted their lesbian identity, there was another stumbling block: how would others react

to the performance of lesbian identity in public spaces? Identities are assumed to take on a physical form in public spaces. Andrews (2009: 169), for instance, states that "gendered identities are not given but emerge in practice and as active processes through, in part, the use of space". Likewise, sexual identities develop in and through place. However, the respondents showed an aversion to joining with the stereotypical 'butch' look of lesbians.

> Fran: It took me so long to come out. I wasn't attracted to other lesbians. I only saw the stereotypical lesbians with the shaved head, tattoos, all pierced and fat. Even in Auckland. They were rude, masculine – really rude actually. They had really big egos. (interview, 19/10/2011)

Alex also avoided looking particularly gay.

> Alex: At the time it was because I wanted to educate people about being, like, gay and gay bashing. I didn't want people to just think of me as just being gay. I wanted them to like me first. And I guess I was still uncomfortable (identifying as a lesbian) myself. (follow-up interview, 12/10/2011)

Retreating to the mobile closet - that is imagined music space - is sometimes seen as a necessity when respondents are negotiating particularly hostile environments. One participant, Fran, is acutely aware that her neighbourhood is not gay friendly. A year prior to our interview her local newspaper awarded the 'Star Letter' to a homophobic piece written by a local resident (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Homophobic 'star letter'

Marriage helps to make society work

YOUR newspaper dropped in our letterbox and I was shocked by the headline Hospital On Sex Website (News Shopper, August 11).

This is meant to be a family newspaper and not some sleazy sex advertiser for the perverted.

Marriage is the thing which makes society work.

This is why we have the holy family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph — to show us man, woman and child is what God asks us to follow.

God gave homosexuals up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonouring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the creator.

For this reason God gave them up to dishonourable passions.

Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another.

If we promote anything other than marriage then we shall answer on Judgment Day for it.

Please stop advertising lesbian, gay and bisexual clubs.

You are giving our young teenagers the wrong message and promoting perversity.

Just before you mention equality there is no equality today due to everything being biased towards homosexuality.

Let's now tell the truth and stop lying to all and sundry.

MRS S FITZSIMONS
South Park Crescent
Lewisham

● What do you think? Find out how to reply in the Your Views box below or post a comment on our award-winning website newsshopper.co.uk/yoursay

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The star letter writer receives a pen from Websters in Petts Wood, The Glades in Bromley, Bluewater or the Whitgift Centre in Croydon. All prizes awarded by News Shopper direct. Visit www.websterspenshop.co.uk

Source: Lewisham News Shopper, 27/08/2010

In our interview, Fran said she would never walk hand-in-hand with her partner anymore, and in the past she had been ridiculed for holding hands with her girlfriend.

> Fran: There's a lot of anti-gay and (does slit throat gesture), but I don't pay attention anyway when I'm alone ... but if I didn't have music on I'd be paranoid.
>
> (Interview, 19/10/2011)

Fran's assertion that, without music she would feel paranoid supports the notion of music serving as a mobile closet. By creating a sense of concealment and making gay people feel invisible (Brown, 2000), music as a mobile closet shields

the listener from homophobic judgments felt in some public spaces. Retreating to imagined music spaces as a source of safety is also highlighted in my reflective journal, written on the train following my interview with Fran:

> The term '100 footer' is used to describe someone you can tell is a lesbian from 100 feet away. Today I met a respondent in Lewisham, a London borough that has received notoriety for being homophobic when an anti-gay rant was awarded the star letter in the local paper. I have never been so hyper aware of looking particularly lesbian until conducting today's interview. Her remarks about the area being anti-gay made me berate myself on my appearance. In addition to having short hair, I'm wearing brogues and a 'Bench' coat – that's pretty much like putting a neon sign saying 'lesbian' above my head. I keep my head down walking to the train station. I lose myself in confidence-boosting, pro-gay music. The rhythm supports my mantra: one hour until I'm in Brighton, one hour until I'm in Brighton.
>
> Reflective journal, 19/10/2011)

The pervasiveness of heteronormativity creates real fears that may deter the exploration of queer identities as these are deemed as not fitting within the majority of public spaces. Therefore, to be able to go about everyday routines like walking on public streets, alternative – albeit imagined – spaces of belonging are needed in order to feel safe.

Music barometers – measuring the safety of spaces through sound

> *Diva* magazine is the UK's premier lesbian magazine. This month's edition featured an article about gay spaces, which has triggered some further reflections on last week's interview with 'Michelle' – which was great, but quite hard work in terms of getting a sense of what lesbian identity meant to her and how this related to her negotiations with others and space. Likewise, the article also demonstrated some of this identity: "For some people, their sexuality is such a minor part of their identity that they're not bothered about having much of a community or tribe and feel they integrate well into the mainstream community". This has got me thinking about my presuppositions that lesbians in general crave a sense of community based on sexuality, and that when a physical sense of community is not possible, then other means are needed to feel a sense of shared identity. Is this naïve of me? Have I got it all wrong?
>
> (Reflective journal, 06/10/2011)

Space matters in the production of lesbian geographies (Browne, 2007b). Muller (2007), for instance, discusses the importance of reclaiming typically heteronormative spaces in the creation of safe lesbian spaces. However, designated gay areas such as gay quarters in large cities, queer events such as pride parades, and gay-friendly bars can polarize queer identities from general public spaces. These designated sites may also reinforce feelings of shame for being queer and highlight the notion that queer identities should be performed "out of place" (Johnston, 2007: 30). In addition to being intimidating sites for

closeted lesbians, such spaces highlight dominant discourses and the tightly-woven relationship between space and sex.

> Alex: If I came out as a lesbian then that would be my sole identity and I didn't want that.
>
> Lisa: So by not coming out you could go about your day-to-day life without being labelled?
>
> Alex: Yeah, and I didn't have any pressure to be anything other than myself.
>
> (follow-up interview, 12/10/2011)

As demonstrated by Alex's comment above, the link between sex and space further compounds the issue of being openly gay and how this affects one's negotiations of everyday spaces. For Alex, performing a lesbian identity does not conform to other ways of being. This is perhaps because, since sexuality is not as visible as other forms of identity such as race or gender "clothing styles and behaviour become significant in signalling sexual identity, authenticity and belonging" (Holt and Griffin, 2003: 412). Therefore her lesbian identity remains demarcated from public spaces. This again links us back to Brown's (2000) assertion of the closet as a space to repress queer identities.

While music can contribute to feelings of belonging in public spaces – as demonstrated by Boland (2010) on his piece about music and Scouser identity – it can also serve as a measure of inclusivity, and as such can be perceived as a definer as to whether one feels safe being openly gay. Although much research has been undertaken on the role of music within gay communities, the interviews

also showed that music provided a key indicator as to whether some mainstream spaces are accepting of queer identities.

> Lisa: What about going to gay bars?
>
> Sarah: For starters gay bars in Wellington are for men (laughs). I just go to Mighty (Mighty is an indie bar in Wellington).
>
> Lisa: And in what ways does Mighty create a space where you feel comfortable being a lesbian?
>
> Sarah: Well I was lucky because I had lesbian friends so I knew where they hung out, but I think for others out there it's probably nice to hear – well other than some of the PDA (public displays of affection) – to hear Ladytron being played and knowing it's probably somewhere lesbians go. And there's lots of all-women indie slash punk slash electro bands playing, and like, the roller derby team meet there so you know it's got to lean that way at least a little bit.
>
> Lisa: Sorry, just being clear for the write-up, by leaning that way you mean that the bar is gay friendly?
>
> Sarah: (laughs) Yeah. Well there must be at least one lesbian behind the bar if they're putting on Ladytron, right?
>
> (interview, 21/09/2011)

Sarah's search for safe spaces goes beyond seeking lesbian spaces per se. From Sarah's description of the Mighty bar, it appears that it is a venue accepting of an array of subcultures including punk music and roller derby. Lesbian identity, to Sarah, seems congruous with other types of outsider identities. Therefore, alternative bars like Mighty are perceived to be more accepting of queer

sexualities – perhaps in part due to the lack of exclusively lesbian venues in her city. Through her association between lesbian identity and the band Ladytron we can also see that the role of music seems to be a key indicator in how Sarah identifies this bar as a safe space. This aligns with Andriotis' (2010) findings regarding gay nude beaches as heterotopias. Within both the beach and the bar described by Sarah, typically 'ordinary' spaces (a beach or a bar) are transformed into spaces where non-heteronormative identities can be freely and safely performed.

On a larger scale, the commercial success of gay-themed songs also leads to a feeling of safety in public spaces more generally. Commercial radio and television stations are arguably a reflection of popular opinion in that their existence relies on mass appeal and the saturation of consumptive spaces. Consuming lesbian music through such channels therefore represents some public acceptance of queer identities.

> Lisa: So did hearing songs like Scissor Sisters on the radio and TV make being gay seem more acceptable?
>
> Fran: Of course it makes it more acceptable.
>
> Lisa: In all places?
>
> Fran: No, but in general it's more accepted.
>
> (interview 19/10/2011)

Fran's comment is interesting in that she links public spaces with mainstream music. Just as Duffy et al (2010) present a case for a sense of community through the mutual consumption of sound, Fran feels a sense of belonging with everyday spaces through the mutual consumption of gay

music on mainstream radio. From this perspective, we can see how music serves as a key indicator as to whether we feel a sense of belonging within various spaces.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have illustrated of the ways in which music may create queer heterotopias and how these are used to negotiate everyday public and private spaces. Through the interviews conducted, I have shown how public and private spaces merge and blur through music. Almost all of the women interviewed commented on their insecurities about exploring their sexuality and that even in supposed 'private' spaces they did not feel free to perform queer identities. Through music, however, the participants could experience queer identities in a safe space. The safety aspect is further highlighted through the use of music in removing the listener from intimidating spaces, and thus making it possible for them to still remain connected to their queer identity, whilst at the same time negotiating particularly heteronormative spaces. This chapter has also demonstrated that music helps ascribe meaning to space; in that it serves as a barometer as to whether the performance of queer identities is acceptable.

Chapter V: I think we're alone now[2]

Music as an intimate space

Lesbians' coming out geographies are about more than finding safe spaces. As noted in the previous chapter, coming out geographies are also affectual. Closeted lesbians are also searching for spaces to express desire, love, infatuation, and heartache. In this chapter I discuss music as a form of intimate space. A prominent theme throughout the empirical material is the notion that music creates spaces where lesbians can explore and express their feelings of love and longing for other women. Key to this theory is the notion that lesbian love is not (usually) congruous with everyday spaces, and that new places and spaces need to be consciously constructed.

The sub-header for this chapter, 'I think we're alone now' is symbolic of the privacy of spaces where intimacies are performed for closeted lesbians. The research participants demonstrate that intimate spaces are particularly key in lesbians' coming out geographies as they tend to express some form of same-sex desire prior to being officially out of the closet. This aligns with Brown's (2000: 39) finding that having sex with a same-sex partner is considered less significant than declaring same-sex desire, and as such people tend to have sex with partners of the same sex before identifying as gay. Through the consumption of music participants can disconnect both spatially and socially from the normative heterosexual environments within which they live. This is particularly necessary when it comes to finding spaces to express love and infatuation, or in creating sites to remember same-sex feelings of desire and heartache.

[2] Lyric from I Think We're Alone Now, Tiffany.

From a Foucauldian perspective, this chapter connects such spaces with heterotopias of crisis and heterotopias of time (refer to page 4 – the latter having links with recent research on emotional geographies and remembering (see for instance, Anderson, 2004; Crang, 2006). Embedded throughout this discussion is the argument that everyday spaces are not congruous with feelings of same-sex longing, loving, and heartache, and that music creates an alternative space where these feelings emotions can be freely explored and expressed.

In what follows I first discuss geographies of desire and how music serves as a heterotopia of crisis where same-sex desire can be freely performed. Second, I discuss music as a technology of memory whereby through the practice of listening to particular songs, the listener creates a heterotopia of time to reminisce past same-sex desires and heartache.

Geographies of desire

> Romance functions as a set of fantasies, feelings, rituals and everyday practices produced on an institutional level, a discursive level, and in everyday practices ... (T)he orientation of the sensual self also occurs in relation to historical and contemporary layers of power and inequality (Tornqvist, 2011: 93).

Expressions of desire are inextricably linked to place. The spaces where performances of affection – such as a kiss or holding hands – are considered appropriate and by whom they are performed are deeply rooted in popular

opinion. Valentine (1996: 150) notes that the repetitive performance of heterosexual desires in public places leads to such spaces being taken for granted as heterosexual. In September 2011, Leisha Hailey from the television show *The L Word* and her *Uh Huh Her* bandmate and girlfriend Camila Grey were allegedly told to leave the plane they boarded because they shared a kiss (NME, 28/09/2011). According to their statement, they were kicked out because their displays of affection were inappropriate on board a "family airline" (ibid). Closer to home, a young lesbian couple were told to leave a Wellington bar after they were seen kissing. The couple argued that, despite a number of heterosexual couples also kissing in the bar, they were the only ones to have been ejected (O'Callaghan and Torrie, 2012). As Nast (1998: 192) points out: "heterosex's normative public expressions are seen as innocent, natural, or unremarkable". In contrast, expressions of same-sex desire continue to be perceived as inappropriate in many everyday settings despite same-sex relationships being accepted at an institutional level in many countries, such as through the introduction of civil unions and civil partnerships in New Zealand and the United Kingdom respectively.

These pervasive ideas about place and the expression of lesbian desire are evident in many of my participants' interviews. They are averse to any kind of public displays of affection between lesbians because of negative reactions they had received or witnessed in the past.

> Lisa: In London, do you find it easier to be comfortably out in some areas more than others?

> Fran: I would never walk hand-in-hand down the road with (my girlfriend) in Catford, that's for sure. In Soho you expect to (be able to) because it's, you know, the gay area. But I just find that I don't like public displays of affection anyway. Only because even though I know it should be accepted, I've been ridiculed for it as well.
> (interview, 19/10/2011)

This then raises the question: if lesbians feel unable to express their sexual desires in public spaces, then where do they feel able? In addition to – and perhaps as an alternative to – embodied practices, people use romantic narratives, such as those performed in songs or written in verse to express their feelings in a more personal or closeted setting. Visser (2010: 180) calls such romantic narratives as a form of "controlled intimacy". They are in themselves an alternative space consciously built for the purpose of expressing desire, and are particularly beneficial when the performance of desire does not seem to fit within everyday spaces.

> Michelle: Music has no sex. It's open and it can be about and for anyone. It knows no limits.
> (interview, 30/09/2011)

Although everyday spaces are considered heteronormative, Michelle's comment shows why music can be seen as providing an alternative space where all forms of sexual desire are accepted. Because music is considered wholly accessible irrespective of sexuality, some people do not consider it to be a heteronormative space. For these people – like Michelle – music is therefore perceived as a platform upon which all forms of sexual desire can be performed. From this perspective, it becomes understandable why some of the songs discussed by

participants in this research are performed by men, such as Jess selecting several tracks by all-male band *Pearl Jam* for the hypothetical compilation (email communication, 08/11/2011), or Tess selecting a song by boy band *Boyz II Men* (email communication, 11/11/2011). The male singer tends to be in a privileged space where he can freely express the desire for a woman that many lesbians can only imagine doing. But because, as Michelle put it, music has no sex as such, it seems to be entirely feasible to transplant one's own desires into the vocalist's lyrics, irrespective of the singer's gender or sexual orientation.

More than simply being space free of criticism or ridicule, such heterotopias create spaces where same-sex affection feels not only acceptable, but indeed possible.

> Michelle: Music is good way for lesbians to feel normal and that everyone falls in love regardless of sexuality.
> (interview, 30/09/2011)

Tess has a similar view:

> I hadn't mixed with gay people or been around gay relationships, so I think that maybe music gave me hope (to fall in love).
> (interview, 30/09/2011)

What Michelle and Tess communicate here is the power of music spaces in contravening and subverting popular discourses. Music spaces are therefore aspirational. Smith (1997: 513) for instance argues that musical performance can be perceived as a space of empowerment or resistance that harnesses "musical expression to local aspiration". Just as music was a way to express suppressed emotions and challenge power structures in Victorian society (ibid), music is also

a way for lesbians to challenge the sexual hierarchy of everyday spaces. What can be understood from Michelle and Tess is that, through music, they can contest everyday assumptions that love is something that only heterosexuals are privy to.

> Fran: I used to listen to my songs that I like to use it to dream about being with other girls. And even though the songs didn't have lyrics like 'I'm a lesbian' it could have been any song, but I used to have daydreams to them
> (interview, 19/10/2011).

Being a form of 'controlled intimacy', the listener has the power to shape what feelings are performed through music spaces. Music gives the listener the power to ascribe meaning to (imagined) space by consciously building connections between music consumption and expressions of desire. In doing so, the listener is bringing to the foreground emotions that are often kept hidden in everyday spaces due to them being seen as taboo or inappropriate. This relates to research undertaken by Wood and Smith (2007: 543) in exploring the power of music in enhancing the emotional aspects of social relations:

> music as a way to articulate the unspeakable, to bear witness to that which is hidden, to feel the unthinkable, and to make known—to render undeniable—that which is so often written out of legislation, and routinely removed from political rhetoric.

My own experience sheds more light on these emotions and the power of music to assist with coming out:

> During my final closeted stages I was actually living with my boyfriend at the time. I had fallen head over heels for Jane. I detested my current living situation but at the same time was too scared to dive right into Sapphic society. I walked Jane home one night after a few drinks at a mutual friend's house. After hugging goodbye, I put on my headphones and listened to Tegan and Sara album *So Jealous*. She texted me something cute that I can't quite recall but obviously indicated she stopped to watch me walk away, and was clearly interested in me. Every single night for the next 10 days I fell asleep listening to *So Jealous* and through this consumptive space I could imagine a completely different world where I was out and with object of my desires. Jane and I would text each other during these times – sweet, romantic, flirtatious, texts that always ended in an 'x' (symbolic of a kiss) – as if my current living situation was non-existent. I would fall asleep swearing I could smell that Bvlgari perfume she wore during that first goodbye hug. After those 10 days I broke up with my boyfriend, moved out of our house, and started seeing Jane.
>
> (Coming out narrative, 31/08/2011)

The above excerpt from my coming out narrative is highly symbolic of the relationship between music and intimacy. Despite living in a de facto heterosexual relationship, I was able to create a private, distinctive space through music where my desires for another woman could be freely performed. It is also interesting that this space became embedded in my everyday routine. It was a space where I could

'test drive' my desires on a daily basis before I was ready to perform them in real life. Foucault (1986) considers sites like these, which enmesh themselves into our lives, are heterotopias of crisis. Whilst such sites appear cut off from everyday spaces, they indeed reflect and subvert the heteronormative spaces within which they are situated

> Sarah: I remember being on the bus to uni and listening to Tori Amos and thinking that nobody knows what I'm thinking and it was just this thing between me and this girl at the time.
> Lisa: So for you, listening to Tori Amos created this secret bubble where you could think about your feelings for that girl?
> Sarah: Yeah. Like not in a kinky way or anything, but I could imagine that she was sitting next to me and we were holding hands. And also, I guess it made those feelings OK?
> Lisa: Because you didn't think those feelings could fit in your everyday existence?
> Sarah: Yeah, because it's a straight world, and lesbians are (pulls face) gross! (laughs)
> (interview, 21/09/2011)

Music creates a space where non-heteronormative feelings feel acceptable. In addition to being a space of controlled intimacy, more importantly the listener is detaching themselves from their immediate, heteronormative surroundings, and transports themselves to an imagined space that forges them closer to the object of their desire.

Tess: I feel connected to girlfriends through music.

Lisa: In what way do you feel connected to them?

Tess: Well I made these love tapes, hoping that my girlfriend would have the same feelings as me when she listened to it.

Lisa: So you felt closer to her through making these love tapes?

Tess: Yeah. Well it was a way where I could show my feelings, so she knew I was there and was thinking about her.

(interview, 30/09/2011)

In addition to creating spaces for us to express emotions, music is also used as a form of eliciting desired responses from others. Tess made love tapes, hoping that her girlfriend at the time would share the same feelings as her when listening to the music. She was using the mix tapes to create a space where her and her girlfriend would feel connected to one another – where their feelings of love could be expressed and shared. Another participant would not make one, but two copies of mix tapes so that her and her girlfriend could have a copy each (Alex, follow-up interview, 12/10/2011). In this instance Alex is creating a space of intimacy that both her and her girlfriend can share, despite their physical distance from one another. Not only is Alex's girlfriend being transported to a space where her partner can express her feelings, but Alex herself is creating a space where she too is reminded of her affections for her girlfriend. Rudd (1997) asserts that, through the intimate nature of music consumption, individuals are bound together through a common listening experience, thus intensifying the connections they have with one another. Just as it can bind individuals together, the intimate nature of music consumption can also bind the past with the present as a technology of memory, which is what I discuss in the next section.

Music as technology of memory

What comes through in the conversations with participants is that music serves as a space to reminisce past intimacies. Foucault (1985) calls such spaces ‘heterotopias of time', where objects or places from another era preserve experiences from the past, which are then placed to be experienced within the present. Such spaces, like a museum, exist within the everyday whilst simultaneously being situated “outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages” (Foucault, 1986: 26). Crang (2006: 2315) calls such sites symbolic constructions where symbols of the past trigger “visceral affective responses”. Sometimes these sites elicit involuntary acts of remembering because they are so embedded in our everyday life; but since everyday spaces are heteronormative, there are very few triggers that elicit reminiscing of same-sex desires.

> Sarah: I guess because you see straight relationships everywhere and everything seems to be targeted towards that, and so I had to build my own triggers for these (same sex) feelings I had because they weren’t visible for me. And in that sense I guess it was hidden.
>
> Lisa: So music was a way for you to connect to those feelings?
>
> Sarah: I suppose it was about building my own little bubble to reminisce and to live out those emotions because I didn’t feel I could do that with anyone else. I dunno, well maybe I was ashamed, well I guess I was scared about how others would take me.

(interview, 21/09/2011)

Sarah highlights the importance of everyday cues to draw out emotions in our daily lives. The abundance of heteronormative discourses appears to exacerbate Sarah's craving to relive past events and to integrate them into all spaces – just as expressions heterosexual desires are seemingly embedded into all facets of everyday life. As an alternative then, music transports her to another place – a heterotopia of time - where past intimacies can exist in her daily life. This kind of purposeful re-imagining of the past into the everyday is precisely what Anderson (2004: 17) discusses when describing how music makes possible for past memories to be re-experienced intensely in the present. Anderson (2004: 16) also states that these "practices of remembering can therefore on occasion, and from within the context of a specific everyday life, take on a utopian function". I, however, would argue that rather than taking on a utopian function, such moments are themselves heterotopias that exist within everyday practices.

De Nora (2000) states that music is a device one uses to configure a space that allows them to reflect upon difficult circumstances. However, I argue that music is more than a device and is a space in its own right. Sarah's linkage with music as a bubble shows how music can also be seen as an annexed space that one can enter in order to deal with emotions that seem incongruous with everyday spaces. Just as Wylie (2009: 278) describes memorial benches as "material manifestations of memory and love", constructed for the purpose of keeping memories alive in the present, so too could music be seen as a similar manifestation: a space in its own right.

I did not come out as a lesbian until after my first few same-sex relationships for two key reasons. The first was that, in the eyes of my family, I was a *straight*, successful, public servant. The second was that my first few flings remained secret even to some of my closest friends for various reasons. During this time it seemed that there was no space away from the object of my affection where I could express the multitude of emotions I was feeling. But through music, I could consciously create a space to unpack my emotions and reminisce – whether that be during my walk to work, or exercising at the gym, or when preparing to sleep. It is through these two initial experiences of same sex longing and heartache that a new habit emerged: for each of the women I have been infatuated with since, I have created a playlist where those initial feelings of desire can be revisited. At the time, these playlists served as a necessary space to unpack emotions and feel connected to someone from whom I was publicly disconnected. Listening back now, these playlists serve as a portal – taking me back to times where specific emotions are triggered.

> Alex: I guess I link that time with Sinead O'Connor because she gave me that album.
>
> Lisa: So when listening to Sinead O'Connor did you feel connected to your girlfriend?
>
> Alex: Uh yeah. It was kind of like this secret language between us. It gave me a sense of comfort ... There's this one song, John I Love You and (she) said it was actually '(Alex) I Love You'.
>
> Lisa: So if you listened to that song now, would it remind you of her and your relationship back then?

> Alex: Yeah, I think so. Yes. But only because she was my first love. It's not like I have special songs for everyone. It's not so much about her as it is about the time I became a lesbian.
> (follow-up interview, 12/10/2011)

Alex's use of the term "comfort" is particularly interesting in that is suggests that the song provided her with some validation the feelings she had for her girlfriend were both genuine and reciprocated. In her first interview, Alex discussed her aversion to coming out even while she was with this girlfriend. Because they could not express their desires publicly, hidden spaces like that of music served as a much-needed substitute. In the music of Sinead O'Connor, Alex has not only stored memories of a girlfriend, but also reminders of the time she was starting to identify as a lesbian. The fact that Alex acknowledges that she does not store other such memories through music goes to show how unique these spaces are in lesbians' coming out geographies.

The emotive space of music can also elicit feelings of pain and loss. From the interviews it appears that the first lesbian heartache occurs before they have fully come out as lesbian. Perhaps because of this, there exists a need to find a similarly closeted space to grieve over hidden feelings. Megan describes music as a space to deal with heartache through her song selection in the hypothetical compilation:

> *In Spite of All The Damage by The Be Good Tanyas*

> *If I wanted to say to you / That I wanted to see your face again / That I want to hear you laughing / /In spite of all the damage I've done* (Ford, 2003)
>
> Megan: She introduced me to the song by putting it on a special 'mix tape' she made to assist me with the whole coming out ordeal - and it was to intro me to some comfort tunes for feeling like you're not the only one who's ever had the 'gaybo girl blues' hahaha! It soothed me through some of the 'first girl' heartbreak that inevitably seemed so much more meaningful and terrible at the time than it really was quite shortly after. Yup ... it seems very common that part of the self-rediscovery/realisation process with coming out must involve having your first girl heartbreak drama and that it must involve experiencing feelings and relationship intensities as if your (sic) on a second delayed bout of teenage hormones....there totally must be a soundtrack's worth of songs to help with that 'second teen heartbreak hormones' feeling on its own! Everything gets at least a bit better after that!"
>
> (Email correspondence, 09/01/2012)

In her narrative Megan talks about the "soothing" nature of music. Within it, she finds a space where her feelings of heartache for a woman can be acknowledged and comforted in private. Not only is Megan finding a space to grieve, through music she is also feeling a sense of connection to other lesbians who understand what she is going through. Because she feels unable to share such emotions to people in her everyday life, such a connection is critical to her dealing with her emotions and learning how to move on. Linking back to music as a technology of

memory, through this particular song Megan is able to “fix, freeze or frame an event” (Anderson, 2004: 15) in order to re-encounter the emotions “from the vantage-point of the present” (ibid). Furthermore, this aspect of fixing, freezing or framing an event within the everyday links back to the contents within a museum, which is symbolic of a heterotopia of time.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored music as intimate space in lesbians’ coming out geographies. I have focused on two key aspects of intimate space: namely, music as a space of desire, and music as a technology of memory. Through the voices of the research participants, I argue that music subverts notions of what is considered appropriate intimate relationships. Through music, lesbians can live out their fantasies, express their feelings towards same-sex lovers, reminisce former loves, or deal with heartache.

Music spaces form a certain rite of passage for lesbians in performing same-sex desires in their coming out geographies. In this regard, I have illustrated how such practices fit within Foucault’s framework of heterotopias of crisis, whereby music allows the listener to remove themselves from their everyday geographies in order to express their same-sex desires. Similarly, I have also taken Foucault’s notion of heterotopias of time to illustrate how, like museums; music can serve as a space where the past can be brought through the present.

I have also demonstrated how music spaces can be considered technologies of memory. In doing so, I have demonstrated a connection between technologies of

memory and heterotopias of time. The research participants seemed to rely on music spaces to store memories of first loves, and to grieve over broken relationships. This appeared to be particularly critical for closeted lesbians, who felt a sense of connection to others – whether that be their former partners, or other lesbians who understood such emotions.

Chapter VI: Where are all the lezzers like me?

Music as connecting space

Sedgwick (1990: 68) calls the closet the "fundamental feature of social life" for non heteronormative people. Similarly, music spaces can serve as a closet for lesbians to feel socially connected to others. In this chapter, I discuss how music plays a pivotal role in lesbians' feelings of connection to other lesbians. Neither the home nor public spaces were sites respondents felt comfortable connecting with other lesbians, or feel comfortable in expressing their sexuality. As such, alternative spaces of connecting were craved, and music played a central part in the construction of such spaces. By public space, I am excluding gay venues because, like Browne (2009: 139), I perceive these establishments as private as they have "clearly established boundaries separating it from the larger heteronormative spatial regime (and) have also been associated with safety and protection".

In the first part of this chapter, I discuss the transformative power of music in shaping space. These places – concerts and bars in particular - are active as they encourage social connectivity amongst lesbians. In the second part of this chapter, I explore the imagined and virtual connections lesbians make through music. Through these spaces, feelings of isolation abate, and a sense of connection between lesbians – both known and unknown – develops.

Constructing lesbian social spaces through music

So far in this thesis I have discussed how intimate associations and lesbian identities develop through the use of safe spaces. Tied in closely with this are the social connections that develop through mutual expressions of lesbian identity within a particular site. Not only is it critical for lesbians to find safe spaces to perform their sexual identity, but key to coming out is finding spaces to connect with others who also identify as lesbian. However, establishing social connections along the lines of affinity – like sexuality – can prove problematic, as the members within the group may not be as immediately identifiable through such indicators as age or ethnicity (Shelemay, 2011: 373) or indeed dress sense (Johnston and Longhurst, 2010). Locating sites where particular lesbian identities are performed are thus key in forming social connections along these lines; but how do such sites become known?

Gay bars, clubs and venues tend to serve as the social hub for homosexuals. In towns and cities where there is no established 'gay scene', however, alternative ways to forge social connections on the grounds of sexual identity are needed. One recent method of connectivity is the *Grindr* phone application for gay men, which alerts them to places where they can meet up with other gay men (George, 2011). Whilst such networking applications have been successful amongst gay men, similar applications directed towards a lesbian market have failed, due in part to there being very little understanding of how lesbian women connect – both romantically and platonically (Harrad, 2011). What this demonstrates is that lesbians tend to keep their performance of sexual identity more hidden. As such, more nuanced indicators – such as musical preference – become even more critical for social connectivity.

> Alex: I saw these girls that were quite cool and gay and they were talking about Tegan and Sara and I didn't know them but wanted them to know I was gay and wanted them to like me, so I said yeah I know them, even though I didn't know their music.
>
> (interview, 15/09/2011)

Alex's description is particularly interesting because the interaction took place on an urban street. As discussed in Chapter V, Alex avoided looking particularly, so one of the only indicators she had to demonstrate her identity as a lesbian (other than blatantly outing herself) was through her taste in music. This example can be understood by considering Boland's (2010) research on Scouser identity, in that music is seen as a key indicator of who is in and who is out. Furthermore, this example shows how music is a pathway to a particular kind of lesbian community that Alex wanted to be part of.

Music has the power to transform heteronormative sites into supportive environments where lesbians can freely connect to one another. Two respondents discussed attending a Tegan and Sara concert and the feelings of solidarity and belonging by being in the audience with other lesbians. Andie, who at the time had not yet come out, recalls the concert as being a poignant and transformative moment in accepting her lesbian identity.

> Andie: At the time it seemed like a real baptism of sorts. It was probably the first time I acknowledged that yip, this is who I am.
>
> (interview, 04/12/2011)
>
> Jess: I remember thinking that these are my people.
>
> (interview, 11/10/2012)

Shared collective experiences in concerts are powerful ways in which to both understand one's lesbian identity, and to be part of a publically expressed group identity. This links with a special edition of the *Social and Cultural Geography* journal, which addresses the ways in which space matters in the production of lesbian geographies (Browne, 2007b). Muller (2007), for instance, discusses imagined lesbian communities within the sports stadium, which is not typically a space associated with lesbian identity. However, through the performance of women's basketball, the site is transformed as a space of social agency for lesbians. Andie's and Jess's remarks on their experiences at a Tegan and Sara concert share similar sentiments, in that through the shared experience of watching a lesbian band play, they felt a sense of connection to, and mutual identification with, members of the audience.

Many participants regarded the label of 'lesbian music' with disdain. Likewise, many participants felt uncomfortable socializing in established lesbian sites like bars and university clubs.

> Sarah: I remember thinking about going to a UniQ meeting – you know, that university group? But I chickened out because it just seemed like an all or nothing, and I wasn't there yet, and I don't know, I guess I was scared of lesbians because I didn't know who they were.
>
> (follow-up interview, 20/10/2011)

However, as with the Tegan and Sara concert, music has the power to influence people's experience of place, to the point of feeling a sense of belonging despite

their initial unease. Alex, who at one point joked that "lesbians are gross" (interview, 15/09/2011) felt nonetheless a sense of social connectedness in a particular lesbian bar.

> Lisa: You mentioned in the last interview that a lesbian space you frequent is the Marlborough. How does the music played in this space affect your feelings of it? For example, does the music being played have any bearing on whether you feel comfortable there?
>
> Alex: Actually that's probably one of the reasons why that place was so cool. Because the music was mine and I probably went back because of that. It wasn't necessarily gay music. It was like she snuck into my house and stole my playlists.
>
> Lisa: And did that affect what you thought of the people there?
>
> Alex: Definitely. When you're with a group of people in a certain space and they like the music you like, then it changes things. It's sort of like a sense of community in that respect.
>
> (follow-up interview, 12/10/2011)

Despite being a lesbian bar, Alex found a sense of connection to other lesbians at the Marlborough through the connections felt through a shared affinity towards music. Even though she feels uncomfortable in other gay spaces, Alex's experience of the Marlborough pub was transformed through the affective power of music in creating a space of social agency among lesbians that she could identify with.

Visible social spaces, like these concerts and the established lesbian sites like the Marlborough pub can be interpreted as heterotopias, much in the same way that

Andriotis (2010) uses the term when describing gay nude beaches. Unlike the imagined spaces described in the previous chapters, these physical sites constitute heterotopias in that they transform typically ordinary spaces – a concert venue or a bar for instance – into alternative spaces through the shared performances of non-heteronormative identities within them. What is key in this particular kind of heterotopia is that music is the critical element in transforming these sites into lesbian geographies. Through a collective listening experience, a feeling of community in relation to lesbian identity emerges. This parallels, once more, with Muller's (1997: 10) research on women's basketball, where "attendance provides an opportunity to see and be an active, visible part of the community that is claimed". However, like other types of heterotopias, such spaces exist outside of the everyday, outside of the ordinary.

Identities are not fixed but are performed, and music can play a critical role in these performances. In addition to helping people understand and develop their own identity, the consumption of music can also reduce feelings of isolation and marginalisation (Hudson, 2006: 629). Furthermore, being able to perform a marginalised identity publicly can be a particularly powerful experience for lesbians who have newly acknowledged their identity.

> *Florence and the Machine – Dog Days Are Over*
>
> *The dog days are over / the dog days are over / can't you hear the horses / 'cause here they come* (Welch and Summers, 2008)
>
> Megan: We saw Florence together at a French music fest in July 2010. I remember roaring the lyrics and feeling like it was really

> saying 'the dark days are over', so it was a bit of a turning point (in coming out).
>
> (email correspondence, 09/01/2012)

The song *Dog Days Are Over* is clearly a song Megan strongly links with coming out and accepting her lesbian identity. In addition, her link between this song and her identity helps her feel accepted and connected to other lesbians.

Building virtual connections through sound

Music spaces can also supersede physical boundaries when creating spaces of belonging. Kruse (2011) argues that the music 'scene' could be defined as both a physical site of performance and as a social network that transcends localities. As such, physical proximity can become redundant when building connections through musical affinity as music spaces can manifest virtually.

> Today, in the age of the internet, looking at scenes in isolation makes even less sense, as the ability to connect with others across scenes …has become easier than ever before (Kruse, 2011: 629).

As Johnston and Longhurst (2010: 72) note, there is an emerging trend of people belonging to communities that they are physically detached from. These 'virtual' communities are formed because shared subjectivities can supersede physical proximity when it comes to finding spaces of belonging and acceptance. Bury (2005: 36) explores virtual heterotopias where women create sites of "alternative spatial orderings" where conventional power relations can be changed in such a way that women no longer feel as oppressed as they typically do in everyday society. As a virtual site, music, like cyberspace, can also contravene normalised

spatial practices. One research participant discussed using Facebook to post music videos from lesbian musicians as her way to feel connected to the lesbian community. Whilst this participant feels physically isolated from other lesbians, she relies on both music and the internet (often in combination) to communicate and feel a sense of connection with other lesbians.

> Jess: I posted a track by Peaches and it gave me a sense of connection with other lesbians.
>
> Lisa: So even though it's your public page that everyone can see, why only lesbians did you feel connected to?
>
> Jess: (The song) was like a hidden language that only other lesbians would understand. And it was nice to see them respond to that
>
> (interview, 11/10/2011)

In this way, despite Facebook being a seemingly public space to express lesbian identity, it is a vehicle within which identities can be performed in a nuanced way. Jess finds that through her affiliation with certain types of songs, she can position herself as a lesbian in a codified manner that only other lesbians could decipher and react to. Posting a song performed by a lesbian artist is Jess's way to create imagined social connections with other lesbians and to confirm her own identity as a lesbian. Through this medium, Jess was instigating a two-way conversation with other lesbians as they can respond through either 'liking' the post or writing a comment. Feeling a sense of connection with lesbians through music appears particularly common for newly-identified lesbians searching for ways to connect,

and those – like Jess – who feel physically detached from any kind of lesbian community.

> Lisa: Do you think coming out impacted on what type of music you listened to?
>
> Lana: Yeah. I would say that. I tried to use the internet more to explore, you know, who was gay and who sings what.
>
> (interview, 19/10/2011)

Some people, in search of social agency, forge connections through music despite not liking the music itself. Lana, for instance, downloaded the Katy Perry song *I Kissed A Girl* in preparation for a road trip she was going on with some lesbian friends. Despite claiming to dislike the song, she downloaded it because of the imagined connections she associated between the song and her lesbian friends.

> Lana: I think I wouldn't download that song, but because we were 12 lesbians who were partying and I knew the girls would love it. And it was nice to hear; well it was the first song really about kissing a girl. But if I compare to music I love, like classical music – I can't even compare it to that; it's absolutely rubbish.
>
> (interview, 19/10/2011)

Lana is not alone in feeling a sense of collective lesbian identity through music despite not liking the music on a personal level. Because of her disdain for the song, Lana highlights rather pertinently the power of social agency through song. Building connections through music is not simply a product of shared personal taste. A sense of affiliation and identification over and above musical style has the power to bind people together.

Social connections matter in the formation and expression of identity. In the absence of real connections, imagined connections are built. As well as providing a space to express desire, particular tracks can serve as a space to socially connect with other lesbians. Alex talks about giving bands "more of a chance if they sound lesbian or have women musicians" (interview, 15/09/2011). When asked why that is, she says:

> Alex: Lesbians are about being strong... I feel connected to that...
> And there's this girl power thing (and) wanting to support them.
> (ibid)

Furthermore, these feelings of support can be conveyed through the private consumption of music. The prominent role that music has in Jess's identity and her connection to other lesbians is perhaps best noted when she made a compilation CD of 'lesbian music' for a friend who was just coming out in her late 20s.

> Jess: I just wanted to support her through the process (of coming out) and show her that there's more to lesbians than just the stereotypes and that there are good lesbians out there.
> (follow-up interview, 25/10/2011)

Jess' statement that there are 'good lesbians out there' is interesting in that she seems to indicate that like-minded lesbians perhaps fall under the radar and a thus hard to come by. The hidden nature of 'good lesbians' means that imagined social attachments serve as a useful alternative in establishing and maintaining feelings

of belonging. Through the consumptive space of music, Jess is providing her cousin with an alternative means of social connectivity.

Following this interview, I reflected upon a similar experience I had prior to coming out:

> About six months before I came out, my sister sent me a compilation CD for my birthday. She had come out a few years earlier, and I was intrigued whether any of the musicians featured on this compilation also identify as lesbian. I thought of this compilation as a sort of secret portal, transporting me into this hidden lesbian lifestyle. In Googling the lyrics of the songs featured, I felt that I was deciphering a code, hearing messages that yes, my sister knew I was gay and that she was introducing me to her lifestyle. Incessantly listening to this CD, I really felt like a part of something; that I was finally with people that I belonged to. (Reflective journal, 25/10/2011)

Another participant went further in her linkage between music and lesbian identity through her construction of an imagined lesbian community. As a teenager, Alex was particularly enamoured by the social connections formed through watching a band in the fictitious lesbian film *All Over Me.*

> Alex: She goes into a bar where there's this band of girls. She's there by herself but it's fine. And I thought 'where is that bar?' I want to go to a place like that and hang out with those kinds of people and see those kinds of bands.

(interview, 15/09/2011)

After watching the film, Alex reminisces about getting the soundtrack to the film and having those feelings of connection to an imagined community of lesbians.

> Alex: You just don't have those places in New Zealand, so the soundtrack was as close as I could get. It was like being there
>
> (ibid)

The soundtrack was, in essence, a heterotopia where Alex could create an imagined space where like-minded lesbians could socialise. Similarly, the compilation from my sister and the compilation Jess made for her cousin also serve as heterotopias. Like Hetherington's (1997: 31) study of gay nudists, these kinds of heterotopias become "a free site, celebrated as a space apart in which people can be and act out difference". Through these albums, lesbian identity can be celebrated, and an imagined sense of affinity with the lesbian identity in general can be established. In essence, through the space of music feelings of pride and belonging ensue.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have focused on the role of music in creating spaces of social connectivity among lesbians. The participants in this research demonstrate the feelings of belonging and shared identity with other lesbians through the collective consumption of music. Such sites of shared consumption are considered transformative in the coming out process for lesbians. In addition, shared music tastes serve as a powerful symbol of affinity when seeking to build social connections on the basis of sexual identity. But while these social attachments

were with those in a shared physical space, others develop such connections within imagined spaces.

Chapter VIII: Last verse

Despite recognition of music as a space in its own right, there remains and underwhelming amount of research exploring music as both 'real' *and* imagined space. In this thesis I have shown that the space created through music consumption can be considered imagined despite being simultaneously being situated within 'real' space. Not only have a presented a case for the consideration of music as imagined space through the application of Foucault's (1986) heterotopia, I have also shown the different purposes that such spaces can serve in lesbians' coming out geographies. While the experience of listening to music is real and is situated in real space, the space created through consumption is also imagined in that it is not physically present to anyone else. Through music one can simultaneously be connected to both real and imagined spaces. Particularly when negotiating public spaces, the ability to connect to a music spaces can be helpful when one wants to explore their sexuality without the fear of being judged, ridiculed and marginalised.

My research has demonstrated the power of music in manipulating feelings within particular spaces. For instance, in Chapter V, I show that music not only creates spaces for the expression of desire, but also serves as a form of controlled intimacy for other listeners. I have also shown that imagined music spaces are particularly important for socially isolated lesbians to feel a sense of attachment and belonging to other lesbians.

This research makes a valuable theoretical and methodological contribution to a number of fields. Firstly, the research presents a compelling argument for the exploration of heterotopias in geographical research. As identified in Chapter II, there has been very little research on heterotopias in geography despite numerous considerations of imagined spaces. Secondly, this thesis has taken a rather unique perspective of music spaces and their role in the performance of identities. Whilst the concept of music as imagined space is not uncommon, my argument that music spaces can be considered heterotopias in their own right is (to the best of my knowledge) completely new. Key to understanding the geographies of sexualities is understanding how heteronormativity is contested in everyday spaces. As I have demonstrated in this research, music can play a significant role in contesting typically heterosexual spaces in a number of ways to serve a number of purposes. I have shown that music has the power to remove the listener from spaces where they feel unsafe or uncomfortable in performing their lesbian identity. I have argued that, in the absence of physical sites, imagined space plays a significant role in feelings of belonging.

Overarching the literature that informed my research has been the concept of heterotopias and their place in lesbians' coming out geographies. Originally adopted as a method to explore the geography of the closet, through this research process I have widened my initial narrow perception on what constitutes heterotopias, and the broader application of music spaces as heterotopias. As a safe space to retreat, I have demonstrated how music can be perceived as a heterotopia of crisis. As a space to reminisce previous performances of sexual identity, I have shown that music can also be interpreted as a heterotopia of time.

Limitations

In retrospect I feel the scope in the information being gathered with significantly limited in my methodological approach. Given the complex and sometimes abstract subject matter, I feel that more innovative forms of information collection would have helped participants better reminisce their own experiences of coming out and the role music spaces may have had in this. Photos can arouse emotional responses from research participants (Rose, 2004). Likewise, music as a technology of memory could have been more comprehensively used in my research (for instance, the use of sound diaries). Furthermore, a more focused exploration of the performance of lesbian identity in everyday geographies would have further enriched my findings (see for instance Bhatti et al., 2009 on performance in garden spaces).

Future research

In Chapter III I showed how the music elicitation technique proved to be a highly valuable methodology in communicating what is meant by imagined music spaces. By considering pertinent songs in their own coming out processes, participants were able to comprehend and convey the role of music in their coming out geographies. In retrospect I feel that the heavy reliance of interviewing to gather information was a limitation in my research, and that perhaps sound diaries would have been a valuable methodological tool. Duffy and Waitt (2011: 127) present a number of benefits in using sound diaries as a methodology – for instance, that it enables "the writing of geographies of everyday experiences often inhibited by the formalised interactions of

interviews". Furthermore, sound diaries contribute to respondents' increased understanding of music as space and the affectual qualities of such spaces – including feelings of belonging. Another benefit of sound diaries is that it provides an alternative way to express hard-to-articulate emotions and affects, which are so often hard to communicate in a typical one-to-one interview structure. These benefits appear to fill the limitations identified in this research.

Finally

In this thesis I have shown how one can simultaneously be connected to both real and imagined spaces through music. Through the concept of heterotopia, I have highlighted the importance of music in the performance of lesbian identity during coming out processes. When negotiating public spaces, the ability to connect to an alternative space can be particularly helpful when one wants to explore their sexuality in without the fear of being judged, ridiculed and marginalised. The power of music - for lesbians during their coming out process – creates safe spaces, intimate spaces, and connecting spaces.

This thesis highlights the lack of attention paid to lesbians' coming out geographies and demonstrates the power of music in subverting the sexual hegemony of everyday imagined and real spaces. I hope that considering lesbians' coming out music heterotopias may encourage a more critical understanding of power, sexualities, music, space and place.

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Appendix 1: Email introduction letter

Staying in, tuning in, and coming out:
The role of music for lesbians' coming out geographies

Hi,

My name is Lisa Hardie and I am a Masters student in Geography, based in Brighton.

I am interested in talking women who came out as lesbians in their 20s or 30s, and exploring the role music played in their coming out process. I am particularly interested in talking to people who believe:

- listening to music played an important role in their coming out process; or
- their music tastes changed considerably as they were coming out.

On a personal note, I too fit the description of the people I would like to meet, and am genuinely interested in finding out more about the relationship between music and coming out.

If this sounds like you or someone you know, I would love to hear from you (please see the attached Information Sheet for more details).

If you would like to know more about this research, please get in touch.

Thanks for your time and I look forward to hearing from you,
Lisa

Lisa Hardie
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Appendix 2: Information sheet for individual interview

Staying in, tuning in, and coming out:
The role of music for lesbians' coming out geographies

Thank you for taking the time to consider being a part of this research. I am Master of Arts student at the University of Waikato in New Zealand. As the title of my research suggests, I am interested in talking women who came out as lesbians in their 20s or 30s, and exploring the role music played in their coming out process.

If you identify as a lesbian and came out in your 20s or 30s, I would really like to meet you. I would especially like to meet you if:

- you feel listening to music played an important role in your coming out process; or
- your music tastes changed considerably as you were coming out.

On a personal note, I too fit the description of the people I would like to meet, and am genuinely interested in finding out more about the relationship between music and coming out.

What will my involvement in this research be?
If you choose to participate, you can contact me through my details on the first page and ask any questions that you might have concerning this research. If you are agreeable to meeting with me, we will then discuss a suitable time and place for us to sit down and do the interview. I will also use a small audio recorder to have an accurate record of our discussion; however, if you do not feel comfortable (for whatever reason) about being recorded that is fine and instead I will only take notes as we go.

What are my rights as a participant?
As a participant in this research you have the right to:

- refuse to answer any questions
- ask any further questions about the research during your participation in the research
- anonymity and confidentiality
- withdraw from the research (up to one month after the interview) without question.

What will my information be used for?
The findings of this project will be presented as a Masters thesis. The findings may also be included in subsequent articles and presentations in relation to the thesis.

This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences of the University of Waikato. Any questions about the ethical conduct of this research may be sent to the Secretary of the Committee, email fass-ethics@waikato.ac.nz postal address, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Te Kura Kete Aronui, University of Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240, New Zealand.

Appendix 3: Consent form

Staying in, tuning in, and coming out:
The role of music for lesbians' coming out geographies

"I agree to take part in this research and acknowledge receipt of a copy of this information sheet and signed consent form. I understand my rights as a participant in this research and that my identity will remain confidential and anonymity guaranteed unless I state otherwise. I have had adequate opportunity to discuss the above information and I am satisfied with the answers that have been provided."

I consent to being interviewed	Yes / No
I consent to our conversation being audio-recorded	Yes / No
I wish to receive a copy of the findings	Yes / No
I wish to remain anonymous for this research	Yes / No
If YES	
A pseudonym of my own choosing can be used in this research	Yes / No

_____ (to be signed and dated by participant)

"I agree to abide by the conditions set out in the information sheet/consent form and I will ensure that no harm will be done to any participant as a result of this research"

_____ (to be signed and dated by Lisa Hardie)

Appendix 4: Interview schedule

Tuning in, and coming out:
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Name/Pseudonym _____

Theme 1: Identity

Tell me about your coming out process

Prompts:

- How old were you when you were knew you were a lesbian?
- How long after you knew that you were a lesbian did you come out to others?
- When you first knew you were a lesbian, how many friends did you tell?
- When you first knew you were a lesbian, how many family members did you tell?
- When you first knew you were a lesbian, how many people at work/school did you tell?
- Can you talk about these decisions you made during this period of your coming out?

Theme 2: Place

Which places were most significant to you when you were coming out?

Prompts

- Did you find it easier to explore your sexuality in some places more than others – for example, at home, at work/school, in gay/lesbian bars, in private spaces, in public spaces?
- Did you know many lesbians when you were coming out?
- And in what ways is this significant to your own sense of identity?
- Can you talk about whether you found it easy to connect with other lesbians when you were coming out.

Theme 3: Music

Did the music that you were listening to change as you were coming out?

Prompts:

- What kind of music did you start listening to?
- In what ways do you think it is significant to your identity?
- Where did you tend to listen to this type of music (e.g. at home, in bars, using headphones)?
- Has the place of your music listening changed prior to, during, and after coming out? Any examples?
- What kinds of feelings were evoked when you listened to this type of music?
- Do you share your music with other lesbians? When/how/where?

Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you for your time!

Your details (for my records)

Name: _____

Age: _____

Phone: _____ (mobile) _____ (home)

Email: _____

How do you describe your gender?: _____

How do you describe your sexuality?: _____

Ethnicity: _____

Occupation: _____