

Men Selling Sex to Men:  
Representations, identities, and experiences in contemporary London

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By Allan Tyler, MSc FHEA

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*Declaration*

'I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.'

Signed:

Allan Tyler

Date: 23 October 2015

With corrections submitted

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**Abstract**

This study seeks to record and document the voices, experiences and representations of men who sell sex to men in London through advertising in queer media. It examines the diverse experiences and representations of men who sell sex to men and the roles they have in co-constructing the meanings of queer, male, and sexual identities and practices. It explores data triangulated from a queer ethnography of London's queer scenes, including: semi-structured interviews with key informants (n=20), samples of escort and masseur advertisements collected from print media, data from social networking websites aimed at gay men, and field notes from collecting data within London's queer scenes. Eighteen of the interview participants are gay or bisexual men who have used advertising to sell sex to other men in London themselves. The study finds that classified advertising can be used as a canon of texts to explore socially constructed records of sexual and economic stories. It details how men have used promotion strategies and technologies to sell sex to other men in London from the early 1990s to the present and how those media have evolved in that time. It suggests ways that sex in this queer, commercial scene is often comparable to more explicit forms of commercial sex transactions. In turn, shifts are illustrated in how sex work is defined here, including ways that the socio-economic, embodied, performative priorities of queer men are interrelated with their geographic and temporal contexts. The study examines ways that typological models can be limiting to how sex work is understood and proposes an (inter-)relational model grounded in the data from men who have sold sex, semiotic structures of analysis, and queer theory. Finally, it argues that these frameworks usefully operationalise structures of subjectivity in empirical research of human and social sciences.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. What is going on here?

This thesis seeks to record and document the voices, experiences and representations of men who sell sex to men in London through advertising in queer media. Whilst the majority of research about selling sex has focused on women selling sex to men, researchers have found that 5% (median 5.1%) of gay men surveyed across 38 countries in Europe report having sold sex *within the last 12 months* (The EMIS Network, 2010); yet, very few researchers have made men selling sex the focus of their investigation. Fewer still have studied men selling sex in Britain. Globally, men who sell sex are discursively constructed as prostitutes, rent boys, hustlers and/or escorts; however, there appear to be significant numbers of men who report selling sex for only a short period of time or only very occasionally. These men have remained mostly invisible – or erased – from discourses and narratives about selling sex. Paradoxically, men advertising as escorts are highly visible in ‘gay scene’ magazines and on social sexual networks, as well as being recognisable in queer (and queer-friendly) spaces that frame and house London’s queer scene – particularly the *commercial*, ‘gay’ scene. Thus, there are empirical gaps and discursive tensions that can be addressed. The insights provided by doing research with and about gay and bisexual men who sell sex to men in London’s queer scene, specifically through advertising should address some of those gaps and tensions.

There is no single reality for the experiences of men selling sex to men. In this thesis, one of my aims is to explore some of the diversity that is often ignored by sensationalised media stories or quantitative work that has been rationalised with the aims of protecting the vulnerable and preventing sexual (and social?) disease. There is scant literature that specifically focuses on the advertising of sex and sexualised services by ‘gay’ men to men in ‘gay’ media, or captures some of the shifting and blurring of sexual boundaries experienced

and constructed by men who advertise as ‘masseurs’ and ‘escorts’. Thus, this thesis offers insight into how men who are attracted to men *and* sell sex to men (M\$M) present and represent themselves. It highlights problems when using monolithic terms like ‘gay’ and ‘gay scene’ when recording and researching groups of individuals whose lived experiences are varied and changeable. It explores how they are represented within queer (expanding from ‘gay’) scene spaces, how they experience sex with clients, and the ways that financial payment has meaning for them. I refer back to sociological and psychological models that have sought to order the experiences of men selling sex by sorting, identifying or constructing *types of men* or *types of prostitutes, sex workers, escorts, hustlers and rentboys*. Throughout this thesis, I explore and discuss the ways that men who are attracted to men rationalise and prioritise multiple factors in the rationale to sell sex to men.

Previous work has focused on the experiences of men selling sex in the streets and bars (for examples, see Hall, 2007; West and de Villiers, 1992; Williams *et al.*, 2006), brothels and saunas, and men who meet clients through private introductions (Weeks, 1991). Other work has focused on young migrant men selling sex (Mai, 2009a, 2011, 2015). Researchers who have recognised the Internet as an important phenomenon in the experiences of selling sex often make the phenomenology of Internet use itself the focus whilst maintaining the discursive construct of ‘the prostitute’ as a person or category that is distinct, knowable, and fixed (Parsons *et al.*, 2004).

Discourses that are bound or limited to specific times and places and also to specific actions and activities need to be re-examined and, where necessary, challenged through the voices of men with personal and/or professional experience and expertise: ‘Nothing about us without us,’ quoting the slogan of modern sex workers/ activists. The language we use – adopted and adapted from historical, legal and political discourses of ‘prostitution’ and ‘sex work’ (Brooks-Gordon, 2006; Sanders, 2005b; Scott, 2003; Weeks, 1991) – fails to capture

how many men experience and identify with selling sex. Many men who sell sex do not fall neatly into a single category of ‘male sex worker’, ‘escort’, ‘prostitute’, or ‘masseur’, nor do many of them identify as such. Neither does ‘rentboy’ (Dorais, 2005; Phua and Caras, 2008) nor the once derogatory – but now recently reclaimed and even valorised – ‘hustler’ (Parsons *et al.*, 2001, 2004; Scott, 2003) capture the richness and multiplicity of what is true for different men, many of whom have not been ‘boys’ for over two decades.

It has come to be understood that ‘gay’ and ‘bisexual’ do not sum up the subjective identities and experiences of all *men who have sex with men* (MSM). Similarly, I have adapted the acronym to be able to talk generally about men who *sell* (sex and sexualised services) to men (M\$M) which focuses the discussion on the transactional element of the interaction, moves away from derogatory, legalised or politicised signs and is inclusive of informants’ own constructions of what is and is not ‘sex’ and ‘work’ (Walby, 2012). My aim is to build upon a relational ideology (Emirbayer, 1997) which insists that activists, writers and researchers should recognise that selling sex should not wholly define any person or fix their identity as it is a bounded activity, like any activity, within any person’s day, month, or lifetime (Bernstein, 2007b).

Original research for this thesis is based on triangulated data including interviews with two key informants who have worked with men selling sex to men over the past two decades. I analysed samples of personal, escort and masseur advertisements which I collected from 20 years of archived and current magazines and data from social networking websites aimed at ‘gay’ men. To ground all of this, I sought interviews with a sample of eighteen men who have advertised in those media. I also refer to my ethnographic research diary and field notes from an (auto)ethnography of migrating into and living within the London queer and ‘gay’ scenes that has its own narrative starting point towards the beginning of the 20 year period I am documenting.

## 1.2. An old story

The idea for this research came in a way that I might construct as serendipity, but in a more reflexive truth, was borne from a wonder that had a much longer gestation than a single, narrative point. The notion of a single, neat, starting point for life stories is challenged throughout the narrative data that men shared with me in interviews, so I will emphasise the same ‘fractal queerness’ (Mai, 2012) of how this research took shape. My migration to London in 1994 from a conservative, religious, farming community in Canada did not just coincide with, but was partly motivated by, my tentative curiosity (and fear) of my attraction to men. What would be my eventual ‘coming out’, as well as coming into the queer scene, was a geographic, social and *sexual* migration. Eliding a longer, personal narrative, where I met my first boyfriend and my first (and some of my most enduring) LGBTQ friends through the personal ‘small ads’ and the ‘Gay and Lesbian’ listings in *Time Out* magazine, I remember being quite struck – not just at first, but continuously – at the presence of small ads for/ from/ about *escorts*. I had some confusion about what they were advertising and I was amazed at how openly – sometimes even brazenly – they could do so. My memory of the exact content is blurry, except for the black and white photo in one advertisement. The photo was of a muscular, young man with a distinct tattoo on his left pectoral. Just as I was struck by the fact that several men were advertising their services as escorts with phone numbers that could easily be traced to an address by the authorities, this man was identifiable by his photo. Like many people – then and today – most of what I (thought I) knew about prostitution came from fiction: popular films and various American police and crime dramas where female streetwalkers, escorts, madams, and male pimps were often featured in storylines or as background extras. Their occupation was identifiable by their make-up and attire. The discourses of crime, desperation, and covert activity were made explicit in scripts and reinforced through staging.

At the same time, the campaign to equalise the age of consent in Britain succeeded in having the age lowered from 21 to 18 in 1994, but failed to achieve the goal of equality until 2001 (Weeks, 2007). From my small-town standpoint, the dominant discourses of what it meant to be a gay man were conveyed through homophobic slurs, parental cautions about ‘bad men’, news stories and films that framed the emergency of AIDS, and covert places with blacked out windows. The ‘coming out’ story of a character in a comic strip in a daily newspaper in Canada (Johnstone, 1993) brought outrage and homophobia in the letters to the editor. How then, could men be openly advertising in magazines as escorts in London? What was going on?

These men were not just publicly open about having sex with men, they were literally advertising it. For money. In my experience, being *thought of* as gay attracted violence and in my understanding, prostitution was illegal. I wondered if these men were routinely arrested and prosecuted. What I felt even more acutely was a fear of what bodily dangers these men would face. We were living in an era where infection with HIV and death from AIDS was a real and present danger to consider for men thinking about having sex with men.

In the twenty years that have passed, we have witnessed life-changing technologies like computers in our homes, mobile telephones that double as (video) cameras, and applications (apps) that operate on either or both. Huge advances have been made in life-saving pharmaceutical technologies such as Combination Anti-Retroviral Therapy (CART) and new discourses have emerged on how and when those therapies are available, offered and used. Many social, commercial and political institutions have adopted and/or championed changes in the recognition, tolerance, acceptance, and even encouragement for LGBT people and their relationships.

With these changes have come new spaces for people to meet and make relationships. These online spaces were founded and designed in the midst of the other structures that were shifting around them. The genealogy, vocabulary, and history of sites like Gay.com, Gaydar.net<sup>1</sup>, Gayromeo, Manhunt, and now Grindr, Scruff, and Hornet (to name a few) were built from the sandy foundations of the personals columns and the commercial ‘gay scene’, each one adopting and adapting language and texts. These multi-modal texts were exponentially – rather than multiply – greater than what had come before. They reflected, reinforced and reconstructed the identities, attitudes and experiences of the men who use(d) them. I was one of those men, and I elide the details of my own story here, except to say that morals and panics have ebbed and flowed for individuals like me, as they continue to do for larger sub-cultures of queer people and British society more generally.

I present that story with its dates and details to explain my own standpoint and to lay the groundwork for my defence of a ‘queer ethnography’ (Halberstam, 2003; Herbst, 2009; Rooke, 2010; Sorainen, 2011). I use queer as an analytical framework throughout the thesis and detail my methodology in a later chapter, but I hope to make explicit here the opportunities afforded by learning about a sub-culture from a period of observation that pre-dates (and so *fractally queers*) the timeline and spaces of my formal data collection and study. I have found it useful to deploy this onto-epistemological mixing of complex mathematical theory as a strategy to visually and materially model the intricate interconnections of multiple – often incomplete – dimensions (Barad, 2007; Stewart, 2008). This is relatively new but not unique for social researchers (Mai, 2012; Rooke, 2010), and so I use it explicitly and reflexively.

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<sup>1</sup> Gaydar.net was formerly .co.uk. They also used localised URLs such as the Australian .com.au.

### **1.3. A new story**

At the same time as content is becoming more complex to analyse with both visual and verbal-text content, there are also opportunities to collect data that are more readily available on the Internet, in an already standardized format, with pop-down menus designed by webmasters and completed by profile users. Profiles on Gaydar and Rentboy become ‘textual and symbolic performances’ and ‘sexual objectification becomes a project of the self’ (Nodin *et al.*, 2011, pp.1026–1027) offering a readily available resource to study the meanings people attach to sexuality – whether at a single moment in time or from several points in history (Davidson, 1991).

I acknowledge influences from researchers and writers who have written about the ways that homosexuality and prostitution have histories that run parallel and intertwine in discourses of law, health and psychology. Academics and activists have probed the effects of language on ideologies of selling sex and moved understanding in a direction that explores and makes explicit the different experiences and contexts for people who sell sex. John Scott (2003) wrote about discourses of male prostitution and men selling sex to men. Teela Sanders (2005b, 2005a, 2006) and Belinda Brooks-Gordon (Brooks-Gordon, 2006) opened up ethnographic methods for how we can get to know more about people who sell sex from closer perspectives. Michel Dorais (2005) developed typologies of men who sell sex to men for an end-of-the-century, out-of-the-closet, Pride-Parade generation of gay and bisexual men to acknowledge shifts in attitudes about men having sex with men. He also documented the continued involvement of heterosexually identified men and in what contexts they have sex with men for money. Perhaps, most importantly to my work in this thesis, he emphasised the temporality of selling sex for some men.

My research builds on this knowledge by arguing that experiences are revealed as ever-more diverse amongst men who sell sex to men in different contexts; however, building on Scott's historical review and Dorais' recognition of different life patterns, I make the argument that research and representations of men selling sex must explicitly acknowledge the phenomenological temporality of subject-position for every person who sells sex, and that the language and methods we use must differentiate between the person and the action, rather than fixing any one person as any single type.

Prior to starting my research for this thesis, most research on selling sex was focused on women selling sex to men (Aggleton (ed.), 1999). Of that, most of the empirical work was done *about* women who sell sex outdoors, referred to commonly as streetwalkers. This lack of research with men who sell sex emphasises gender difference and gendered-power relations, but erases how multiple (power) structures and intersectionalities frame contexts and exchanges. The lack of empirical research with men who *have sold sex* is also in stark contrast to the findings of the European Men-Who-Have-Sex-With-Men Internet Survey (The EMIS Network, 2010) that I referred to previously, which reports that 5% of all men responding to the survey had *been paid for sex in the past 12 months*.

Of the relatively little research that had been conducted with men who sell sex, still fewer published studies that were available had been done with men in Britain. The work of West and de Villiers (1992) reported on young men selling sex and accessing outreach services in London as well as men working through advertised agencies or independent advertising. Other research with men in London drew on the same outreach services to capture data from mostly homeless young men, as well as extending enquiry to Cardiff and South Wales (Davies and Feldman, 1999). Cameron, Collins and Thew (1999) used an economic framework to analyse escort advertisements in the British monthly magazine, *Gay Times*. These examples pre-date most of the legal and technological changes I have outlined but

provide alternatives to discourses that focus exclusively on vulnerable women. Their work brought focus to male sex work in Britain and added perspectives to the literature away from HIV/AIDS research and young people working on the streets. More recently, Connell and Hart (2003) reported on men selling sex in Glasgow and Edinburgh. Their research, like West and de Villiers', included men who worked from the street or indoor premises. Since I started collecting data, many more academics have produced findings about or with men selling sex in Britain. Nick Mai (2009b) has explored the experiences of migrants to the UK selling sex, Mary Laing (Whowell, 2010) and Justin Gaffney (2007) have written about social policy implications from legal and health perspectives for men selling sex in Britain (Whowell and Gaffney, 2009; Laing and Gaffney, 2014) and Paul J. Maginn and Graham Ellison (2014) have added new findings about men selling sex in Northern Ireland. My work adds to this emerging canon by focusing on identities, experiences and representations of men selling sex to men in London through the 1990s to the present. By combining data from interviews with men who have sold sex with data from archived and current magazine advertising and online profiles, I am updating and widening the data and the discourses about selling sex in Britain in an era of new technologies and bringing forward the voices and stories of men who were otherwise unheard and unrecorded in academic literature.

Research that has focused on and been operationalised within the technologies of the Internet and online social-networking spaces has looked critically at how men use those technologies and spaces for personal interactions (Campbell, 2004; Jones, 2005; Mowlabocus, 2007a, 2010a, 2010d, 2010b, 2007b) and critiqued the commercial structures that shape, and are shaped by, the sex lives of the men who use them (Light, 2007a). Research that actively considers men who sell sex in those spaces has been conducted in America (Logan, 2010; Logan and Shah, 2009; Parsons *et al.*, 2004), Canada (Walby, 2010, 2012), Australia (McClean, 2013b, 2013a) and Brazil (Phua and Caras, 2008).

There remains a gap for contemporary British research with gay and bisexual men who have sold sex to men in spaces that they also use as part of their involvement in the queer or 'gay scene'. Furthermore, there is a tension in how previous and contemporary research fixes men as Male Sex Workers and ignores and erases part-time, casual, occasional or past sex work which further erases the movement of men in and out of sex work.

In light of ongoing political interest and concern about the welfare of people who sell sex and the best ways that societies and their laws might serve to protect people from harm, there is a need for more research with men who sell sex or have sold sex but do not access services for sex workers or even sometimes do not identify with the label of sex worker.

#### **1.4. Aims and outline of the thesis**

The purpose of this thesis is to answer the question: what are the experiences and representations of men who sell sex to men in London through advertising? To do that, my research poses five questions:

- 1) How can classified advertising be used as a source of data to learn about men's lives selling sex in the gay scene in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
- 2) How have men used different types of magazine advertising and Internet promotion to sell sex to men in London from the beginning of the 1990s to the present?
- 3) How do men in London's gay scene define sex work? What boundaries and distinctions do they make between sex work, massage and sex that is not-for-pay?
- 4) What meanings do men give to money in their narratives of selling sex? How do they deal with money and what can be learned from talking about money?

- 5) How do research models that typify in order to understand and explain men's experiences of selling sex also serve to objectify them? How can research models be constructed better to represent changes in experience, priorities and embodiment?

Following this Introduction chapter, the second chapter is a review of existing literature that has informed my investigation. I begin with an argument for the importance of researching 'sexual stories'. The chapter draws from historical accounts of the legal definition and treatment of homosexuality and prostitution in England, with an eye on broader, global or international discourses. I engage with a brief review of literature on sex work generally and three of the main themes which dominate that literature: risk, agency and gender. I bring my review of literature on male sex work up to date by reviewing some of the shifts in discourse about men selling sex to men and emphasise research models which use typologies, personal narratives, and/or temporal structures. The chapter signposts the ideologies, writing, and research which have informed and framed my own research. Throughout the chapter, I point to the gaps and tensions that I see as useful starting points to the questions I answer in the following chapters.

In the third chapter, I develop and operationalise my use of queer theory (de Lauretis, 2007; Halberstam, 2011; Hall, 2003; Muñoz, 2009; O'Riordan, 2007; Segal, 1999; Turner, 2000) and advertising theory (Goldman, 1992; Rose, 2007; Williamson, 2002). I make an argument for how the two can be used effectively to analyse queer texts and retell sexual stories (de Lauretis, 2007; Plummer, 1995). I then provide a brief overview of the study of advertising and personal ads to highlight the contexts for decisions I had to make about how to frame what has become a key part of my data.

The fourth chapter explains my methodology. Building on the introduction of queer theory, I outline and define the 'Reflexive Queer Ethnography' I have developed to gather the data for

my thesis (Adams and Holman Jones, 2011; Sorainen, 2011; Rooke, 2010; Walby, 2012). I explain my how my definitions and documentation of queer spaces and ‘queer time’ disrupt the positioning of ethnographers as inserted into distant, ‘other’ spaces (Sorainen, 2011), the normativity of ethnographic time and the mythology of a return to an ‘ontologically stable’ self (Rooke, 2010). As a mode of organising and communicating the interrelated circularity of theoretically sampled datasets, I begin to introduce mathematical terminology for sociological applications of ‘complexity theory’ (McLennan, 2003).

I argue that archived and contemporary classified advertisements in magazines and online profiles in social networking spaces are rich sources of polytextual data that can offer insight into past and present sub-cultures as queer, unorthodox texts, outside of more conventional canons for analysis (Leckey and Brooks (eds.), 2010). I provide demographic details of the twenty people I interviewed as part of my data collection and discuss opportunities and limitations of this cohort. I signpost fuller summaries of their interviews in Appendix L. I then provide details of the interview format and the ethical considerations and issues for which I had prepared, and those for which I had not. I detail the theoretical approach I used to sample the magazine and profile data before I discuss how and what I developed as a coding schedule. With that, I provide description and illustration of the software suite I curated to digitally log, file, and analyse the verbal and visual data as a single dataset.

In the final section of my methodology chapter, I define the application of constructivist grounded theory that I used for my data collection and analysis (Charmaz, 2006). I explain how I interpret queer theory and grounded theory as being complementary, and how I adopted a semiotic framework to develop a method of analysis that is more specifically describable than the broad applications of grounded theory.

Chapter Five is the first of my findings chapters. In it, I set the scene for the reader by detailing the modes and spaces of advertising sex between men in London, introducing the two examples that have become the main sources of my advertisement data, *Boyz* magazine and Gaydar.net. Integrating data from these sources with data from interviews with men who have sold sex and an interview with the managing director of *Boyz* magazine, I chart a history of the Escort and Masseur ads in *Boyz*. This maps out the introduction of photographs in ads and examines whether content really has become more explicit. These questions point towards newer, online spaces. I use the data as non-canonical texts (Leckey and Brooks (eds.), 2010) to document details of an under-researched and reportedly hard-to-reach community. I also use my findings to make cautions and outline limitations on how data collected from advertisements alone provide a skewed, unreliable, even invalid illustration of any real, demographic data. Making explicit the usefulness of a social-constructionist approach, I use the chapter to examine how discourses of independence and agency are blurred through performativity, embodiment, and contact.

This points towards the next chapter. Chapter Six explains ways that content and structures of profiles shift and shape sub-cultural representations, identities and so (self-) expectations and values of sexual citizenship. In this chapter, I outline the ways that men in the queer scene co-construct commercial spaces through the ways they represent themselves and the ways they use those spaces. I define Commercially Sited Sex to expand the conceptualisation of commercial sex and to emphasise the way selling sex in social spaces and paying for spaces to exchange (otherwise) unpaid sex queers the boundaries between commercial and unpaid, 'authentic' relationships and sex. I explore how normalised, recreationalised and anonymised sex between men that takes place in or is negotiated in commercial spaces is not seen as new or dissimilar by the men who co-operated as my informants.

Chapter Seven illustrates examples of how some men in London's queer scene define sex work as similar to unpaid sex encounters. I explore men's accounts that both paid and unpaid sex can be casual, recreational, and anonymised (if not anonymous) and as such, both can be seen and used as bounded relationships. Engagement with the sex in sex work is part of a larger, performative project that may be liberationist and/or similar to – or directly draw on – neo-liberal sexual politics. Performativity is constructed individually and socially through personal feelings of embodiment as well as social and economic priorities of the individual and the society in which they live.

If Chapter Seven is mostly about sex and relationships, then Chapter Eight looks specifically at money and payment. The eighth chapter defines the cash nexus – the intersection of money with the sexual exchange. I explore the meaning that money has to men selling sex and introduce the concept of 'scarcity' to queer the ways that 'need' and 'want' are conceptualised as separate, with the objectives of disambiguating those binary distinctions and opening up understandings of the accounts of the men themselves.

Social and economic priorities are subjective constructs of need and want and can be understood within a theory of scarcity (Mullainathan and Shafir, 2013). Men seeking 'easy money' can use a 'tunnelling' strategy to offset costs and risks to an undetermined point in the future. Men selling sex to men adopt different strategies for charging clients. These strategies can be economically motivated or used to address embodied and/or performative disinterest (i.e. a lack of physical or social attraction to/of a particular client). Medium and long-term strategies for financial planning can be used to avoid or mediate compounded feelings of scarcity in embodiment and performativity (e.g. ageing, decreased interest in casual, recreational sex).

I introduce price-setting and marketing strategies that men describe and I present comparisons with more mainstream, recognisable business strategies to highlight not just the vulnerabilities that men face selling sex, but also the strengths of entrepreneurialism and ingenuity that they use to meet their goals. I continue to focus on strategies and goals by framing sex work temporally. I build on the discussion of scarcity and I discuss how a lack of realistic, medium-term, financial strategy can lead men who sell sex to express feeling (increased) distress and a sense of diminished agency in the future.

To bring my findings together as a model, Chapter Nine examines the stories the men have told me and their experiences more holistically. I re-examine the models and typologies that have previously been put forward to help understand the identities, lives and lived experiences of men who sell sex to men. The data, particularly from the narratives of the men themselves, suggest that fixed and fixing typologies only further objectify men who sell sex. In addition, those typologies obfuscate the ways that men move into, between, through, and/or out of categories or patterns through their lives, their careers, or even within smaller units of time. Building on the themes that have emerged in the earlier chapters – Addressing Scarcity, Defining Performativity, Utilising Embodiment, Locating Contact(s) and Thinking Temporally – I propose a new, relational model for understanding the identities and experiences of men who sell sex to men. I explore some of the ways the themes are enmeshed and ‘super-positioned’ so as to be intractable from one another and offer suggestions for how researchers might take this forward empirically and theoretically with mathematics which are more familiar in applications of quantum mechanics than human sciences.

To conclude my thesis, I review the key concepts explored in the findings and discussion. I argue that classified ads work as a queer source of data about sexual stories. I emphasise the usefulness of triangulation to explore the meanings given to sex, sex work, and money. I discuss some of the wider implications for my findings. I refer to the limitations of my

findings and my data before making final remarks about the diverse experiences, representations, and identities of men who use advertising to sell sex to men in London's queer scene.

### **1.5. Summary**

In summary, this thesis argues that classified advertising for men selling sex can be used as a queer, non-canonical source of data to learn about men's lives selling sex in the gay scene.

Data is most usefully read and interpreted through a social-constructionist framework, given the use of pseudonyms and pseudo-descriptions from advertisers. Using various texts within a queer ethnography supports research by using triangulation to address concerns about small participant samples, interpretation of historical texts, and access to difficult to reach populations, as well as the emotional and political dimensions of the research narrative.

Men have used different types of advertising and promotion, particularly through magazines and online social networks from their introduction to the queer scenes in London. Men migrate in and out of these spaces and use them in ways that suit their purposes at particular times and in particular contexts.

Past and current models of men who sell sex have sought to categorise men into typologies. These typologies do not acknowledge and therefore erase the fluidity with which men may move through the categories that have been constructed for them. I make an argument for a more relational model that explicitly acknowledges the semiosis of human 'subjects' in the creation of their own identity signs. I argue that binaries of agency and structure are unhelpful, as are metonyms of agency and choice. Instead, I believe we can study and model people's *priorities* with an aim to cease or at least reflexively reduce how we fix or objectify people themselves. Building a model from themes that have emerged in the research for this thesis, I propose that a model that seeks to understand the stories of men who sell sex to men

should explore actions which Address Scarcity, Define Performativity, Utilise Embodiment, Locate Contact(s) and Think Temporally. At this stage, it is useful to review the existing literature that has informed and framed my thesis.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Introduction**

My research aims to look at representations, experiences and identities of men who sell sex to men through advertising in London. The literature I review here addresses sex work from discursive, psychological, sociological, legal, and epidemiological perspectives. Overall, a particular emphasis has been placed on women selling sex to men, reconstructions of desperate and deviant behaviours, and sexually transmitted infection. Until relatively recently, much of this work has concentrated on selling sex on the street. Work that focuses on men has concentrated on HIV prevention. The gap that exists is for contemporary research in a British context with gay and bisexual men who have sold sex to men in queer or 'gay scene' spaces (Altman 1999). I also pose the argument that research fixes men as Male Sex Workers, and types thereof, which erases and ignores the movement of men in and out of sex work and men who do not identify with the label or identity of Sex Worker or prostitute (Davies and Feldman 1999).

In this chapter, I explore some of the existing literature on sex work that has informed and framed my research, including a review of literature on prostitution and risk, discourses of sex work from psychological, sociological and legal perspectives, particularly identities and politics of sex/ -work. I focus my discussion on men selling sex to men, particularly the variability of experiences and feelings within this cohort. These narratives have received relatively little attention yet nonetheless already illustrate an overwhelming amount of diversity. Finally, I outline some of the tensions that arise for me as a researcher and for members of the cohort being reported. This chapter is intended to offer a summary of some of the ideologies and texts that I have used as the foundation for my research and to highlight

gaps and tensions within the existing literature that my research addresses in the following chapters.

### **2.1.1 Research narratives and sexual stories**

Research about selling sex is shaped – and also constrained – by the sexual nature of the narratives that are shared, recorded and collected; hence, they become ‘sexual stories’

(Plummer 1995). In the context of human sciences research, sexual stories:

are simply the narratives of the intimate life, focused especially around the erotic, the gendered and the relational. They are part of the wider discourses and ideologies abroad in society, and they have much in common with all manner of other stories with differing foci (Plummer, 1995, p.6).

The ‘research narrative’ of and about men selling sex to men is bound up within other historically and culturally specific stories: heteronormative, moralised and medicalised narratives (Scott 2003). Indeed, this is true for all kinds of ‘sexual stories’ (Plummer, 1995). Alongside, but quite separated from this academic canon, there is another site of construction for a polytextual, multi-modal, illustrated story of men selling sex – in the canon of advertisements featuring men selling sex as escorts and masseurs.

One of my aims for this thesis – and beyond – is to build on feminist scholarship that advocates the possibilities and potentials for people through telling their own stories in their own words (Edwards and Holland, 2013; Holland *et al.*, 2004; Ramazanoğlu and Holland, 2002). In this case, I set out to make it possible for men who sell sex to men to talk about their own experiences and illuminate details of their own stories. What I actually achieve is bringing forward the stories of a particular cohort of men who have been visible in London’s queer scene but whose personal perspectives are untold elsewhere, sometimes ignored, marginalised, or kept secret because of sexual, moral and medical frameworks and repertoires.

## 2.2. Defining (the literature of) sex work

The discourse of 'sex work' and 'sex workers' is used to recognise the labour processes (Walby, 2012) and to make some escape from the negative connotations that may be associated with 'prostitution' (Scott, 2003). 'In doing so, it emphasises the economic aspect of sex work, what people do, rather than the pathological or proto-psychiatric aspect, what they are' (Davies and Feldman, 1999, p.2). Beyond the economic, the change in language signals a move away from the traditional discourse of the 'powerless prostitute' and a socio-linguistic escape from the polysemy of 'prostitute' as subject-noun, verb, and object-noun. It aims to include an understanding of selling sex as work that involves physical and emotional labour (Bernstein, 2007b; Scott, 2003). This is in line with (and a part of) broader work and labour discourses that have moved beyond economic models to recognise the physical bodies of workers (Smith, 2012) and ways that emotional labour is embodied (Mai, 2012; Tyler, 2012; Walby, 2012). This shift suits certain ideological approaches to selling sex better than others and tensions remain whether sex should play any part in work at all (Jean, 2012).

One tension in the literature on selling sex is developing a definition of what is and is not included in 'sex work'. The term 'sex work' is also used as a synecdoche to include a number of erotic labours including stripping, telephone sex, escorting, compensated sex, Domination/Submission role play, pornography, and sex tourism (Christina (ed.), 2004; Frank, 2005; Guidroz and Rich, 2010; Padilla, 2008; Rivers-Moore, 2012; Walby, 2012) My focus is on men who are selling (or have sold) sex for monetary compensation. Through my data collection, this came to include men who are selling 'sexualised services' – in other words, sexualised 'bodywork', 'referring to massage services which include manual stimulation of the client's genitals' (Parsons *et al.*, 2004, p.1022; also see Ashford, 2009a). This framework both reinforces and queers definitions of what has been referred to commonly – and formally (Brooks-Gordon, 2006) – as 'prostitution'. Whilst I make 'selling

sex and sexualised services' my focus for this research, I explicitly recognise that some people may be involved in more than one type of sex work, either at a specific time or throughout their involvement with the sex industry (Abramovich, 2005; Christina (ed.), 2004; Dorais, 2005; Shaw, 2006; Walby, 2012). This point was made throughout the literature and reinforced by participants and data in my research here. (For examples, see Appendix L for brief summaries of participants' interviews).

Narratives of people who sell sex reveal involvement in multiple aspects of sex work may happen for a number of reasons: necessity, proximity, aptitude or opportunity (Christina 2004). These narrative drivers are often written as being singular or in opposition to one another. The script of 'economic necessity' is posed in contrast to a 'liberationist' account (Altman 1999; Dorais 2006). However, in my research, recognising and understanding multiple priorities has emerged as critical for understanding (same-sex attracted) men's<sup>2</sup> experiences of selling sex to men. One of the aims that has emerged in doing my own research has been to explore the interconnectedness and interplay between multiple drivers or priorities within any one man's narrative of selling sex to men. What this would address is some of the ways that 'metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony' (Chandler, 2007, p.136) are used as the tropes underlying modern – and post-modern – interpretations, representations and (mis)understandings of 'prostitution', 'sex work', 'escorting', 'massage', and perhaps even sex between men. Framing analysis to address multiple drivers draws from linguistic examination of 'the "deep structure" underlying different historiographical styles' (Chandler, 2007, p.137) and allows the structural rigour of linguistics to guide the analyst and other

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<sup>2</sup> Queer criticism of binary genders and sexualities considered (Smith and Laing, 2012), my work deals with male subjects; therefore, in places I use gender specific pronouns and examples where appropriate, understanding that in some cases, the same theory or examples could be applied to women. Citations of other work may include both male and female references.

readers, with ‘the added advantage of resisting’ a fall into essentialism or false binaries (Chandler, 2007, p.137).

### **2.3. A catalogue of ‘exploitation’ and definitions of ‘agency’**

The traditional argument around prostitution legislation is that of protecting the vulnerable from harm (Brooks-Gordon, 2006; Weeks, 2007). Important work continues to explore the experiences of women and girls who retell stories of violence and dependence, sometimes at the hands of family and ‘friends’ (Easton and Matthews, 2012; Matthews and Easton, 2010). Whilst from a personal queer/ theoretically Queer standpoint, my position is critical of homogenising and heteronormative generalisations, I remain anxious that no voices are silenced, particularly people who are genuinely vulnerable and disenfranchised.

With that, there is a considerable body of work written about vulnerable women (e.g. Cwikel and Hoban, 2005; Jyrkinen, 2005). This work reinforces those images and identities that are the most prevalent in the media and in the common perceptions of prostitution: the street walker, the drug addict, the fallen woman, the runaway youth, and the trafficked woman (Cregan *et al.*, 2013; Sloss and Harper, 2004; van Veen *et al.*, 2010; Vanwesenbeeck, 2001; Weitzer, 2009). That image of the woman who is forced into prostitution through coercion, desperation, or dependence is the dominant perception (Scoular, 2004). Yet, often research is presented with little or no reflexivity about the limitations of a sample, recruitment, or the ethics of a project that mandates future behaviour and activity (Magnanti, 2012). When a study only recruits participants from support services for women, it is critical that those findings not be generalised or represented as evidence of the experiences of a wider population.

The justification for the focus on women is that they make up the ‘vast majority’ of sex workers.

Indeed, a huge amount of theoretical weight rests upon the shoulders of this empirical assertion and yet it is never really interrogated empirically. Rather, the words “vast majority” are uttered and any and all embodiments and performances of commercial sexual exchange that do not conform rigidly to a female-worker/male-client imaginary magically disappear (Smith, 2015, p.15).

However, there is substantial evidence that populations and personal experiences are varied which I go on to detail more in the next and final part of my literature review (Mclean, 2013a; Minichiello *et al.*, 2013a; Smith, 2012; Walby, 2012; Mai, 2009b; Cunningham and Kendall, 2011; Stoebenau *et al.*, 2011; Christina (ed.), 2004). This growing body of empirical research continues to challenge the idea that *all* ‘prostitution’ is (symbolic) violence against women (cf. Coy *et al.*, 2011; Jeffreys, 2010; Scoular, 2004; Jeffreys, 1997).

The challenges in researching populations and practices that have been stigmatised and/or criminalised include this very ideological divergence and the difficulties of ‘capturing’ representational populations (Magnanti, 2012; Smith, 2015). Equally, researchers (and service providers, activists, allies, and other professionals) may censor or downplay discussion about exiting, drug use or mental health to avoid moralism or well-intentioned coercion (Easton and Matthews, 2012). I discuss some of my own challenges in the next chapter and throughout my findings and discussion.

### **2.3.1 Reporting risk (and resilience) for populations who sell sex**

There is a clear distinction made between “street” sex workers, people who solicit for custom outdoors, and “indoor” workers who may work from private accommodation, a sauna or massage parlour, or a brothel (Kinnell, 2006; Lewis *et al.*, 2005; Sanders, 2006). There is a common criticism that historically, most research has been reported on street workers, since they are the most visible and are prone to the most extreme social problems associated with sex work (Bimbi, 2007); the specific criticism is that people who sell sex outdoors and people who sell sex indoors have different experiences with health and safety. Street workers are the most vulnerable to attacks and violence, the most likely to have or develop mental health

problems, the most likely to abuse drugs and have drug dependencies, and the most likely to abandon safer sex practices (condom use) through coercion or lack of professionalism (Jackson *et al.*, 2005; Lewis *et al.*, 2005; Reback *et al.*, 2005; Surratt *et al.*, 2005). These factors are all reported as being interrelated. For example, by being outdoors, street workers are more visible to the public and therefore are more vulnerable to attacks from strangers. In an attempt to stay out of the public eye, and out of the way of the police, street workers may spend less time screening potential clients as potential attackers or negotiating what services are available, confirming prices, and asserting conditions to the sale (e.g. specifying a required use of condoms) (Jackson *et al.*, 2005; Surratt *et al.*, 2005). Sex workers, regardless of gender, have been reported to be ‘vectors of disease’ (Kong, 2014; Parsons *et al.*, 2004) and have been associated with violent crime (e.g. Matthews and Easton, 2010; Özbay, 2015; West and de Villiers, 1992). Male or female, there is a stigma surrounding the nexus at which sex and money meet. I explore this further in my findings.

The current research is fairly unanimous in stating that people who sell sex indoors are better protected and are less vulnerable than street workers. None of the problems that sex workers face are exclusive to the street, but it is easier to implement systems of control and risk management in the indoor environment (Brooks-Gordon, 2006; Sanders, 2006). Indoor workers work more autonomously and rely less on protection from pimps who may themselves be the abusers. Indoor workers are able to screen against potential attackers using ‘spyholes’ and, increasingly, CCTV. They have the opportunity to employ ‘maids’ who may provide reception services and support in preventing and/or limiting violent situations (Sanders, 2006). Indoor workers can be better equipped to control exchanges with clients, by negotiating and enforcing terms of payment and service, in part simply because they are not seeking to escape public prosecution or persecution (Sanders, 2006).

An area that continues to prove the most challenging, for writers and social policy makers alike, looks at the boundaries and negotiation of contractual obligations during sexual services. Christina's (2004) *Paying For It* provides insightful first person accounts of sex workers' own concerns about boundaries. There is further discourse on violence towards sex workers specifically relating to sexual abuse or rape of workers by clients.

Violence towards sex workers is reported for both male and female street workers, but is more common towards women. This includes rape and gang rape. Violence towards indoor workers seems to be more common for women than men in North America (Harriman *et al.*, 2007; Dorais, 2005).; however, little distinction has been made to date between street and indoor male workers elsewhere (Laing and Gaffney, 2014). A broader resource of texts provides a more nuanced discourse regarding female sex workers. Research about men who sell sex indoors suggests that issues of control, violence, and safety are more easily moderated by the workers themselves (Morrison and Whitehead, 2005), although this study was of a relatively small sample (n=9). I suggest that factors of embodiment such as physical size and muscular strength – relative to (an) attacker/s, rather than related only to gender – are significant.

Violence towards clients is reported more for male street workers, although O'Connell Davidson (1998) illustrates one example of a female indoor worker abusing her 'position of power' with a male client. Clients of both male and female street workers may be victims of theft, blackmail or fraud, as in the scenario where a service is offered, money is exchanged, and then the client is sent away or scared off with threats (Dorais, 2005; Harriman *et al.*, 2007). Others argue that it is the result of the way some research is reported and the way some sex workers project themselves to protect themselves from actually *becoming* victims (Kaye, 2007, 2014; Smith, 2015).

Whilst women are presumed to be physically more vulnerable to physical attack, heterosexual women do not face the same stigma of homosexuality in their encounters with heterosexual male clients. On the other hand, women face a stigma in relation to being sexually promiscuous. If they have children, they may also be labelled (or label themselves) as 'Bad Mothers'. For men, being paid to have sex may even carry a certain kudos, at least for a time (Boden, 2007; Harriman, 2007; Scott, 2007).

Male sex workers may have multiple layers of stigma and conflict surrounding their own sexual identity and their own sexual practices, in addition to those of their clients. These issues of identity and practice can affect power dynamics (as mediated by esteem and self-esteem) in a number of ways, either to the favour or detriment of the male sex worker (Vanwesenbeeck, 2013). Additionally, the stigma and conflict can have longer lasting impact on the self-esteem and overall psychological well-being of the individual (Laing and Gaffney, 2014).

For some male sex workers, their sexual orientation is reported as a mediating factor in their entry to the sex trade (Altman, 2015b). This may be because they were forced out of their family home because they were gay, or because they chose sex work as a way of enhancing their erotic experience. This includes men who identify as straight who may legitimise their experience of gay sex by claiming it is only a way to make money (Mai, 2011; Özbay, 2010, 2015). Using sex work as a vocation to enhance one's erotic experience is not the preserve of queer men, or men at all which is evident in auto-ethnography from women (Holt, 2015; Sprinkle, 2004).

Female clients of male sex workers have no question made of their sexual orientation/identification/preference and the sexual orientation of male clients with female sex workers is taken for granted; however, it is well documented that male clients of male sex

workers may identify as gay, bisexual, or curious/experimenting (Larvie, 1999; Masvawure and Sandfort, 2015; Minichiello *et al.*, 1999; Scott *et al.*, 2014).

### **2.3.2 Researching the agentic subject**

Within the literature that compares paid and unpaid sex, there continues to be much debate about discourses of self-determination (referred to as agency) and sex work. Agency in this context is shaped by ‘philosophical disputes about cause and effect, determinism and free-will’ (Ramazanoğlu and Holland, 2002). To what extent does an individual choose sex work? What are the (inevitable) tensions between structure and agency? (Crawshaw, 2009). How do people who sell sex attend to those issues? In addressing these questions, I have focused on structure from two perspectives: social structures and narrative structures. Social structure is defined most simply as ‘enduring social arrangements that influence individuals and selves’ (Plummer, 2010, p.219). Alongside (as well as within) this are the narrative structures and the cognitive organisation of memories that are shaped within the ‘collective frameworks’ (Reavey and Brown, 2007, p.12). From this perspective, individuals organise past events according to the separate and combined social groups to which they belong in the material world (Reavey and Brown, 2007).

There is a tendency in contemporary writing about sex work (and even sex more generally) to equate agency with straightforward choice. For example, ‘Their philosophy includes the belief that sex workers have agency (they can choose to engage in prostitution)’ (Oselin and Weitzer, 2013, p.450) and ‘Agency, whether the sex worker had been coerced by an outside party or was engaging in sexual exchanges through deliberate choice...’ (Dennis, 2008, p.12) Likewise, in a more general example, ‘This clearly constitutes a form of agency, a choice to take one perspective on our action in preference to another (Butt and Langdridge, 2003, p.487) and this trend of thought is not limited to constructs of sexual citizenship. There is scholarship that acknowledges that choice and agency are interrelated but are not one and the

same, such as where the authors emphasise the two terms listed together or as part of longer lists with other constructs (Minichiello *et al.*, 2013b; Reavey and Brown, 2007).

The construction of agency *as* choice (and vice versa) in place of the more complex signification of choice as a part of agency is understandable, sociologically and linguistically. ‘Agency implies that people have the ability to choose their goals and act (more or less rationally) to achieve them, as opposed to actions and ideas being determined by one’s social position, genes, subconscious, impersonal historical forces, or other factors’ (Ramazanoğlu and Holland, 2002, p.10). The first part of this definition demonstrates the easy shift between choice as both constructive of and constructed by agency. The sticking point, perhaps, is the assumption of an even and predictable understanding of what is ‘rational’. It is the second part of this definition, then, where the drivers *and tensions* in ‘rationality’ are illustrated as a volume of preceding and concurrent structural factors that return discussions of agency to an understanding of the properties of fractal<sup>3</sup> and quantum decision-making<sup>5</sup> (Yukalov and Sornette, 2009). Empirical studies are criticised for focusing on contextual determinants situated within a framework that is static rather than temporal (Delignières *et al.*, 2004) or exploring group membership (and frameworks for memory and decision making) as consecutive rather than concurrent (Smith *et al.*, 2013; Vanwesenbeeck, 2013). Concurrent identification with different groups, as well as financial or social needs and states of embodiment complicate models for understanding entry, exit or stasis in sex work. For this

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<sup>3</sup> A true fractal will have infinite detail and endless repetition. Every repetition within a ‘generation’ is an equal size and each generation is the same ratio to the one before as the one that follows. A continuous line may also have a fractal dimension; that is, it may have the properties of fractals: self-similarity and iteration. Self-similarity refers to the repetition of a shape within the components of that shape (see figure X). Iteration refers to repetition of the shaped segments (Uribe, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> The central idea of ‘quantum theory’ in decision making is the recognition that ‘realistic decision-making problems are composite, consisting of several parts intimately interconnected, intricately correlated, and entangled with each other’ (Yukalov and Sornette, 2009, p.3). Because multiple actions and emotions interfere with one another, the effects cannot be measured simply with classical utility functions. ‘The complexity involved in decision making reflects the interplay between the decision maker’s underlying emotions and feelings and his/her attitude to risk and uncertainty accompanying the decision making process’ (Yukalov and Sornette, 2009, p.3).

reason, Vanwesenbeeck (2013) implores researchers to consider gender as a primary power structure when designing empirical work for and about sex work. A sociological and social-psychological study of men who identify as gay selling sex to men can be useful to narrow the impact of intersectional politics and power relationships. Advocating similar work in public health and sociology of health, Crawshaw (2009, p.284) states:

Through critically examining power relations and working to explore the complex symbiosis between structure and agency, sociological approaches are able to contextualise what may ostensibly appear to be male-specific issues in the context of wider social, political and economic change and consider how these work to both construct men as a stable and universal category, and potentially serve to obfuscate more pertinent issues such as socio-economic status.

### 2.3.3 Gendered agency

In my initial review of the literature, there seemed to be no suggestion that (adult) men were directly coerced into sex work; however, newer findings in the UK (Laing and Gaffney, 2014) and China (Kong, 2014) dispute the argument that no men are controlled to sell sex<sup>6</sup>. Predominantly, agency is assumed for men (Crofts, 2014), except where a history of child sexual abuse has been known and the subject is regarded as vulnerable and treated as a case of victimisation (Abromovich, 2005). The men in Dorais' (2005) Canadian study reported not to be controlled by pimps or gangs.

Kaye's (2007) examination of the situation of male street sex workers in the United States suggests that often men are co-opted into other types of difficult situations in street work that are equally dangerous (e.g. handling drugs), but not subject to the sympathies of 'rescue' strategies and discourse in the same way as women and men who are attributed with more feminine characteristics whilst women's roles as victims and vulnerable are reinforced (Crofts, 2014).

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<sup>6</sup> Reviewing international sex work literature to make comparisons is challenging where some writers include trans\* women in their discussion of 'men' (da Silva, 1999; Minichiello *et al.*, 2014).

In Kaye's (2007) argument, gangs control men for purposes other than sex work; however, his study also demonstrates that young men can be in 'working relationships' where the person they call their partner finds them work and takes a share of their profits. Boys and male youth who are controlled, used, 'protected' and shared by paedophiles tend to be discarded when they become 'too old' and their desirability, vis-a-vis their extreme youth, disappears. Women who are controlled, on the other hand, may be profitable well past the age of majority, and so remain a valuable resource for their coercive partners, bosses or captors (Matthews and Easton, 2010; Dorais, 2005).

Sex tourism, including people travelling to other cities or other countries to buy sex, occurs for both male and female sex workers (Padilla, 2007; see also Hall, 2007; Luongo, 2000). There is an emerging understanding of sex work tourism, where people travel to other countries to sell sex (Mai, 2009a, 2011). Evidence challenges the automatic identification of all migrant sex workers as 'trafficked' women (Agustín, 2006a, 2007; Mai, 2009b). Work with male and female (cisgender and transgender) migrants who sell sex discusses varied stories of motivation as opportunities and predicaments (Mai, 2012, 2009b). Although adult males are not reported to be trafficked for sex, attention should be paid to the narratives of men with histories of child prostitution, running away and life in the streets (Dorais, 2005; Kaye, 2007). At the same time, the absence of adult men as victims in discourses and practices of rescue from trafficking raises rather than allays further tensions about gender stereotypes and heteronormative expectation (Smith, 2015). Men and women are constructed (or 'disappeared') by others and construct themselves within existing legal and economic parameters for 'rescue' and 'victims' (Smith, 2015).

Gift giving and informal exchanging of intimacies, between men have been explored in Brazil (Piscitelli, 2007), Moscow (Niccolai, 2014) and the UK (Davies and Feldman, 1999). The literature examines those relationships which are not necessarily individual exchanges

but can become more formalised social units or long-term arrangements (Kong, 2014; Padilla, 2008; Rivers-Moore, 2012). My work extends these conversations with a specific focus on money and its meanings to men who sell sex to men in London.

#### **2.4. Men selling sex to men**

In contrast to most other areas of social science, in sex work research men as a population of subjects are in the minority to women and are treated as the Other. Literature about male sex workers specifically name their subjects as male (e.g. Bimbi, 2007; Disogra *et al.*, 2005), where most articles that refer simply to sex workers are, in fact, referring to female sex workers (Kinnell, 2006; Lewis *et al.*, 2005). This is true not only in academic work but also in popular and social policy discourse (Anon, 2007; Jacobson, 2008). It is less common to find research that addresses both male and female subjects, although more recent examples can be cited (Abramovich, 2005; Bernstein, 2007b; Mai, 2012, 2009b). Some recent work has made comparisons between men and women who sell sex (Koken *et al.*, 2010). Others discursively frame their analysis and discussion of data collected with/from 'male sex workers' in relation to existing literature about 'female sex workers' (Smith *et al.*, 2013).

The trans-person is also specifically referenced as the Other (Reback *et al.*, 2005) to cisgender people. Trans\*<sup>7</sup> women (identified male at birth) are variously included with and excluded from research with cisgender women or men selling sex to men (cf da Silva, 1999; Mai, 2012, 2009b). With few exceptions, trans\* men (identified female at birth) have not been given significant attention in sex work literature, notably excepting various media that have highlighted the uniqueness of specific erotic performers (Noble, 2007).

The subjects and participants in my research are cisgender, same-sex attracted men who sell sex. I have maintained the relatively homogenous sample for reasons which I expand in the

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<sup>7</sup> 'Trans\*' has emerged as a signifier used by and for people who identify as transgender or transsexual.

next chapter, but which Dennis Altman summarises as acknowledging that men who *sell* (sex and sexualised services) to men (M\$M) are a part of the broader category of men who have sex with men (MSM), not *apart from* MSM. Importantly, as he summarily notes, ‘gender affects the relationships of commercial sex’ (Altman, 1999, p.xiv). With gender, Altman also includes sexuality, particularly in accounts of ‘economic necessity’ in contrast with more ‘romantic’ accounts. Thus, my work has developed from this approach to explore inequities instead of more obvious inequalities (Adams *et al.*, 2013).

#### **2.4.1 Shifting discourses of Men Selling Sex to Men**

There have been several shifts in the discursive treatment of men who sell sex to men in the West (Scott, 2003). Historically, men selling sex to men, and even men having consensual, non-commercial sex were considered a moral problem because they were seen as a deviation from gender(ed) norms which posed a disruption of class boundaries.

John Scott (2003) outlines a historical timeline for discourses of men selling sex to men.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, male prostitution was understood as a moral problem, typically associated with gender deviation or the crossing of class boundaries. By the mid-twentieth century, male prostitution was understood through a scientific lens, and typically associated with intergenerational sex and economic exploitation. Following from this, male prostitution has been transformed from a moral aberration of limited social significance into a social problem, closely associated with issues of health and welfare (Scott, 2003).

I would argue that whilst there has been a change in the *emphasis* on different discourses, their effects have been cumulative and they can often be read concurrently rather than consecutively. That is to say, repertoires of morality have not been vanquished from academic or practical considerations of (men) selling sex. Sex between men and non-monogamy continue to shape and be shaped by moral discourses, even when emphasis is placed on the scientific study of health and welfare. The staying power of these discourses is remarkable, even still in the twenty-first century. Scott’s observations about gender norms

and class boundaries continue to be relevant and so this thesis supports the continued focus of scientific interest: analysis of male escort advertising can both support and challenge perceptions that men who sell sex are all young ‘hustlers’ working on the street (Ashford, 2009a; Davies and Feldman, 1999; Walby, 2012). Interview data with men who sell sex in their thirties and forties (McLean, 2013; Tyler, 2014; Walby, 2012) further disrupts the intergenerational discourse where experienced, ‘older’ men (sometimes read as in their *thirties!*) are approached by younger customers.

Dominant repertoires have constructed typologies of thuggish or desperate young men offering contact to closeted ‘inverts’ who remain, for social or embodied reasons, unfamiliar to an *authentic* community or a particular embodiment of masculinity (Scott, 2003).

Meanwhile, a repertoire of economic exploitation (wealthier men exploiting poorer men in need) is a reading that privileges the heteronormative (Altman, 1999; Kaye, 2014). It ignores the social and psychological oppression and suppression of homosexuality (for individuals, communities or whole nations), and disregards ageism and physical capital of genetic and cultivated bodily attributes and performances (Walby, 2012), as well as 21st century gay-identity-capital (Mai, 2011).

First person accounts of sex work from writers like Annie Sprinkle (2004), Brooke Magnanti (de Jour, 2005; Magnanti, 2012), and Aiden Shaw (2006) shift the focus onto individual narratives and challenge the traditional dynamic of the researched sex-worker object reported by the outsider academic. The sex-worker-as-author is less common than academics using qualitative – often feminist – methodologies to co-produce ethnographic or interview data with, from, and about people selling sex.

Researchers have used data from interviews to illustrate ways that their informants talk about selling sex and examples of when people compare sex work favourably to more mainstream

working conditions and compensation (e.g. Davies and Feldman, 1999; Weitzer, 2009). Some women with college or university educations in the United States have opted for unconventional careers that they see as empowering because they are self-employed, earn more money in less time, and are free to pursue other endeavours that would be limited by a job that took up more of their time (Bernstein, 2007a, 2007b). There, Bernstein's work emphasises choice and experiences of women who use their bodies – as well as their time, cultural capital and caring skills – for personal empowerment and financial profit. Similar findings are offered from male participants in the United States and Canada (Smith, 2012; Walby, 2012).

## **2.5. Life Patterns**

With a recognition that sex work is not one single, homogenous entity – nor are the people involved – researchers and other stakeholders continue to devise different ways of categorising sex work. Contemporary literature – for example, the past ten years – continues to use the spaces where sex is sold, negotiated and/or exchanged to describe and categorise forms of sex work (Scott, 2003), such as 'Outdoor', 'Indoor' and 'Internet' (Crofts, 2014). Others make differentiation between levels of autonomy (McClean, 2013b); however, there are also polysemic shifts that take place when the type of service or type of place becomes shorthand and a 'type of sex worker' is constructed. Rather, people are constructed as types of sex workers: "call boys" (i.e. agency workers), the private escort' (McClean, 2013b, p.7) street workers, off-street workers, and indoor workers (Shaver, 2005). Unintentionally, but without attention, the person disappears (or is 'disappeared'; Smith, 2015, citing Agustín, 2006), particularly when assumptions are made about the 'nature' of the person (Scott, 2003). This then reinforces the symbolic shift of 'sex work' and 'sex workers', away from the

public, political affiliations with and movements of ‘work’ and ‘workers’ and towards the private – both sensationalised and secret – personal stigma of ‘sex’ and ‘money’.

One example of past attempts to typify character types or life patterns is how Michel Dorais’ (2005) addresses pathways into doing sex work by creating four profiles for male sex workers: the ‘Outcast’, the ‘Insider’, the ‘Part-timer’, and the ‘Liberationist’. He conducted his study through ‘careful but discreet observation of the relevant social environments, and especially, an analysis of semi-directed interviews [n=40] consisting of a series of open questions’ (Dorais, 2005, p.7). The participants in his Québec study were all men who sold or had sold sex. Their average age at the time of interview was 27 years. They included men with different sexual histories and sexual identities, including men who identified as heterosexual and men who had been sexually abused as children. The participants had sold sex through various environments including online escorting, stripping venues and the street.

### **2.5.1 One researcher’s linguistic shift from ‘life patterns’ to typologies**

According to Dorais’ (2005) analysis, ‘Outcasts’ use sex work as a means to meet basic needs (food, shelter) and support addictive habits. Typically they have low self-esteem, low esteem, lack of alternative resources, and are very vulnerable to violence, prosecution, and STD and HIV transmission. Outcasts describe struggling to feel a sense of agency (Dorais, 2005). It is important to note that these findings are based on the qualitative data and so reports of ‘low’, ‘high’, ‘more’, and ‘less’ self-esteem, for example, are not based on standardised measures. Whilst reporting on the literature, I use the language and categories provided, however critically, as it was the design, if not the interpretation, that was central to my own methodology, as I will go on to describe in the next chapter.

By contrast, ‘Dorais’ ‘Insiders’ have grown up in close proximity to sex work and see it as a normal lifestyle, however removed from other sections of society. Typically they have a

parent or peers who also do sex work. Insiders do not attach the same stigma to sex work; therefore, they have a higher sense of self-worth, but not necessarily a higher sense of agency. They are likely to have a lack of financial and educational resources (Dorais, 2005).

Whilst few people do sex work for their whole lives, Dorais creates a category that is temporally demarcated. 'Part-Timers' use sex work as a means to supplement their usual income to reduce or remove debt or to obtain things they could not otherwise afford. They do attach a stigma to their work. They tend to keep their sex work a secret, and see it as temporary, though they have a higher sense of agency because it is not their *only* alternative, but perhaps the best paying. Part-Timers are likely to be very vigilant with safer sexual practice to ensure their sex work does not transgress into their mainstream lives (Dorais, 2005).

'Liberationists' may take up sex work as a way to earn money from the sex that they would enjoy anyway, to increase the amount of sex that they have, to legitimate sex that they might otherwise consider taboo, or to gain libidinal excitement from the power relationships involved in paid sex exchange (submissive or dominant). As such, this group is said to have the highest sense of agency; however, this empirical claim, as previously mentioned, is developed from qualitative rather than quantitative data and is not quantitatively assessed; thus, Liberationists are constructed as having been able to make an *objective choice* rather than a *relative choice*, the most resources, the most esteem and self-esteem, and the most control over their situation (Dorais, 2005).

It is of note that not everyone *stays* in sex work for the same reasons they enter it, and that satisfaction, agency, esteem, and self-esteem can change throughout one's life and career (as is true for any occupation). This is particularly important when considering drug use, safer-sex choices, client choices, and occupation exit strategies (Dorais, 2005). I found Dorais'

model useful at the beginning of my research to understand the broad spectrum of experiences of men and the number of factors are both constructive of and constructed when men sell sex to men; however, the model has several limitations which I also discovered.

First, I believe temporality is misplaced within the model, as I go on to illustrate in my own findings. Constructs of agency as being objective ignore ongoing debates about the interrelationship of multiple structures and fractally complex (and often incomplete) dimensions of decision making and self-efficacy (Delignières *et al.*, 2004). My work advances this model by critically reflecting on its structural fixity and the way this objectifies people who sell sex. In the place of fixed character types or life patterns, I add a structure of diffraction (Mai, 2012), imploring the use of temporality to recognise how ongoing iterations are repeated patterns within larger, unfinished life stories (Plummer, 1995). In other words, building on Barad (2007), Mai (2012) and McLennan (2003), I borrow from mathematics and physics to suggest quantum modelling, so that meanings which have been constructed from arbitrary boundaries and misleading binaries – such as ‘entering prostitution’/ ‘exiting prostitution’ or ‘coercion’/ ‘choice’ or ‘objective’/ ‘relational’ – can be reconsidered as part of a continuously growing ontological structure (Barad, 2007) with explicit acknowledgement of the performativity of self-similar iterations (Stewart, 2008). Analog fuzziness, which was once ignored by mathematicians is now seen as being particularly significant for ‘real-world systems’ (Gleick, 1998). With the onto-epistemological tensions of unpacking ‘structures’ and ‘agencies’, the nonlinearity of complex systems suggests ‘an operational way to define free will, in a way that [allows one] to reconcile free will with determinism’ (Gleick, 1998, p.251). Following Barad’s (2007) critique, I acknowledge that in social sciences and human sciences, emphasis is more often placed on ‘quantum’ models as metaphor in the explanation rather than defined equations at this stage; however, it is my aim

to reinforce a theoretical foundation for psychological and sociological models to take on more complex quantitative applications in the future.

## **2.6. Summary**

Sexual stories are increasingly recognised as important parts of wider discourses, social ideologies, and personal histories (Plummer, 1995). Scholarship about sex work shapes and is shaped by the discourses it seeks to understand. Those discourses have largely been heteronormative, medicalised, and/or moralised narratives (Scott, 2003). Under umbrellas of divergent ideologies of feminism, scholars, policy makers and activists continue to debate the experiences and identities of people selling sex. Mandates to reduce risks and harm to vulnerable people, particularly women and children in poverty, have had the effect of oversimplifying the complex array of actions, identities, and motivations conveyed and understood by people who sell sex themselves.

Having outlined some of the foundational work that has outlined gender and environment as key structures to constructs of agency and subject-position, I have introduced examples of how models which aim to categorise and typify experiences and identities can impose unintended fixed, binary positions. Certainly, patterns emerge but remain problematic within dominant ontological focus on knowing ‘types’ of people.

In the next chapter, I define how I am operationalising ‘queer’ and queer theory to shift my ontological focus from types and boundaries to actions and relationships. I outline how queer, sex, and work interconnect with representation and advertising. I argue that this makes a distinct set of texts available which can be used as data for the study of these topics at their intersections in contemporary Britain. I build on my argument for using these ‘queer texts’ with an overview of scholarly work which has already looked at advertisements for romantic

and sexual interactions, including recent empirical work with online advertisements in the United States.

## **CHAPTER 3: QUEER ADVERTISING AS TEXTS**

Having outlined the existing literature on sex work, in this chapter, I outline how I use queer theory and structural applications of semiotics to frame my research question, ‘What are the experiences and representations of men who sell sex to men in London through advertising?’

I include definitions of queer theory and how I use applications of those definitions to do research on sex work. I point the reader to the interconnections of queer, sex, and work, to lead towards my interest in queer representations, representations of sex, and advertising. I then provide a short primer on ‘small ads’ as they have been used and studied in the context of sexual contact before the next chapter where I explain my methodology and their inclusion as data with the interviews and the wider ethnography.

### **3.1. Queer Theory**

Teresa de Lauretis coined the term ‘Queer Theory’ as a way of marking a ‘critical distance’ from the tensions of ‘lesbian and gay studies’ (Turner, 2000, p.133). ‘Queer’ is useful to move away from the medicalised and pathologising use of ‘homosexual’ as well as the erasure of more diverse – and sometimes fluid – experiences and identity practices such as the intersectionalities of race, class, age, gender and/or sex (Turner, 2000). It has been posed that Lauretis’ use of ‘theory’ is distinct from a positivist scientific definition of ‘a proven postulate’ or a set of principles used to explain facts where, instead, she refers to using theory for critiquing ‘passionate fictions’ (White, 2007, p.2). My use of the term ‘queer’, as part of using queer theory, is a deliberate action to speak simply about the diversity that emerged from my participants and my data as well as acknowledge hierarchical structures and performativity which continue to work in othering individuals and groups-within-groups, even in ‘the world we have won’ (Weeks, 2007).

The importance of applying queer approaches to methodology is emphasised when exploring under-represented, otherwise unknowable or previously problematic acts, as is the importance of positioning experiences of sexually extraordinary citizens at the centre of thought, research and writing (Browne and Nash, 2010; Caudwell, 2006; Eng, 2006). In queer theory, film, sculpture, speeches and parliamentary debates ‘are all appropriately scrutinized as potentially regulatory and productive texts [through] their gaps, insinuations, and excesses of meaning’ (Leckey and Brooks (eds.), 2010, p.4) in their relationship to heteronormativity, paying attention to ‘subjects positioned outside the privileged sites of heterosexuality and heteronormativity’ (Leckey and Brooks (eds.), 2010, p.5) and their attendant positions with hegemonic masculinities and a mythologised ‘charmed circle’ (Rubin, 1993). Using (sub-) cultural, non-canonical texts allows reflexive thought about the extent to which spaces and sites co-construct with their users/ subjects normative and potentially regulatory codes and treatments (Leckey and Brooks (eds.), 2010). The exploration of Gaydar profiles as cultural texts provokes reflection on the extent to which commercial social-sexual representations are co-construct-ive/-ed with their subjects in normative and potentially regulatory ways. If ‘queer’ has indeed ‘been conscripted into service as a sexier, more marketable label for lesbian and gay identities’ (Leckey and Brooks (eds.), 2010, p.2) then perhaps a deconstruction of sex/y market/able culture is a useful endeavour to explore not the ‘inevitable’ absorptions but the intersectionalities of ‘political dissent’, ‘late capitalism’ and ‘consumer culture’. Queer enables and maintains ways of speaking with/ about the (sometimes uncomfortable) tensions that encapsulate discursive representations and experiences of those citizens who are often curtailed, marginalised and/or exaggerated through fantasy (Leckey and Brooks (eds.), 2010). ‘Placing personal identity radically into question raise[s] significant questions about conceptual identity, “truth,” and the philosophy that chases it’ (Turner, 2000, p.134).

### **3.1.1 Defining ‘queer’: the queer paradox**

Throughout my thesis, I use ‘queer’ variously as noun, verb, adjective, adverb, synecdoche, and metonym, enjoying rather than limiting the multiplicity and fluidity of the word itself. I employ its multiple genealogies: social constructionism, trans-gendering, ‘outing’ politics (Halley and Parker, 2011), which not only lend themselves to, but are indispensable in, exploring advertised sex work. Here, queer is collectivism and otherness, disruption and blending, deconstruction and re-imagining (Muñoz 2009). Queer, for my reading, tames (or frees?) the oxymoron of the Collective/Other. Queer performs as a relational description of the collective of persons whose gender/ sexual actions/ constitutions/ actions are other/ ‘Other’ to the current, culturally recognised dominant categories and hierarchies. Queer infers ‘a certain failure to live up to expectations’ (Turner, 2000, p.134; see also Halberstam, 2011) as well as the utopianism which prevents it from ossifying as just another sub-structural category of known and knowable power relations (Foucault, 1998; Muñoz, 2009). Queer is used, here, without specific and specious boundaries, (beyond) those constructed through gender and sexuality, noting that sexuality and gender are mutually constructing and interrelated with other identity categories such as race, class, age, embodiment, and so on (Hall, 2003; Turner, 2000). Even more so, ‘the power relations of “sexuality” cannot be reduced to those of “gender”’ (Segal, 1999, p.55; see also Rubin, 1993).

### **3.1.2 Queer sex work**

The use of ‘queer’ is often critiqued when used as a metonym for men who have sex with men (Caudwell, 2006), and there is growing literature on male sex work (Smith and Laing, 2012); however, it is true that men working in the sex industry are still an understudied group of people (Walby, 2012). Men selling sex to men straddle two phenomena that have been largely peripheral to mainstream interest: sex work and queer identity (Morrison and Whitehead, 2007). Historical examples of compensated male with male exchanges have

explored stories of young male soldiers, working class labourers and cross-dressing men in London in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Weeks, 1991). Male prostitution from the middle of the twentieth century placed an emphasis on street prostitution and ‘hustlers’ (Scott, 2003). Recent research looks at M\$M from psychological, social and sexual health (Mariño *et al.*, 2000; Parsons *et al.*, 2004, 2005; Uy *et al.*, 2004), and legal perspectives (Whowell, 2010). More recent work has focused on (or included) sociologies of men selling sex to men (Dorais 2005; Walby 2012) and builds a perspective of a new ‘petite bourgeoisie’ of graduates who use sex to earn extra or alternate income outside of more mainstream enterprises, eschewing lower pay, longer hours or other stresses (Bernstein, 2007a, 2007b; Walby, 2012). Some of the most up to date work explores newer forms of client contact and negotiation, specifically men who advertise escort services in magazines (Cameron *et al.*, 1999) and on the internet (Koken *et al.*, 2010; Phua and Caras, 2008; Phua *et al.*, 2009; Walby, 2010, 2012). The focus or site of the internet advertising research is online classified advertisements (Koken *et al.*, 2010) and websites dedicated to escort advertising (Logan, 2010; Phua and Caras, 2008; Phua *et al.*, 2009), usually in America. Of course there are other spaces for online advertising of sex and body work, including private websites, blogs and social networks. All of this dovetails nicely with the emergence of queer theory in relation to studying ‘computer mediated communication’ in the 1990s – in other words, part of what is now known as ‘digital media’ (O’Riordan, 2007). The ‘simultaneous production of queer intersectionality with epistemology and methodology [...] signals further the power of queer’s capacity to be used to dynamically [sic] effect’ (O’Riordan, 2007, p.19).

### **3.1.3 Queer advertising as a mode of storytelling**

Queer theorists like have been critical of the politics of monoculturist canon formation (Leckey and Brooks (eds.), 2010; Turner, 2000).

To move quickly from the very private personal story to the much more public personal tale, the late modern world has become increasingly saturated by the mass media – in ways that simply weren't possible for earlier generations. [It] may well be that the changing media is the key to the growth of sexual story telling (Plummer 1995: 8).

Advertising can be defined by both the processes and the industries which connect messages, images and ideologies to products or services in order to promote them, usually to some financial benefit (Humm, 2003). Feminist theories of advertising that critique Western advertising as sexist, ageist, racist, and homophobic, argue that 'advertising obscures the social relations of class and gender with identifications made by consumption not production and it obscures history with a false sense of the present' (Humm, 2003, p.4). From this perspective, Williamson's work (2002) is portrayed as drawing on psychoanalysis to illustrate how women have been represented in mainstream consumer advertising 'as fragmented objects' seeking coherence from 'an artificial unity through product consumption' (Humm, 2003, p.4). Advertising – both the process and the industry – is framed from this perspective as antithetical to understanding consumer impact as part of a *beneficial* shift for Western women in the mid to late twentieth century (Weeks, 2007).

Research has established using personal ads and online profiles as a rich source of data regarding self-presentation and mate-selection (Baker, 2003; Child *et al.*, 1996; Davis, 1990; Deaux and Hanna, 1984; Groom and Pennebaker, 2005; Hancock *et al.*, 2007; Dowsett *et al.*, 2008). The advertisements serve as an example of a queer canonical text (Leckey and Brooks (eds.), 2010) which researchers can read as an alternative source of data for historical, sociological, cultural-anthropological information about people and places that have otherwise been invisible or erased, demonised or even destroyed. Individually, the ads are both constructed and constructive; however, read together, advertisements can become a corpus ('a large, representative sample') (Baker, 2003, p.244), to be read synchronically (for example all of the ads from one month in several different publications or media) (Tyler,

2014) or diachronically (i.e. historically or temporally, such as a sample of ads taken from a single publication over 20 year period (Baker, 2003; Tyler, 2014). ‘While a corpus-based approach to personal adverts will not explain why gay identities have (or have not) changed over time, they will at least provide a representative set of linguistic snap-shots’ (Baker, 2003, p.245).

Baker’s work provides a foundation for using corpus linguistics with a large sample of advertisements and electronically annotating them, which provides frequency information in a content analysis as well as identifying patterns and trends over a longer period of time. In turn, this provided him with the opportunity to do ‘more detailed qualitative analyses of smaller extracts [and] uncover associations or *collocations*<sup>8</sup> between different lexical items’ (Baker, 2003, p.244) that people use as form of self-presentation. Research using small ads and online profiles reflexively can explore patterns of self-presentation amongst men who have sex with men (MSM) by acknowledging the processes involved when the men produce their own advertisements.

Drawing on Goffman’s (1959) theory of performance, we understand the creation of online profiles as a form of self-presentation whereby men who have sex with men [MSM] choose to highlight and/or exclude certain personal traits in the hope of attracting sexual partners (Nodin *et al.*, 2011).

The literature touches on but stops short of exploring in depth the interrelationship and the blurring of boundaries between the subject/object-positions of men who appear in the profiles and advertisement which they create and update themselves. Acknowledging the prominence of these texts at the intersections of popular, metropolitan, queer cultures and utilising them as data offers the potential to further that discussion.

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<sup>8</sup> Baker gives the example that if words like *flamboyant* and *homosexual* are often found to be used together in a particular group of texts like personal advertisements, then we can identify them as ‘strong collocates of one another [which] can be useful in revealing underlying discourses and assumptions in a text’ (Baker, 2003, p.244).

There is an emerging body of work that focuses on online profiles and the popular social-sexual networking sites used by men who have sex with men (MSM), particularly men who *identify as* gay and bisexual (Campbell, 2007; Gosine, 2007; Gudelunas, 2012; Jones, 2005; Light *et al.*, 2008; Mowlabocus, 2010b), Data collection and analysis is often focused on condom use, specifically in relation to understanding and preventing transmission of HIV<sup>9</sup> (Coleman *et al.*, 2010; Dowsett *et al.*, 2008; Klein, 2011; Mowlabocus, 2007b). In the UK research has focused on how the (historically most) popular social-sexual networking site, Gaydar has been used (Ashford, 2009a; Light *et al.*, 2008; Mowlabocus, 2007a, 2010b, 2010d). ‘Internet-based practices are changing [and demonstrate] how key structuring devices found within archetypal gay pornography have become increasingly integral to self-representation in many gay online spaces’ (Mowlabocus 2007, 61) and how that dialogue extends outside them, as well.

The research that has focused on men who have sex with men (MSM) and personal ads (Baker, 2003; Davidson, 1991) or social networking sites (Jones, 2005; Mowlabocus, 2010b) and applications (apps) has predominantly omitted reference to men selling sex and sexual services to men (M\$M). Other researchers have explored the ways people who sell sex have used magazines (Cameron *et al.*, 1999) the Internet and the way its use impacts how they sell sex (Mclean, 2013b; Parsons *et al.*, 2004; Sanders, 2005a). In the following section, I discuss the literature on classified advertising and the use of ‘small ads’ for seeking (sexual) partners from historical and contemporary perspectives, then focus on the research that has been done specifically on gay men and MSM and finally examine the very small amount of work that has been done about M\$M advertising to discuss the gaps that remain.

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<sup>9</sup> HIV is the human immune-deficiency virus.

## 3.2. Advertising

### 3.2.1 Small ads

Research on M\$M advertising is relatively scarce. A broader literature exists looking at classified personal ads generally (Cocks, 2009; Deaux and Hanna, 1984), gay men's classified ads specifically (Baker, 2003; Davidson, 1991; Livia, 2002) and most recently there has been a great deal of interest in how MSM use the Internet to interact, usually with a focus on prevention of HIV (Carballo-Diéguez et al., 2006; Nodin et al., 2011; Wilson et al, 2009).

We can read a social history – immigration, morality, ideals and ideologies – within the texts of the small ads. The first printed ad appeared in 1477, stating the ‘ecclesiastical rules governing the Easter festival’ (Cocks, 2009: viii). In the 1690s, print ads were used to seek matrimonial arrangements, approximately fifty years after the first modern newspaper was created (Cocks, 2009: viii). H.G. Cocks provides detailed insight into the history of the classified ads and their development and evolution to the ads that we know today. He recounts that for many people, particularly those with

unconventional lives [...] the personal column was a vital resource, a way of not only making friends and meeting lovers, but also forging a community when homosexuality was still illegal, when being single past the age of twenty-one was seen as embarrassingly shameful, and when the difficulty of obtaining a divorce could make marriage seem like a terrible constraint (Cocks, 2009: xi).

For example, in post-war Britain, a periodical called *Picture Show* ran a column called ‘Star Fan Club’. This was for people wanting to meet sexual or romantic partners, whether of the opposite sex or the same sex, even though homosexuality was illegal for men (Cocks, 2009: 131). Advertising was not explicit but signs and clues to the sexual *persuasion* of the advertiser could be read in their interests. Names like Montgomery Clift and Bette Davis

were used to signify homoerotic intent. These signals were sometimes detected by the police, especially when a serviceman was involved (Cocks, 2009: 131).

One point this highlights is the importance of a semiotic reading of ads which can provide clues and cues that advertisers may wish/ have wished to reveal only to a knowing audience. The other point, then, is the usefulness of knowledge of a sub-culture – whether personally or from key informants – in order to effectively look for and read these hidden signs.

‘Just as they had since the Edwardian period, small ads continued to play a key role in the formation of the gay scene. Many gay men, in fact, preferred the neutral territory of the personal column to the overly political and confrontational message of Gay Liberation. Gay ads appeared regularly in *IT* [International Times, a periodical for the counter-culture], which had a special “Gentlemen’s Directory” section at the back to cater for them. *Exit* and *Way Out* also catered for [men seeking men]’ (Cocks, 2009: 149).

### **3.2.2 Ads in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (Contemporary advertising)**

Contemporary analysis of classified ads has focused on the features that people emphasise about themselves or the partner they are seeking. Deaux and Hanna (1984) analysed 800 classified advertisements from individuals they identified as gay and straight men and women. Their findings included an emphasis on physical characteristics by men whilst women placed more importance on psychological factors. People looking for same-sex partners made this explicit – interpreted by the researchers as an emphasis on sexuality (Deaux and Hanna, 1984). Critically, this coding and interpretation privileged heterosexuality as ordinary where a ‘need’ to specify the gender of a partner was placed only on people looking for ‘same-sex’ partners.<sup>10</sup> This serves as a reminder of the value of more reflexive research where researchers are conscious of their/ our own standpoint and assumptions (Edwards and Holland, 2013; Holland *et al.*, 2004) no less so when texts are historical. In advertisements from men for the (sexual) attention of other men – a queer minority within a

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<sup>10</sup> As I rewrite, I am prompted to look again at the analysis to look for cisgender privilege which I had not noted previously.

heteronormative majority – the intersections of sexuality, race, nationality, and gender-performance are read, and often written, with more intent.

### 3.2.3 ‘Gay’ men, and MSM classified ads

Men seeking men (MSM) stressed a hegemonic masculinity, whether advertising as ‘escorts and models’ or for ‘personal relationships’ (Deaux and Hanna, 1984, p.364; citing Lumby, 1978). Content-analysis of the personals section of New York’s *The Village Voice* analysed numbers of advertisements and the language used by gay men to refer to their presentation of self and particularly sexuality. Analysis at three year intervals in 1982, 1985 and 1988 showed significant increases in the number of advertisements. Language used by gay men to refer to their sexuality expressed a rejection of presentations of self that were considered “stereotypical” (Davidson, 1991). Davidson (1991, p.127) notes that ‘studies of gay male life using the personals column are temporally limited because the data tapped are primarily adapted to what’ concerns gay men at the time. He lists such temporally sited concerns as physical attraction, psychological attraction, age, youthfulness, ‘sexiness’, personality, education, virility and descriptors of the self and ideal partners. His critique is focused on the omission of health-related concerns, particularly those that emerged from the impact and awareness of HIV and AIDS in the 1980s.

I use Davidson’s approach with content analysis of social texts and adapt the method for visual advertising from M\$M, also noting potential omissions (particularly a discussion of the relative absence of HIV status from M\$M ads which I discuss in Chapter 4). Arguably, all research that makes use of social texts is temporally limited; however, being mindful of temporal limitations and reading data reflexively is useful for continuing to build historically relevant understandings of socially constructed ideologies. He also argues that ‘the use of documentary data does have the advantage of providing a longer time dimension than is

available in previous studies' that used other methods of data collection (Davidson, 1991, p.128).

Research on the written text in personal advertisements moves forward as advances are made in technology. With the invention, adoption and adaptation of the Internet as a tool and space for social interaction, researchers have looked at how men have initiated and negotiated exchanges and relationships electronically (Campbell, 2007; Jones, 2005; Mowlabocus, 2010d). An analysis of the pseudonyms constructed by users of the French Minitel (a type of interactive video text system, similar to online chatrooms) looked at the component signs within pseudonyms and how they were used to create layers of signification, to become part of the interactions, as well as precluding and prompting them (Livia, 2002). Pseudonyms became protocol as part of a culture where using an address or telephone number was disallowed in an attempt to prevent sex workers soliciting on the erotic chat lines. Just as print ads were charged per word (Tyler, 2014), Minitel (and Internet) users were charged per minute; thus, abbreviations and acronyms<sup>11</sup> also became a part of the culture – again like the print ads (Davidson, 1991). The abbreviations become a coded language and have the effect of creating a shared culture of understanding. This in turn constructs an 'insider' group and shared identity associated with the patois (Livia, 2002). Even in a completely verbal-text environment, Livia (2002) concluded that the function of pseudonyms of men seeking sex with men had a greater relationship to the users' intention of eroticising encounters than as a way of disguising intention to outsiders or moderators.

My observations were of interfaces like Gaydar.net where an alphabetised sorting was used as a default option prior to sorting by global positioning system (GPS) that has become

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<sup>11</sup> Familiar examples of abbreviations and acronyms from personal ads are GSOH is 'good sense of humour', ALAWP is 'all letters answered with photo' or the more contemporary examples of BB for anal sex without condoms as 'bareback' and PNP for men using 'chems' (class A drugs) for sex to 'party 'n' play')

popular with mobile apps. These advances invite newer research, observation and comment on how handles and pseudonyms are chosen and used.

### **3.2.4 Ads for M\$M**

Some research has been done with men who sell sex using magazine and Internet advertising, making a point to distinguish the advertising cohort as distinct from street workers (e.g. Minichiello *et al.*, 2000; Morrison and Whitehead, 2007; Parsons *et al.*, 2001). Further research on how men selling sex in the United States use the Internet has explored some of the ways that the available technologies are used to screen clients and discuss safer sex, as well as the roles the Internet and online applications have played in their entry into sex work (Parsons *et al.*, 2004). This emphasis on modes of contact can be investigated further, particularly where there is a gap in research that focuses on men selling sex to men in Britain and using British based social-networking applications.

The research from the United States has also revealed that Internet advertising allowed them to pre-book clients on business trips whereas magazine advertising attracted more potential clients who had been drinking (in bars) or using drugs (Parsons *et al.*, 2004). As I have stated previously, so much of the past research has been conducted in the United States and with an emphasis on HIV prevention. My research builds upon and updates this research, where dramatic changes have occurred in mobile communication technologies – including smart phones, WiFi and social networking ‘apps’ – as well as advances in the treatment and prevention of HIV and related discourses amongst sex workers, gay men, and more broadly, MSM. My particular focus on participants in Britain and spaces in London over a 20 year period provides a continuity with past research on magazines and the ‘gay scene’ (Ashford, 2009a), whilst challenging repertoires that would ignore the overlaps of various and evolving modes of contact and construct the use of different modes of contact as absolute and distinct.

There is an emerging body of research that focuses on the *content* of advertising for men selling sex to men (M\$M), but like past work on personal classified ads (Baker, 2003; Davidson, 1991; Livia, 2002), it is largely focused on the (verbal-) ‘text’ content. Previous research on male escort advertising has focused completely on verbal-text-only advertising (Cameron *et al.*, 1999) or has limited its focus to the verbal-text within the advertisements (Phua and Caras, 2008). In part, this is simply because most early ads only contained verbal texts. As technologies and advertising conventions have developed, so have research interests in the visual content in social science research more generally (Reavey (ed.), 2011; Rose, 2007). Again, this chapter serves to explore these forms of advertising that are newer, more visual, multi-modal, and more interactive.

Research that has looked at the meaning of photographs on gay men’s personal profiles (Campbell, 2007, 2004; Jones, 2009; Mowlabocus, 2010d, 2010a; Richardson, 2010) has not yet been widely applied to the commercial profiles of M\$M. One researcher has done content analysis with both written and visual texts of commercial profiles from Gaydar.co.uk<sup>12</sup> (Ashford, 2009a). His analysis addresses the ways men who sell sex need to be considered within wider policy frameworks and legal discourse about selling sex, sex work, and prostitution in Britain. Ashford’s (2009a) use of both visual and verbal content raises tensions between how complex, conflicting messages are constructed and read. In one example, he describes a profile flagged for ‘Safer Sex: Always’ but displaying a photo of the advertiser having anal (penetrative) sex without a condom. What Ashford’s method also adds is a discussion of the opportunities to analyse the content of individual advertisements, as well as to analyse the content of the advertisements within a corpus and as a corpus. Ashford’s findings emphasise the importance of adopting more than one approach. His interpretations of the advertisers’ motivations for omitting or revealing certain content – such as price – can

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<sup>12</sup> Gaydar.co.uk and its related URLs such as Gaydar.com.au are now all listed as Gaydar.net.

only be stated as inferences without actually approaching the men who advertise themselves. This gap is one that my research addresses, where I use analysis of the advertisements with interview data from men who advertise and key informants who work in advertising or support services for men who sell sex.

The presence or absence of photographs on Internet advertisements for men selling sex has been used to analyse differences in advertised prices (Logan and Shah, 2009). Their analysis found that men selling sex who included at least one face picture also advertised higher prices than those who did not reveal their faces in their photographs.

Cameron et al. (1999) analysed issues of *Gay Times* in the mid-1990s to look for patterns of significance between the advertisers' self-described characteristics – such as age, ethnicity, physique and proclamations of masculinity – and the types of services they offered, described as either 'mainstream', ordinary sex or more fetish-related activities including dressing up, role-play and BDSM. They found that the age of advertisers promoting fetish-related activities was higher than the average and that men who claimed to be 'older' (in this case, over 26 years) were also more likely to claim to be bisexual or indicate other signs of masculinity. They also found a pattern where the ages of men who promoted themselves as 'foreign' (to an assumed British audience) were younger than the ages of men who promoted themselves as British or made no claim to a national identity (Cameron *et al.*, 1999).

Phua and Caras (2008) picked up this exploration of nationality, ethnicity and representation in online advertisements. They looked at race, comparing the written text of Brazilian and White American men selling sex. Their method used the photo images contained in the advertisements to confirm or compare written claims of race and ethnicity but did not analyse the photos further. The researchers collected and categorised the advertisers' self-descriptions in their profiles and looked at how the M\$M constructed themselves for their audience (Phua

and Caras 2008). Their analysis interrogated the ways men described themselves in their ads, comparing white American men with (mainly mixed-race) Brazilian men. I compared this to Deaux and Hannah's (1984) study of 800 personal advertisements. Their analysis on personal ads in magazines lists 13 categories that include codes (sub-categories) that overlap with the 23 categories Phua and Caras found in online profiles. These include physical descriptions, sexual acts, age and race. These studies provide a reference point for analysis and discussion of British magazine ads. They also provide support for the methods I used as well as my findings as I coded the advertising sections and recorded and developed categories.

In both magazine and online profiles, men construct 'brands' (Phua and Caras 2008) or Unique Selling Points (USP) that differentiate themselves from their colleagues/ 'competitors' in the surrounding ads, often creating 'packages', associating groups of physical characteristics (muscularity and penis size), personal characteristics ('discreet', 'passionate'), and services offered (fetish, 'boyfriend experience'). Comparisons between male and female sex workers note that advertising the 'boyfriend experience' is immediately comparable to female sex workers advertising a 'girlfriend experience' and a mode of constructing a presentation of 'authenticity', similar to strategies of highlighting education and class as prestige. Differences for M\$M from women selling sex to men include male advertisers emphasising their gender identities and performances of masculinity (Koken *et al.*, 2010).

The inclusion of both verbal and visual texts can present additional data but also added complexity to the analysis of texts (Reavey (ed.), 2011; Rose, 2007). For example, Baker's (2003) use of collocations and associations between different lexical signs in personal ads requires using different methods and technology for capturing, coding, organising and analysing data. Software for word-processing, data-bases and qualitative analysis has foundations developed for verbal texts. Part of what my research builds is how researchers

can adapt or develop off-the-shelf software for multi-modal analysis, which I discuss more in the Methodology chapter.

### 3.2.5 Queer and ‘quantum’ semiotics

Lauretis is credited with combining an application of Peircean semiotics with psychoanalytic theory ‘in order to explain how subjects negotiate the intersection of their interior psychic processes and external representations of sexuality’ (Turner, 2000, p.126). The strength of combining the two was attributed to an acknowledgement of the limitations of each. I have had to address the question of how or why my approach is not simply a straight-forward symbolic interactionism, and for me it has been the mutually informing dialogues between the rigours and disciplines of framing my analysis with the openness of queer theory and the material structures of semiotics.

Beyond the methods and technologies of analysis, visual signs can add an exponential level of meaning and analysis, even to small advertisements. Whilst a single word can have multiple meanings that vary with context, position and interpretation (known as a polyseme<sup>13</sup>) (Koskela, 2005), a single image may also be made up of multiple signs or symbols of multiple types, each with multiple meanings (Chandler, 2007; Williamson, 2002). The information, reading and interpretation of an image that is a combination of signs within signs is summed up neatly in the common phrase that ‘a picture is worth a thousand words’ and more formally by the application of Zeno’s paradox to qualitative texts (Uribe, 1998). Describing a feeling which is too familiar for many researchers, students, and writers, Zeno’s paradox denies the possibility of movement between two points by stating that one must consider an infinite number of segments, each of which must be travelled through and each of which is infinitely small (Uribe, 1998).

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<sup>13</sup> A polyseme is a word that has different but related meanings in different contexts. An example is ‘The doctor is coming,’ and ‘They doctor the books’ (Chandler, 2007; Koskela, 2005)

Language is part of an infinite semiosis of meaning. To say anything, I have got to shut up. I have to construct a single sentence. I know that the next sentence will open the infinite semiosis of meaning again, so I will take it back. So each stop is not a natural break.[...] But you have to get into that game or you will never say anything at all (Hall, 1991, p.51).

These infinite possibilities and paths also address the onto-epistemological critiques of the infinite possibilities of interpretations that researchers may make using (and creating) qualitative texts. Arguably, practices such as theoretical saturation (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1994a) can be supported mathematically by explanations of fractals dimensions (see below) and Georg Cantor's earlier theory of transfinite<sup>14</sup> numbers.

### *The opportunity of fractal dimensions*

Multi-dimensional space (i.e. greater than three dimensions) is mathematically possible and has proven to be theoretically useful in understanding phenomena in physical sciences (Stewart, 2008). An example which is emerging as discursively familiar is the four-dimensional space-time. Any point plotted on the four coordinates of space-time is defined as an event (Stewart, 2008). The modelling possibilities for super-positioned experiences, identities, and representations are as yet unexplored for queer phenomena.

Even plotted on two dimensions, coordinates may be plotted in such a way that they create a continuous line which curves and/or turns in regular iterations so as to make its progress as a one-dimensional line indistinguishable from the appearance of a two-dimensional shape. It creates a curve which illustrates a piece of a plane and so it seems to have two dimensions, yet it remains a one-dimensional line (Uribe, 1998).

'To overcome this conflict, mathematicians have introduced the idea of a "fractal dimension".

An intuitive definition is that the fractal dimension describes the amount of the plane that the

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<sup>14</sup> Transfinite numbers have the property of being 'infinite' insofar as they are greater than finite numbers although not necessarily *definitively* infinite.

curve eventually fills' (Uribe, 1998, p.9; see also Crilly, 2014). For example, the Peano curve fills the entire plane and thus its fractal dimension is 2; however, the number of dimensions that a fractal can have does not have to be a whole number. The Koch curve does not fill the whole plane although it fills more than a straight line. As such, it has a fractal dimension of 1.26182 – more than 1 and less than 2 (Crilly, 2014; Uribe, 1998).

This provides some mathematical power to address the argument that we must adopt complex models of interpretation, like previous references to understanding sociological, psychological, and geographical contexts of sex work through fractal models (Mai, 2012).

You have to come into language to get out of it. There is no other way. That is the paradox of meaning. To think it only in terms of difference and not in terms of the relational position between the suturing, the arbitrary, overdetermined cut of language which says something which is instantly opened again to the play of meaning; not to think of meaning always, in supplement, that there is always something left over, always something which goes on escaping the precision (Hall, 1991, p.51).

I go on to discuss some of the literature on analysing multi-modal and polytextual texts – specifically advertisements – in the next chapter and return to a discussion of the future of mathematical modelling in human sciences in the discussion.

Despite the challenges, there are significant – and growing – opportunities to collect data that is more readily available on the Internet. In my research, I discuss taking advantage of data that is available in an already-standardized format, sometimes with pop-down menus that have been designed by webmasters and completed by profile users. Profiles on Gaydar and Rentboy become the data of 'textual and symbolic performances' and this thesis adds illustration to how 'sexual objectification becomes a project of the self' (Nodin et al., 2011: 1026-1027). In other words, I have employed a large dataset from men photographing themselves (i.e. taking 'selfies') and using those photographs in combination with standardised and personalised verbal descriptions to project a sexual, social rendering of themselves with the explicit agenda of attracting the attention of a particular audience and

making contact and forms of connection and relationship. What the ads offer – read and analysed as a corpus (Baker, 2003) – is a readily available resource to study meanings that people attach to sexuality, whether at a single moment in time or from several points in history (Davidson, 1991).

### **3.3. Summary**

Having outlined how I am defining queer theory and how I am applying it to queer sex work advertisements, my brief overview of ‘small ads’ leads to an explanation of how they can be used. In my review of the literature and my development of applying queer theory to men’s sex work advertisements in queer social media, I have outlined four key areas to be addressed in understanding the experiences, representations and identities of men who sell sex to men in London’s gay scene media.

First, there is a dearth of research from social sciences or the humanities on queer sex work advertising. Second, the interrelationship of M\$M and London’s ‘gay scene’ has been unexplored since the late 1990s whilst dramatic legal and technological changes have reconfigured social practices for individuals and queer men as a group. Third, and building on these points, the existing literature on men selling sex through advertising lacks an in-depth exploration of what significance/ signification is given to the money made through sex work. Fourth, and finally, what these gaps and tensions illustrate is that models that have sought to create distinct types of sex workers or even analogous life patterns are both limited and limiting, and serve to objectify people rather than give voice to their subjective narratives. Having outlined my objectives, I now point to the Methodology chapter that follows where I explain my data collection and analysis processes.

## CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

### 4.1. Introduction

My thesis is that discourses of prostitution and sex work are not wholly representative of the range of experiences that people have of selling sex. I argue that current research and popular discourse do not adequately address the experiences and representations of gay, bisexual and queer men who sell sex to other men, globally, nationally, and in the context of London's 'gay scene' and queer subculture(s). My aim for this thesis is to address the question 'What are the experiences and representations of men selling sex to men through advertising in London at the turn of the twenty-first century?' In the previous chapters, I have outlined the literature that informs my research and the gaps and tensions that I have identified. Specifically, definitions of prostitution and discourses around sex work are rigidly defined in a heterocentric, heteronormative model which does not reflect the lived realities of many people who sell sex (Smith, 2015; Smith and Laing, 2012). While there is a growing body of work that explores sex work from a non-pathologising perspective, and a growing body of work on male sex work/-ers (Aggleton and Parker, 2015; Laing and Gaffney, 2014; Minichiello and Scott (eds.), 2014; Walby, 2012), the literature continues to define the person by the occupation of selling sex, despite the limits of this within their lifespan or career or within their regular day, week, month, or year. My thesis, then, sets out to explore the subject-positions of men who sell sex to men (M\$M) through their various representations, lived experiences, and identities. This chapter outlines the methodologies I have incorporated as a single 'queer ethnography' to engage with my subject/subjects, to develop a grounded theory that can help to make sense of the representations and discourses of M\$M within London's gay scene, to bring to life the stories and experiences of the men behind those images (Plummer, 1995), and to explore how those images are both constructive and constructed in London's gay scene.

My objectives are first, to add to the limited body of research from social sciences and the humanities on queer sex work advertising. Second, I develop the exploration of the interrelationship of M\$M and London's 'gay scene' from the late 1990s during the dramatic legal and technological changes which have reconfigured social practices for queer individuals and British society more broadly. In building on these points, I add to the existing literature on men who advertise selling sex a focused exploration of what significance/signification is given to the money made through sex work. Finally, I illustrate that the models that have been developed to understand distinct types of sex workers and/or analogous life patterns are limited and limiting, and serve to further objectify people rather than give voice to their subjective narratives.

To explain my methodology, and specifically the method I used to identify, collect and analyse my data, I have organised this chapter in two sections. First, I discuss data collection by talking about the sources and materials I have used to collect my data. I describe and explain my 'reflexive queer ethnography', including the shifts in my pre-existing immersion in/to London's 'analog' (real-time) and 'virtual' (Internet) 'gay' (queer) scenes which give me cause to frame the ethnography as 'queer ethnography'. I go on to describe the ways this directed fieldwork, my participant observation, and my recruitment of and interviews with men who sell and/or have sold sex to other men. I introduce my interview participants in this section, explaining how the interviews are framed as a part of the wider ethnography. I then go on to outline the advertising data that I collected and how I have developed and rationalised the necessary decisions about what to include as data and what to exclude (for now).

I then describe and justify the methods I have used to analyse the data that I collected. I explain the practical steps I followed – or did not follow as was sometimes the case – and the applications I adopted and adapted to develop a customised software 'toolkit' to facilitate the

organisation and visual analysis of multi-media and archived materials as ‘queer’ sources of data (Leckey and Brooks (eds.), 2010). Finally, along with a discussion of some of the ethical processes observed, I offer some reflections on the limitations to my data collection and analysis as well as some consideration of ways in which I might recommend approaching the material differently before signposting the structure of my findings chapters which follow.

#### **4.2. Data collection: Reflexive Queer Ethnography**

Bryman (2004) identifies ethnography/ participant observation as a method that includes interviews with stakeholders, biographical accounts from participants, analysis of documents (magazines and profiles), field notes, and researchers’ own introspections about experiences. The ‘best ethnographies’ do more than provide detailed, in-depth accounts of lived experience. They also make explicit the ways that those ‘social lives’ are not incidental to culture and history, but iterations of self-similarity within multi-layered discourses and (re)productions of meaning (Rooke, 2010). ‘Queer’ ethnographies do this through reflexively probing emotional dimensions of ‘participants’, ‘the field’, and ‘the researcher’ and exploring their ‘intersubjectivity’ which in turn challenges those mythologised boundaries (Rooke, 2010).

In the previous chapter, I defined queer as signifying disruption and blending, collectivity and otherness, and deconstruction and re-imagining (Muñoz, 2009). Developing this research as a queer ethnography builds on the foundational ‘ethico-onto-epistemology’ (Barad, 2007) which positions feminist research as being ‘politically *for* women; feminist knowledge has some grounding in women’s *experiences*, and in how it *feels* to live in unjust gendered relationships’ (Ramazanoğlu and Holland, 2002, p.16, italics as original). As they say, and I am unapologetically paraphrasing: methodology may not seem ‘consistently or specifically’ feminist or queer, but it ‘is distinctive to the extent that it is shaped by feminist [and queer]

theory, politics and ethics and grounded in [a queer] experience (Ramazanoğlu and Holland, 2002, p.16).

My framing of reflexive queer ethnography attends to the theoretical connection between ethics, ontology and epistemology – e.g. Barad’s (2007) ‘ethico-onto-epistemology’ and Plummer (1995, p.25) advocacy to use ethnography to understand ‘sexual stories’, where he writes that

tellings cannot be in isolation from hearings, readings, consumings. [...] How might a reader interpret a text and what role might the story play in the consumer's life? How do some readers find themselves emotionally in a text, whilst others may readily dismiss it? And how might such readings connect to the social worlds—real, imagined, interpretive, symbolic—in which they are read?

This makes an obvious argument for explicitly addressing and situating the social contexts and sub-culture(s) of London’s ‘gay scene’ and queer community around a study of experiences and representations of gay and bisexual men who have sex with men and sell sex to men in London’s media targeting gay and bisexual men. The data I have collected and analysed comes from five sources: semi-structured interviews with gay men who run businesses that provide services to men who sell sex to men (n=3)<sup>15</sup>; interviews with men who have sold sex to men through advertising (n= 18); semiological analysis of small ads in gay scene magazines (n= 796, concentrated on editions of *Boyz* from 1991 to 2011); ‘Commercial’ profiles on Gaydar (n= 100); and my own field notes, including observations made in the ‘virtual’ field.

Sampling data from multiple, interrelated sources towards a goal of theoretical saturation can create a corpus of findings which have the possibility of spiralling in an infinite (or at least a transfinite<sup>16</sup>) number of directions. One difficulty I had with the repeated spiral patterns of data from this method of theoretical sampling was how to discuss and present it in a linear,

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<sup>15</sup> One of the M\$M I interviewed no longer sold sex and had started a photography business where his experience was sought by many of his clients who were M\$M themselves. As such, his interview is included in both categories.

<sup>16</sup> Transfinite numbers are ‘infinite’ insofar as they are larger than finite numbers, yet not necessarily definitively infinite (Uribe, 1998).

delineated format. For example, participants refer to features of print advertisements in our interviews and I asked questions that related to their online profiles. Treated as separate studies meant my writing took on a circular pattern of its own, or the opportunities afforded by triangulated data were lost in my initial drafts. The solution: rather than looking at these as separate studies, I have framed all of the data as queer ethnography, particularly whilst employing 'critical social' approaches (e.g. liberal feminist, post-structuralist and queer theory) to the data collection and analysis (Barad, 2007; Edwards and Holland, 2013; Plummer, 1995; Ramazanoğlu and Holland, 2002). I have done this to highlight an 'onto-epistemology' of fractal self-similarity: patterns within patterns showing interconnections and interrelationships between the iterations of the structures, the agents, and the readers (Barad, 2007; Mai, 2012). Sexuality cannot be taken out of cultural contexts and practices in order to be simplified as only a psychological impulse (Sorainen, 2011).

Central to these value(s) of queer ethnography is the emphasis on the reflexive processes of the researcher. I employed – and then challenged – my own identity politics, ideologies, presumptions and practices through the nominally formalised processes of theoretical sampling, reflexive thinking, writing, and diagramming (Rooke, 2010).

The sexual stories gathered from research are not mere resources, but become topics of investigation in their own right. They can no longer be taken as transparent and unproblematic in their search for truth. Instead, the social scientist is part of the very process being observed, analysed and ultimately written about: I am part of this process and it is deeply social (Plummer, 1995, p.12).

My entry to London's gay scene began in the early-mid-nineties, and to a greater and, more recently, lesser extent, I have been both a participant and observer of its evolution in the (now over) twenty years since. I have witnessed changes and constancies within London's scene – and the magazines that report it and shape it. My initial ideas, research questions and standpoint were shaped, not 'instinctively' or 'intuitively', but from years of my own activity in London's 'gay' gyms, pubs, clubs, restaurants, bars, media and networks, not to mention

the theatre spaces, sports clubs, volunteer organisations, charities and fundraisers. (There were even ‘gay taxi services’). Rewriting this, I realise I have elided the most instrumental forces of my experiences: the people who not only inhabited those spaces but *made them* and the relationships I had with those people (and with some, still have). This participation, interaction and inhabitation – these iterations – precluded any formal ‘*data familiarisation*’. Rooke (2010, pp.7–8) refers to the ‘fiction of ethnography’ and the ‘normativity of ethnographic time’. Before I had begun to collect and analyse my data methodically using a grounded theory approach built around observation, interviews, content analysis, semiotics, and thematic analysis, I had already spent over a decade enmeshed ‘in the field’ and had developed an *impression* of the content in – and contrasts between – newsstand magazines like *Gay Times (GT)* and *Attitude* and the free scene guides, *Boyz* and *QX*, that are distributed through the gay venues they promote. To my initial surprise – and perhaps this highlights my naivety as a researcher as well as a queer person – my pre-conceived impressions often turned out to be inaccurate in many ways.

So, on one hand, my immersion in this queer culture limits my perspective, and I have had to seek out sources of expertise where I had none. My only previous experience with gay magazines was as a consumer, and although I recognised a number of men (who advertised as escorts) in the spaces we shared, I did not personally know anyone who sold sex. Or so I thought. On the other hand, it emerged that I did – I do, in fact – know several men who have sold sex. The combination of interviews with leaders from businesses and service organisations, biographical accounts from men who have sold sex, analysis of the print and online media, and my own research diaries and field notes offer me a breadth and depth of insight that would not have been possible from any one source alone. My ‘queer ethnography’ was necessary for a triangulation of findings from a cross-section of data sources, as I detail below.

### **Fieldwork on Gaydar: A space for recruitment, data collection and participant observation**

Queer ethnography extends its disruption of binary constructs to bridge false dichotomies of ‘real’ and ‘virtual’ environments (Ashford, 2009b). I used the online social-sexual-networking site, Gaydar.net<sup>17</sup>, as a source of advertising data, as an ethnographic site of research to advertise for participants and to contact potential participants (Brownlow and O’Dell, 2002; Mowlabocus, 2010b; Sanders, 2005b). This builds on research that has focused on the use of ‘small ads’ for personal and commercial encounters (Deaux and Hanna, 1984; Baker, 2003; Miller *et al.*, 2000), the use of social-sexual networking sites by MSM populations (Light, 2007b; Mowlabocus, 2010c; Light *et al.*, 2008; Mowlabocus, 2010d; Campbell, 2007; Kong, 2002; Nodin *et al.*, 2011), and the use of Internet spaces by men (and women) who sell sex (Coleman *et al.*, 2010; Bar-Johnson and Weiss, 2014; Parsons *et al.*, 2004; The EMIS Network, 2010).

The Gaydar site allows paying and guest members to create profiles, view other members’ profiles, to leave ‘tracks’, send instant messages and to enter chatrooms and open private chat windows<sup>18</sup>. I used a paying Member’s profile to advertise that I was looking for men who were interested in being interviewed about their experiences selling sex (See Figure 4.1 below.)

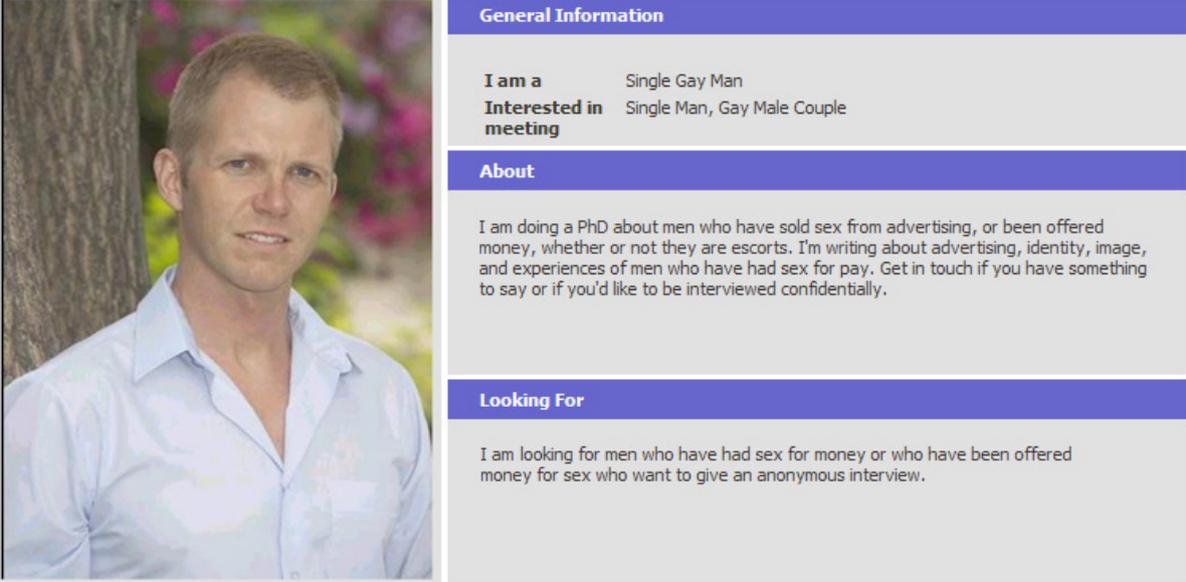
I maintained an online presence in escort/client rooms on Gaydar by logging into chatrooms (Ashford, 2009b). This was to make my profile more visible and to create unobtrusive opportunities for online discussion whilst I was collecting data through observation and keeping a log of the content of a sample of Commercial profiles. I had hoped by logging onto

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<sup>17</sup> Gaydar.net was previously Gaydar.co.uk. International extensions like Gaydar.com.au (Australia) have since been integrated to the single .net address.

<sup>18</sup> Functionality has changed over time. New functions are added and the availability or inclusion of some functions to non-paying members can change.

the site at different times and on different days of the week that I would recruit as diverse a sample as possible, but this strategy was less successful than I had hoped.



General Information	
<b>I am a</b>	Single Gay Man
<b>Interested in meeting</b>	Single Man, Gay Male Couple
About	
I am doing a PhD about men who have sold sex from advertising, or been offered money, whether or not they are escorts. I'm writing about advertising, identity, image, and experiences of men who have had sex for pay. Get in touch if you have something to say or if you'd like to be interviewed confidentially.	
Looking For	
I am looking for men who have had sex for money or who have been offered money for sex who want to give an anonymous interview.	

(Figure 4.1, Detail from Gaydar profile for participant recruitment, see Appendix B)

To contact men who sell sex, I posted a recruitment ad on a profile on Gaydar (see Figure 4.1 above; Ashford, 2009b; Ayling and Mewse, 2009). When potential participants contacted me, I used the instant messaging functions to answer their questions, and with their permission, contacted them by telephone. Some men contacted me by sending me instant messages, inviting me to private chat or by using the 'leave a track' function which can be used to signal for attention without using messages that are limited for guest users. See Figure 4.2 for an overview of modes of participant contact and Appendix S for a simplified 'user experience' (UX) map of Gaydar.net<sup>19</sup>.

My initial objective was to maximise the agency of potential participants who could initiate contact with me whilst I respected the 'privacy' and working space of members. This strategy did not provide a sufficient response rate and relatively few contacts from this passive approach led to interviews (n=6).

<sup>19</sup> Correct at 27 August 2014.

#### 4.2.1. Purposive and convenience recruitment strategies

To address my sample requirements, I adopted a more active approach to contact men with commercial profiles by using instant messages. This secured me some extra participants (n=4), but again uptake was limited. I also contacted one man using one of his personal profiles<sup>20</sup> whom I recognised as actively using escort ads in *QX* and *Boyz* magazines. My attempts to 'cold-call' men from the magazine ads by telephone were unsuccessful, with no uptake. The general response was a familiar annoyance such as is typical of receiving calls from more mundane telephone marketing researchers. I was uncomfortable with this role and my anxiety about seeming unethical, coercive or a nuisance prevented me from a more assertive pursuit of direct contact.

Approaching participants online I had limited success but was more successful than my attempts to cold-call participants from the print advertisements. My feeling is the greater success online can be attributed to my 'ethnographic' presence and the amount of information I provided about myself in my profile, including my photograph as a form of 'gay capital' (Ashford, 2009b), which addressed some issues of power and consent between the men who would be potential participants and myself as a researcher and unknown caller. From data collected in interviews, men reinforced the understanding that they use the online profiles of men who contact them as a source of information about whom to see and whom to ignore. I recruited the rest of my interview participants through a number of methods which reinforced the 'queer ethnography', including informal networking and introductions from colleagues and friends (Rooke, 2010; Ross and Sullivan, 2012). For example, one man who became a participant revealed he had sold sex after he approached me outside a pub. I recruited the directors of two service organisations by email and followed up with telephone calls because I had seen their businesses advertised in the 'gay press'. Three (n=3) of the

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<sup>20</sup> This participant had three personal profiles on the Gaydar and Manhunt sites/applications ('apps') and listed other profiles on other sites/apps in our interview.

interviews are with men I knew socially prior to taking up this research, but who revealed their experiences of selling sex to me only after the topic of my current research was brought up in casual conversation. This supports my argument for using a ‘queer’ ethnography, where I use queer to signify the unusual and unexpected, as well as emphasising my own LGBT social and professional networks (Ashford, 2009b; Rooke, 2010; Sorainen, 2011). This also reinforces findings that I discuss later, where M\$M are not the discrete category of ‘male sex workers’ constructed/ reinforced through naming discourses. I say this after Butler (1999, p.4), using Foucault, explains that ‘systems of power produce the subjects they subsequently come to represent [and] the subjects regulated by such structures are, by virtue of being subjected to them, formed, defined, and reproduced in accordance with the requirements of those structures.’ It also queers my position as an ethnographer when I was already in the midst – or on the periphery – of my research community.

#### **4.2.2. Interviews and Participants**

My research for this thesis is specifically with and about men who have advertised sex (or sexualised services) in print and online media targeting gay and bisexual men in London.

Two of my pilot interviews were with key informants who were not selling sex themselves, but who ran different types of organisations that were specifically or additionally providing services to men who sell sex to men. One leads a magazine that includes escort and masseur advertising in its pages and has also supported an outreach program for men who sell sex.

The other led another outreach program that offered sexual health and other support services aimed at men who sell sex to men. Of further note, one of the participants I interviewed as an informant who has sold sex had, like several others, changed occupations. In this one case, the participant informed me that he now runs a business which does a significant amount of work with men who advertise selling sex; thus, he was also able to talk about that in some detail.

In order to obtain autobiographical accounts of selling sex to men through advertisements and profiles, I interviewed 18 men who had advertised a paid sexual service such as escorting or sexualised massage<sup>21</sup>. I began interviews in late 2008 and early 2009. After my initial familiarisation with and coding of those interviews using a constructivist grounded theory approach (following Charmaz, 2006), I continued a process of theoretical sampling in 2010. (I describe my coding and analysis in more depth in section 4.3.) This continued sampling was to build on the variations of earlier informants' constructs and boundaries of what they defined as 'sex' and 'sex work' whilst maintaining an element of homogeneity to my sample to enable me to speak meaningfully about patterns for groups and individuals without minimising or erasing the influence of interconnecting factors such as racialized performances of masculinity and further intersectionality of sub-cultures in a racialized society (Phua and Kaufman, 2003; Ramazanoğlu and Holland, 2002). Understanding the limited resources available for this study, my aim was never to achieve a conclusive 'analytic induction' or universal explanation 'by pursuing the collection of data until no cases that are inconsistent with a hypothetical explanation [...] are found' which is sometimes associated with the ideals of qualitative methodologies like grounded theory (Bryman, 2004, p.400). In having a relatively homogenous participant sample in some aspects (e.g. race, age, residence) I have been able to more closely approach category saturation in order to speak more meaningfully about a slim section of the still broadly defined – or even increasingly so -- category of 'indoor male sex workers'. I have included a table to provide an overview of basic demographics of my participants in Table 4.2 below.

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<sup>21</sup> I define and explain sexualised massage and sexualised services in detail in Chapter 6.

Research Pseudonym	Real Age	Age for Ads	Race Nationality	Involvement in Sex Work	Self-Identified as a Sex Worker	Mode of contact
Andrew	42	37	White British	present	Yes	long time friend; I approached him when I saw his commercial profile
Brian	42	n/a	White British	said past, still doing porn	Yes	friend of colleague; formally introduced
Craig	38	35	White Commonwealth	past	No	long time friend; shared with me in conversation
Darren	n/a	n/a	White British	past	Yes	gym; shared with me in conversation
George	42	39	White British	present	Yes	online; I approached him
Henrik	35	30	White European	present	Yes	online; responded to call for participants on my profile
Joe	43	43	White British	present	No	online; responded to call for participants on my profile
Keith	24	24	White British	present and past	Yes	online; I approached him
Marcos	24	23	South American/ European	present	Yes	online; I approached him
Matthew	41	39	White Commonwealth	initially said past, still occasional	Yes	friend; shared with me in conversation
Paulo	36	34	South American	past	Yes	long time friend; shared with me in conversation
Philip	42	39	White British	initially said past, still occasional	Yes	friend; shared with me in conversation
Quinn	42	39	White British	present	Yes	online; I approached him
Steve	33	33	White Commonwealth	present	No	online; responded to call for participants on my profile
Stuart	37	36	White British	past	Yes	online; responded to call for participants on my profile
Victor	41	41	South American/ European	past	Yes	online; responded to call for participants on my profile
Will	n/a	n/a	White British	past	Yes	pub; shared with me in conversation
Yannick	"40s"	39	White Commonwealth	present	No	online; responded to call for participants on my profile

**(Figure 4.2, Overview of Participant Demographics)**

My interview format was open and conversational, so as to emphasise the reciprocity of the encounter, support the invitation to share intimate information and disrupt (or queer) the

dynamics of the researcher and the researched (Edwards and Holland, 2013; Walby, 2010). I invited participants to explain the decisions and choices behind the content and format of their advertising, as well as their reading and interpretations of the discourses of the advertisements, the industry and other men who sell sex. In doing so, one of my first ‘findings’ was an explicit recognition that men who advertise as escorts and masseurs are themselves often consumers within, and observers of, the gay scene. Interviews with men who have sold sex or sexual massage offer their own perspectives and opinions on (other/ ‘Other’<sup>22</sup>) men who sell sex, and not simply their own experiences (Jones, 2012; Jowett, 2010). This perspective provides added elements of audience studies (how an audience views or consumes media, from Rose, 2007, 2012) or audience ethnography (Plummer, 1995), which allow me to further triangulate findings from different sources of data and to go some way towards addressing concerns about the reliability of the interpretation of a single researcher. Rose (2012) advocates the extension of audience studies to magazines from its more usual application with audiences of television. She suggests using ethnography along with interviews, where Plummer (1995) sees them as integral to one another. Further, this supports the queering of the subject/object and producer/consumer dichotomies that have become habit in analogous, heteronormative thinking about sexual stories and the media (Pilcher, 2012).

[P]roducing and reading should not be seen as separate events. There is a flow of action and producers become consumers whilst consumers become producers. What, then, are the links between the story and the flow of production and consumption? How does one feed into and upon the other such that the making and consuming of stories are closely bound together? (Plummer, 1995, p.25)

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<sup>22</sup> For a definition of ‘Othering’ I follow Jones (Jones, 2012, pp.217–218). ‘Because of the principle of socialization, all communications have the simultaneous effect of producing ‘others’ who are identified by not being members of the relevant community of practice’.

By talking to the men who appear in the advertisements themselves I argue that my research disrupts – although also continuing to reinforce – further objectification of the men selling sex in the advertisements.

Participants varied by the ways in which they have participated in commercial sex. In other words, they have sold sex as escorts and masseurs, part-time or for their main source of income, and ways which I detail in a precis for each man (see Appendix L) and throughout the thesis. What this highlights is the necessity of reading sex work narratives as subjective, bounded, temporal and gendered.

My participants all identify as gay men, or in some cases bisexual. Where they identify as bisexual, participants are explicit that the majority of their relationships are (and have been) with men. This is important where previous research that has explored experiences of distress for men selling sex to men may relate to the reasons that men are having sex with men at all (Allen, 1980; Deisher *et al.*, 1969; Dorais, 2005; Morse *et al.*, 1991; Simon *et al.*, 1992).

Three of the participants are in long-term relationships<sup>23</sup>. The profile of my sample ranges in age from 24 to 42 (mean=32.5) years, including men who sold advertised body-sex-work in the early-1990s to the present, in different modes of body/sex/work and through different channels, all of which I discuss in the following chapters. The average age of participants in my study *at the time of interview* is older than average ages recorded from my sample of online profiles. As the objective is to capture and document men selling sex through advertising from 1991 to 2011, there are a range of experiences, where some men are new to selling sex and some started selling sex in the 1990s. Some participants have stopped selling sex. In other cases they only do so sporadically; thus, in order to understand this sample as a group and these subjects as individuals, it is imperative to emphasise that age is included to

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<sup>23</sup> One tension in reporting relationship status is how it can infer permanence to relationship identities and erases the temporal shifts that are ordinary in personal, romantic and/or sexual relationships. Rereading and editing this chapter at the end of the project makes that clear. For clarity, relationship statuses, like ages, are correct as at the time of the interviews.

add perspective to individual standpoint, but does not necessarily correspond to the age at which each participant was most actively selling sex. These details are noted in their narrative summaries (see Appendix L).

The difference in the ages of participants relative to ages listed in advertisements relates, in part, to the ‘profile’ of participants who agreed to participate and followed through, as well as ethnographic contacts; however, I recognise limitations in not recruiting *more* younger men who are currently selling sex, where some accounts are more historical and remembered rather than relating to immediate experiences. The relative dearth of these historical stories in the literature makes this a strength of this research and leaves room for future research to continue to investigate the contemporary experiences of younger men. Additional findings on the use of pseudo-ages and a finding that advertised ages are very often younger than real average ages is detailed in Chapter 5.

Using theoretical sampling, I recruited a relatively homogenous sample in terms of race and ethnicity, and for brevity, acknowledge this as a limitation of a small interview sample despite my explicitly queer aims; however, I have used homogeneity without purporting to be representative or attempting to escape ‘abstracted categories of “otherness”’ but to acknowledge ‘the complexity of interlocking and shifting relations of difference’ attached to race and ethnicity (Ramazanoğlu and Holland, 2002, p.111). For example, race and ethnicity are correlated to inequities in men’s healthcare (Crawshaw, 2009) and subjectivities (experiences, identities and representations) of masculinities (Kong, 2002; Phua and Kaufman, 2003). I want to be very careful that what I am reporting and analysing is with the aim of bringing forward the stories of some of the men who advertise selling sex and expanding the current literature without claiming to speak for all men. Furthermore, critics of past research with people selling sex in the UK have cautioned the ontological and epistemological limits about what can be known about a population that researchers struggle

to estimate (Cusick *et al.*, 2009) or even define (The EMIS Network, 2010). My findings support this, particularly with regards to racial, national and ethnic identities whether or not advertisements are used as data. Future research can be expanded to specifically look at the experiences of men with particular ethnic, national or racial backgrounds, building on current international and migration perspectives (Mai, 2012; Phua and Caras, 2008). Participants all identify as having white European heritage, and over half (n= 10) are British born. The rest (n= 8) migrated to the UK as young adults. Pablo identifies as Latino and is from Brazil. Marcos is also from Brazil (and arguably Latino), although he identifies with his European father's heritage. Victor, from Argentina, identifies as Argentinian, but has a European mother. Almost all (n=16) have tertiary education, including one doctoral candidate. Detailed summaries of each participant's biography are offered in Appendix L.

### ***Interview Ethics***

I explained the research to participants online, again on the telephone, and again in person where face-to-face interviews took place. Participants gave verbal consent and we signed consent forms for face-to-face interviews (see Appendices C and D). The consent forms included tick boxes for permissions about understanding, anonymity, recording and data transcription and use (Edwards and Holland, 2013). Participation was also agreed online and is included in the online transcripts. I was mindful to ensure continuous consent, and regularly 'checked-in' with participants throughout our interviews. I reminded participants that they were not under any obligation to answer questions. Some participants declined to answer questions about recreational drugs. Some participants offered only vague or general indications of income and earnings. One participant expressed exasperation when I asked him to expand on what he meant when he referred to the negative aspects about selling sex, concerned that I was intent on reporting only the problems with prostitution. My aim was to

provide a non-pathologising account of men's experiences of selling sex; however, I could not ignore data when participants – in their own words – described problems, negative feelings and dissonant thinking.

I included information about services for sexual health and services for men who sell sex on post-interview sheets (see Appendix J), as well as in the conversational elements of the interviews. In conversation, I also answered questions about my early findings where men were interested in how their own narratives compared to what I had learned.

The original design was to interview all participants face-to-face. In the early stages, some men contacting me asked to be interviewed, but declined to meet face to face. One potential participant wanted to remain *completely* anonymous, even to me. I felt obliged to decline his offer to participate via an online interview where I could verify nothing about 'him' through the written profile, the available photograph (of his erection) or an online written discussion. At the time, I had no way to know if his profile was genuine. He may or may not have been a sex worker himself, so his account may have been an opportunity to narrate a fantasy. (Years later, he still has an active commercial profile on Gaydar, and in hindsight I could have had more trust.)

As some of my participants told me, the field of sex work is full of 'time wasters' posing as clients whose sole intention is to talk about the potential experience. Bernstein (Bernstein, 2007b) also recalls the sense that – when interviewing clients of sex workers, she sometimes had the sense that they regarded the interview as an intimate experience in itself. This was not my aim and although I absolutely work to maintain the privacy and where desired by my participants (and as required by my formal ethics obligations) it was untenable. As a researcher recording personal accounts of intimate experiences in a population/ industry/ practice where privacy, secrecy and discretion are widely sought and usually demanded, I acknowledge that I have no certain way to verify some of the details of some accounts

without engaging a more materially intrusive form of fieldwork: shadowing participants (Sanders, 2005b) or aligning myself with a service organisation (Brooks-Gordon, 2006; Whowell and Gaffney, 2009), sending researchers to pose as clients (West and de Villiers, 1992) or engaging in some form of the vocation myself (Holt, 2015). These alternatives would (and do) attract other criticisms. I am extremely grateful to all of my participants for the very frank and often disarmingly personal accounts of their experiences, knowledge, and feelings.

### *Interview format*

Fifteen interviews were conducted face to face, usually in the participant's home, which doubled as their place of business. My pilot interview with someone who sells sex was changed to a walking interview (Clark and Emmel, 2010) at the participant's request, and only part of the interview was recorded when we sat down together in cafés. One interview was conducted entirely outside a pub and one was started as a conversation in a gym. I piloted a telephone interview, an instant message interview and a chatroom interview, all of which yielded rich data. I could potentially have collected more data through these techniques, but I was uneasy about two points: first, online interactions through instant messages and chatrooms may be monitored by moderators and so may not remain private (Brownlow and O'Dell, 2002). Second, there is no way to verify the identity of an online interviewee. I acknowledge and accept that face-to-face interviews are personal accounts and may be exaggerated or edited to suit the narrator (Bryman, 2004; Howitt, 2010). More interviews would have been possible had I allowed and further pursued online-only contacts through profiles, specifically those without face pictures (for example, where only a picture of an erect penis was displayed) but this would have opened up other methodological

criticism, such as the extent to which researchers can verify the identities and experiences of (unseen) informants.

I intended interviews to follow a semi-structured approach but I adopted a more open, feminist approach and as I state above, interviews tended to be conversational (Edwards and Holland, 2013; Ramazanoğlu and Holland, 2002) with levels of personal disclosure varying from both myself and participants, depending, in part, on the reciprocity and rapport that developed (or existed) between us. Interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 3.5 hours. I had developed a very rough, semi-structured interview guide that was approved by my supervisors and the LSBU ethics committee (see Appendix I). It was overly long, somewhat intentionally, so as to address the range of topics that might be considered sensitive under ethical scrutiny. From my experience, the initial guide was improved with more thoughtful, open-ended questions that covered several of the shorter prompts. The initial guide also lacked a focus that made early analysis difficult but suited the grounded theory approach. In the interviews, I ensured that the following themes were covered: a discussion of the participant's own advertising, the temporal and structural form of their occupation in sex work, their path into sex work, the place of sex work as part of their identity/identities, and their attitudes towards sex with men and to selling sex. The interviews are themselves a cooperative exercise in analysis, intended to include how the advertiser himself, arguably the 'author' of his own advertisement or profile, has intended it to be seen and used. In one interview, the participant challenged any researcher's ability to understand the experience of selling sex at all. The men advertising as masseurs all asserted that I ought to experience or at very least observe their services to understand what they do and how it compares and contrasts to other forms of work and touch. This was outside my personally appropriate and formally agreed boundaries and I had to decline, in each case repeatedly. Again, this challenged my preconceived notions of 'power' and roles in the research

relationship (Plummer, 1995; Ramazanoğlu and Holland, 2002). Some participants interrupted our interviews in order to take telephone calls, which even to overhear, were informative in themselves. These ‘interruptions’ add further ethnographic elements to my data, but also serve as additional ethical challenges about whether, how, and in what detail might they be used as data.

#### **4.2.3. Using advertisements as data**

The central ‘location’ of my data was originally intended to be the small ads that appear in the free scene magazines that are available in London’s gay bars (and for a period of time in the late 1990s and early 2000s, some gyms and other venues with predominantly gay male clients). As discussed in the previous chapter, queer theory and feminist scholars advocate using a broad source of media as texts including magazines (Halberstam, 2011; Jankowski *et al.*, 2014; Reavey (ed.), 2011) and past research has established using personal ads as a rich source of data regarding self-presentation and mate-selection (Child *et al.*, 1996; Davis, 1990; Deaux and Hanna, 1984). Cameron *et al.* (1999) studied escort advertisements in *Gay Times* from in the mid-nineties. More recent work has looked at sex work advertising online (Logan, 2010; Phua and Caras, 2008; Phua *et al.*, 2009). My work builds on previous research by focusing on advertisements in the gay-scene magazine, *Boyz*, between 1991 and 2012 and in the online profiles of Gaydar.net (2008-2012) as the corpora for a corpus-assisted analysis. I use these data and this method to demonstrate how reiterated patterns of lexical items and their collocates convey broader social messages (discourses) as they build up over – and are reconstructed as – large amounts of text’ (Baker and McEnery, 2012). I build on an early quantification of content-analysis by using a semiotic approach to explore how the ads create as well as convey meaning (Williamson, 2002) and triangulate my findings with constant comparison between categories and across the multiple forms of texts (Charmaz, 2006).

Judith Williamson's seminal work explores how advertising 'creates structures of meaning' (Williamson, 2002, p.12). Williamson analyses advertisements through semiotics, exploring the meanings constructed across advertisements for different products and services, and deconstructing the elements within advertisements. This approach fits nicely with the aims of queer theory as a way to apply some rigour to an otherwise very open-ended, mellifluous method of analysis.

To begin, I had two objectives: first, to survey the development and the evolution of the escort advertising format and content from its introduction in 1991. This offers a historical record of the advertisements as a corpus (Baker, 2003) and an insight into some of the representations and practices for contemporary escort advertising and even personal profiles that we see today. The second objective was to build on multi-modal analysis of texts that shift with verbal and visual data (Jones, 2005). I make use of the visual texts that have been incorporated into the advertisements, and illustrate not only how they are used, but what we can learn from studying them critically. I offer reasons why it is important to include these visual texts in a meaningful analysis of escort advertising (or any promotion of sex exchange).

My third objective, through sheer necessity, was then to develop a system of organisation and analysis that would be useful for managing multimodal (Jones, 2012, 2005) polytextual data (Reavey (ed.), 2011) where texts are both verbal and visual and span several sites of display (Jones, 2009).

### ***Explanation of research objectives***

While even the most recent studies made mention of the prominence of photographs, few of them made use of the photographs as a source of data, in competition or complementarity to the written texts. As the visual continues to take greater prominence in cultures of

consumption, entertainment, and leisure, the visual text has become more central to meaning making, and the understanding of how meanings are created, conveyed and consumed (Rose, 2007). Continuing to ignore the visual signs and symbols that are used in small ads and profiles disregards a rich data source, and in doing so, fails to accurately or reliably capture the messages that we are intending to study (Bryman, 2004). However, studying a combination of written text and visual images has presented its own challenges, which I outline below.

### *Challenges of polytextual data*

Additionally, inclusion of advertising from the internet meant an exponential increase in the amount of data and the format of the data. With current functions for user-generated-content, even uniformly formatted profiles can now include 25 separate photographs, paragraphs of text, video clips, hyperlinks, and music soundtracks that play automatically when the profile is viewed. Now, as much as ever before, the media is the message! In the initial stages, I first adopted a diachronic approach to trace the advertisements from short, verbal print ads in the 1990s to multi-media online profiles in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Doing this required a multimodal, or polytextual, approach which allowed me to collect, organise, code and analyse ‘texts’ as paragraphs, single words, telephone numbers, digital and print photographs, as well as their framing devices. My fear – and it was well-founded – was that the data available would be immense and unmanageable. Indeed, one of my challenges was to find methods to analyse – but first simply to *organise* – advertisements that were diverse in their media, their form and their content. When I began to collect the data in 2008, the limitations to the capacity and interface of accessible software solutions were prohibitive. Software designed for qualitative data collection and analysis was unable to store or navigate images and file sizes with the level of detail in whole pages of classified advertisements with

colour photos. That software has improved dramatically but maintains a format that emphasises the verbal as well as more deductive and reductive approaches to analysis.

### ***Field work and the archives***

With kind permission from the managing director at *Boyz* magazine, I used their archived collection that includes every issue of the magazine since it was first published in 1991. I was allowed to visit their offices for the first two days of the week after each edition was published, when the offices were quietest and my presence would cause the least disruption. This gave me the added benefit of spending time with some of the magazine's editorial and layout staff, asking questions, and observing the magazine from organisational and operational perspectives. Some people were very interested in the work I was doing. They asked me questions and shared their own stories about the magazine's history and their own experiences and remembrances. Where I thought I was being intrusive, in fact, one staff member chastised me for not asking more from him (Field Notes).

### **4.3. Data Analysis: Grounded Theory**

Ethnography or participant observation is a method of data collection, and not a method of data analysis (Bryman, 2004). The definitions, methods and applications of grounded theory overlay well with those used in ethnography (e.g. multiple forms of data, ongoing data collection, inductive theory building. In this final section of my methodology chapter, I define the constructivist grounded theory (Mills *et al.*, 2006) method I followed and adapted for analysing a polytextual data that is made up finally of interviews, multi-media analysis, observation, field notes, and a literature review. I have aimed to treat this as a single ethnographic collection of data; however, for readability, I offer distinct sections for some

processes of the analysis, just as I am discussing the analysis in a section presented entirely after the data collection<sup>24</sup>.

This section is structured as follows: I offer a brief definition of the ontology and epistemology that frame my approach and application of grounded theory with support from theory. I explain the steps I have used to guide my grounded theory analysis and preface some of the conceptual tools I have implemented to structure this. I go on to discuss the fit of the conceptual and software ‘toolkits’ that I adapted for the processes of coding and comparison in more detail. I briefly outline some of the limitations of the grounded theory methodology as I have applied it before I finally outline the structure of my findings for the following chapters.

#### **4.3.1. Defining Queer(ed) Grounded Theory**

As a methodology, by definition, the aims of grounded theory are to ‘construct theory about issues of importance in peoples’ lives’ (Mills *et al.*, 2006, p.2). Even within feminist, queer, reflexive writing that engages individual narratives from multi-modal structures, there remain tensions that immutable realities can be known.

It is important for subjects to write their own narratives. What is *really* going on? If I disagree with someone else’s interpretation of events, I can criticise it and give my own version of events; however My interpretation will just be a different narrative (Halberstam, 2008).

Yet, as debates about clear divides between inductive and constructivist positions become more nuanced, the clarity of those divisions becomes more ‘fuzzy’ (McCloskey and Glucksberg, 1978; Scott, 2011; Wagemann and Schneider, 2010). To replace the binary paradigm is a position that ‘[a]ll variations of grounded theory exist on a methodological spiral and reflect their epistemological underpinnings’ (Mills *et al.*, 2006, p.1). The metaphor

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<sup>24</sup> Even with digital, multi-media formatting and hyperlinks, the phenomenon of reading the thesis text for evaluation has linear boundaries. [

of the spiral engages the ‘constructivist intent’ that works to further the development of grounded theory.

Building on what I have discussed in the previous theory chapter and in my earlier discussion of ‘queer’ ethnography, I say briefly that I have adopted a constructivist grounded theory approach following the leads of Kathy Charmaz (2006), and Jane Mills, Ann Bonner, and Karen Francis (2006) who of course refer to grounded theory pioneers, Barney Glaser, Anselm Strauss, and Juliet Corbin:

Constructivist grounded theory can be traced from the work of Strauss (1987) and Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1994b, 1998) underpinned by their relativist position and demonstrated in their belief that the researcher constructs theory as an outcome of their interpretation of the participants’ stories. Strauss and Corbin’s focus on the provision of tools to use in this process confirms their constructivist intent (Mills *et al.*, 2006, p.7).

This acknowledges the ‘realist’ structures *and* the performative, agentic ‘nature’ of scientific knowledge creation (Barad, 2007), ‘the subjective interrelationship between the researcher and participant[s] and the coconstruction of meaning[s]’ (Mills *et al.*, 2006, p.2). This complements the conceptual framework of my applications of queer theory (Halberstam, 2008, 2011; Muñoz, 2009; see previous chapter for in-depth discussion; Halley and Parker (eds.), 2011), Fuzzy sets’ (Bezdek, 1993; Wagemann and Schneider, 2010) and fractal logic (Barad, 2007; Mai, 2012) that have helped me to work with, rather than against, the plurality and tensions that I have encountered and to bring them together as a single research narrative. Grounded theory can be described as relating less to a specified form of data content (in contrast to Narrative or Discourse Analysis) and more as a methodology to guide decisions about what data to collect as analysis proceeds (Howitt, 2010). In my application of grounded theory, I have followed this through processes of constant comparison, initially making comparisons within data through detailed coding, then between data through *extensive* memo writing, progressing to comparing my codes and categories with more data. Deconstructing my processes this way for description, I hasten to emphasise how I repeated these steps, not

so much in distinct cycles but in more fragmented, fractally structured patterns. ‘This constant comparison of analysis to the field grounds the researcher’s final theorizing in the participants’ experiences’ (Mills *et al.*, 2006, p.3). Following Charmaz (2006), I applied this differently to different decisions about different texts (e.g. print ads and interviews, other types of magazine content, online profiles and instant messaging). Finding myself overwhelmed with no single, predefined ‘starting point’, the ideal of an inductive methodology and the sheer number of competing decisions involved in the data collection and analysis, I incorporated a semiotic framework to define a structure for my data. Building on Charmaz’s instructions, I developed a ‘coding schedule’ (Bryman, 2004) from my initial coding and from the theory and examples of Paul Baker (2007), Gillian Rose (2007), and Judith Williamson (2002). What follows is my description of my coding, comparison, categorisation, memo writing and diagramming, with attention to theoretical sensitivity and rigour of support<sup>25</sup> (Mills *et al.*, 2006).

#### **4.3.2. Using a semiotic framework for methodical, polytextual analysis of ethnographic, multimodal data**

Qualitative research can attract criticism when analysis is regarded as being ‘too interpretative’ or ‘too subjective’, particularly when researchers are not transparent and/or reflexive in their analysis (Ramazanoğlu and Holland, 2002). I use semiotics as an analytical framework to support an overarching aim of (theoretical) sensitivity in grounded theory research with a topic where the politics and discourses I have encountered are testament to deep ideological divisions. Using semiotics allows me to work to address potential critiques of my analysis as being ‘too interpretative’ or ‘too subjective’. Semiology is useful to sociologists (Plummer, 2010) and underpins the understanding and meaning making that are constructed through the various methods of analysis (Rose, 2007). This level of detail helped

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<sup>25</sup> I refer to demonstrating ‘support’ for my findings, interpretations and theory, as opposed to the positivism implied by ‘verification’.

me make sense where differentiations (for example, between agency and structure) were/are ill-defined and to 'challenge taken for granted understandings' (Charmaz, 2006, p.54).

Semiotics were useful where I saw patterns within patterns and multiple levels of signification with meanings that shifted between audiences, as well as shifted for me as I encountered different narratives and representations. I use semiotics as a structure for the 'constant comparative methods' recommended by grounded theorists (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Howitt, 2010).

A semiotic framework does not offer a definitive description of what one image, a collection of images, or a corpus *must* mean; however, semiotics can provide a framework for deconstructing and illustrating the multiple relationships and processes that are elided within more general descriptions of social constructionism, for example, and symbolic interactionism. Therefore, to achieve my overall aim of asking 'What are the experiences and representations of men selling sex to men through advertising in London at the turn of the twenty-first century?', my objective has been to describe, deconstruct, and illustrate how the texts – including images – work together, with each other, with their subjects, with their audience, and with wider discourse(s) to create meaning(s) across a large body of text (Baker, 2003, 2005; Baker and McEnery, 2012; Norris, 2012). Thus, to achieve this I have adopted a semiotic framework for my application of grounded theory.

As I have mentioned, my analysis processes for my different data sources were neither linear nor discrete. 'Intertextuality blurs the boundaries not only between texts but between texts and the world of lived experience' (Chandler, 2007, p.209). Intertextuality allows an understand that the meanings of one text can and will depend on the meanings of other texts (Rose, 2007). Likewise, one of the challenges of multimodal analysis is that different modes of communication are materially structured in different ways (Norris, 2012). A constructive grounded theory approach acknowledges and takes advantage of those differences; however,

any rigid distinctions between grounded theory and discourse analysis become increasingly fuzzy. To adapt for this in my initial coding of the advertisements, I developed a coding schedule, following Rose's (2007) guidelines for semiological analysis. The core coding questions were:

- 1) What are the signs?
- 2) What do the signs signify in themselves?
- 3) How do they relate to other signs in themselves?
- 4) What are the connections? (for signs, within signs, between signs; between codes; with wider repertoires and discourses)  
What are the connections of the connections?
- 5) Revisiting the signs through their codes: How are narratives, ideologies and mythologies articulated?

From this, I developed a detailed coding schedule for questions 1 and 2 as presented in Appendix N. I used the categories which I constructed and identified to develop my analysis and produce the findings that follow in the rest of this thesis.

### ***Applying the practice of 'line by line' coding to multimodal texts***

Along with the materiality of *doing* the coding, creating the categories, and *making* an organised structure, one of my challenges with multimodal texts was with how to describe and name the different signs as they emerged. 'Line-by-line coding' was an insufficient description. For example, I have attended to the minutiae of comparing collocations of words and images in archived print advertisements that had variously been written, dictated, or designed by men as advertisers and/or magazine design staff, and at the same time I have deconstructed the interviews produced with my participants into narrative and thematic sections. For clarity, I have returned to the descriptions which Charmaz (2006) offers for coding so as to document the materiality of my coding practices thus allowing a transparent guide for what I have done.

I coded magazines as incident by incident (or issue by issue) analysis to determine a unit size (see Appendices M, N, and O for coding schedules and initial coding samples) for my text

samples. Through this process I also had to make decisions about how to sample volumes/issues. For example, I started with multiple issues per year and when that data was saturated sampled single issues from consecutive or intermittent periods, depending on the pace and types of changes to the content. I did this coding by hand initially, using page markers with the archived volumes in the offices at *Boyz* magazine and creating tables and handwritten memos in notebooks. I created spreadsheets in Microsoft Excel. When I had determined the size of my text 'units', I scanned the pages I needed for the next level of coding.

Next, I used the Adobe suite software (Photoshop, Illustrator, and Acrobat) to code visual and verbal texts together, to take advantage of the available technology without losing the interface or analytical scope that was available in that generation of NVivo (and similar) products for Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS; see Bryman, 2004). I describe how I used these tools in more detail later in this chapter. I coded the ads in the identified editions word by word to deconstruct all of the sampled advertisements. My objective was to identify patterns of collocation through a corpus-based content analysis (Baker, 2003); however, my findings led me to develop the semiotic framework along with the analysis.

This close analysis allowed me to reveal patterns within ads and within the layout which were not immediately apparent through looking at what was otherwise familiar in different ways (Charmaz, 2006). With the content coded, I used semiotics to develop a comparative method in order to create a distance from any of the preconceptions I had about what I thought I might find in the advertisements (Charmaz, 2006).

I used NVivo software (version 7, then 8 and 9) to apply thematic codes (as 'nodes') to create 'incidents' within the interviews to 'discover patterns and contrasts' (Charmaz, 2006, p.55), then recoded incident by incident. In practice, I had a hard time with this because I used

single words for many of my codes, which allowed me to find unanticipated relationships but was not a ‘quick’ method to distil the open codes.

There was simply too little focus to make meaningful connections from single words except as thematic groupings. Returning to the literature, I used my thematic groupings to make seven categories: proximity, knowledge, exclusion, need, experimentation, desire, and temporality. There were inevitable tensions which I discuss in detail in the findings chapters. Following the advice to ‘preserve actions’ (Charmaz, 2006, p.49), I revisited my data sets, collected new data and comparing my additional analysis, revised the seven categories into a model of five actions:

- 1) Addressing scarcity,
- 2) Defining performativity (redefining, rationalising/ defending),
- 3) Utilising embodiment,
- 4) Locating contact(s),
- 5) Thinking temporally

These five categories are interrelated actions which M\$M have taken. I have used these actions as categories to identify modes of rationale, comfort and distress for people selling sex and/or involved in sex work. I did this by constructing tables to summarise how their personal experiences fit all five categories. (For an example, see Appendix T.) At this stage, I had a cohesive model but still struggled with how to describe its interrelated parts in a sensible, linear manner. ‘The action as unit of analysis, however, is still a complicated issue, because there are smaller (lower-level) and larger (higher-level) actions’ (Norris, 2012, p.199).

To construct a research narrative that illustrates the interrelationship of these modes, I applied an additional process of axial coding to reorganise my data into four themes which answer Strauss and Corbin’s (1998, p. 125) questions ‘when, where, why, who, how, and with what consequences?’ (cited in Charmaz, 2006, p.60). Following Charmaz’s advice for axial coding rather than Strauss and Corbin’s formal procedures, I developed sub-categories for categories

(such as ‘strategies for setting prices’) to help illustrate the relationships and to make explicit how the data my participants have provided might be useful as information for others in their place. To heed the call, ‘Nothing about us without us’ (Schreiber, 2015, p.256).

These four themes make the narrative for my findings chapters: advertising in London’s queer scene (Chapter 5), representations and interpretations of men’s bodies and embodiment (Chapter 6), the role of queer rationale in performativity when men sell sex to men (M\$M) in London’s ‘gay’ scene (Chapter 7) and ways that money and worth are defined and experienced by M\$M in contemporary London (Chapter 8). This follows Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) organising scheme to identify ‘1) *conditions*, the circumstances or situations that form the structure of the studied phenomena; 2) *actions/interactions*, participants' routine or strategic responses to issues, events, or problems; and 3) *consequences*, outcomes of actions/interactions’ (Charmaz, 2006, p.61). The final chapter is my discussion chapter, where I bring those findings back together to discuss them as a single five part model of rationale, comfort and distress.

***An argument: All grounded theory is a little bit queer***

To define key points of grounded theory from the application discussed by Charmaz (2006), I have employed and adapted existing theories to analyse my interview material. I *have* coded material line by line, and adapting that for the visual: frame by frame. And also *within* images: element by element. And I have *quantified* content. And I have *interpreted* meanings. I have relied on theory and applications that have been produced more recently than the earlier incarnations from Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (Bryman, 2004; Charmaz, 2006; Howitt, 2010) or Strauss and Juliet Corbin (Strauss and Corbin, 1994b).

Yet, I will label even my grounded theory as having queer properties. For however inductive grounded theorists might aim (or claim) to be, I have reflected extensively (read: experienced

and reconciled enormous anxieties) about ‘identifying’, or rather *discussing*, ‘realities’ which are (or certainly *seem*) discursively constructed as well as constructive (Barad, 2007). Even in this relatively under-researched area, I could not claim to be free from standpoint or a prior immersion in the literature, or the field, and so indeed I have claimed that standpoint and that immersion as features of my methodology. Labelling ethnography and grounded theory as ‘queer’ disrupts even the label of queer because in retrospect, these points only seem like common sense. That common sense, at times, might seem exceptionally queer.

#### **4.3.3. Emphasising visual data and processes of grounded theory**

In the sample of *Boyz* magazine, one of the initial objectives was to map the development of the ads themselves. How were photos used? How had they come to be used like this? When did they first appear? When did it become usual to use photographs? How are ads used differently for massage and escorting? How representative of the escorting population are the advertisements? It was initially unclear what a meaningful unit of study would be: individual advertisements? Whole pages? Whole sections?

To answer this, I developed a basic Content Analysis of the advertisement section. I began by going through every issue including the dummy issue (a mock up used as a pilot issue, and for selling advertising space to new advertisers) and the first issue. I counted every advertisement in the ‘Escorts & Masseurs’ column, and noted significant features, such as the magazine’s pricing structures, and changes, such as when they were split into separate columns. I collected similar data for the surrounding advertisement sections. When I reached theoretical saturation in the approach I was using, for example the number of ads was stable or no new features appeared, I ‘jumped ahead’ to the start of the next year to record the year’s first edition as a representative sample<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> One criticism of using the first edition is that there are holiday-themed advertisements. The magazine’s director has also noted that a more representative edition might be in June or July, as often advertisers will take breaks over the holiday period. His understanding was that business is slower.

If new features or significant changes were noted in the quantity, content or the layout of the advertisements or the magazine itself, I traced backwards within the year's editions and tacked backwards and forwards until I located the first instance of change and wrote memos and field notes about the changes. If no new features were recorded, I jumped ahead to the next year's first edition. This first stage allowed me to make a timeline of the advertisements, and to map the developments and the changes that seemed significant, particularly as read from a contemporary context, where *GT (Gay Times)*, Gaydar, and Grindr seem ubiquitous in (many) gay men's lives. The findings from this work are discussed in Chapter 5 – Ad Men. However, from an ethnographic position, I understood that studying *Boyz* magazine is not wholly representative of the advertising content for men selling sex to men. London is unique in having multiple newsstand and free titles available, each with its own brand and unique selling point (USP). I made additional comparative analysis of a competing free title, *QX Magazine*, as well as newsstand titles *GT (Gay Times)* and *Attitude*. Further analysis could be done comparing titles in other regions, nationally or internationally.

In the second stage of coding the advertisements, I collected samples of advertisements for analysis. There were significant changes over the 20 years, and I wanted to capture those changes; however, there were over 100 advertisements per issue in most years and 51 or 52 issues per year (see Figure 5.5 in Chapter 5). At the early stages, I was unsure how much detail I needed to collect and how best to record it.

To determine what would be useful to create meaningful categories and develop them to saturation (Charmaz, 2006), I experimented with different sampling methods. I ruled out selecting randomised advertisements across several editions within a year for several reasons. With advertisements in weekly editions, there is repetition from one edition to the next, and cross-checking content for repetition as I collected randomised ads was inefficient. Within

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any one edition, there can be advertisements that use the same phone number. Some advertisers place twinned ads with colleagues or partners as ‘duos’ offering performances, threesomes and group sex. Each edition includes a collection of advertisements that are organised by a series of editorial and layout decisions. Using a randomised selection of advertisements would not allow the advertisements to be read syntagmatically – in the context of their position within surrounding advertisements – and some of these findings would have been missed. Furthermore, creating records of the advertisements presents its own challenges. To make high quality (colour) copies of whole pages, I scanned each page, scanning in two halves where the publication was in the larger A3 format and ‘pasting’ them together in Adobe Photoshop.

My final sample of *Boyz* content includes the first seven (n=7) consecutive issues in 1991 with a total of 35 unique advertisements, then the first issue of each year (e.g. 01 January) for five years from 1992 to 1996, and thereafter the first January issue of every fifth year (2001, 2006 and 2011), plus additional intermediate issues where significant editorial or format changes occur. See details in Chapter 5. My sample includes the first seven issues in 1991 where escort and massage advertisements appear because so few advertisements appear in each of the earliest issues relative to subsequent years (e.g. n=8 in *Boyz* August 1, 1991) compared to n=139 in 6 January 1996 and n=154 in 3 February 2001<sup>27</sup>) and many of those ads repeat for several weeks. The additional issues are included to provide a wider sample for the purposes of category saturation.

Having identified the individual ads as the most useful analytic unit to address my research objectives, it was necessary for me to develop my coding schedule further. There are a number of approaches that can be used for specifically evaluating personal ads (Baker, 2003,

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<sup>27</sup> The format of *Boyz* magazine changed in 2001 in the 3 February issue. I have analysed and described this issue as my 2001 sample data instead of the first January edition. This highlights one of a number of issues that emerged as causing tension in collecting comparable samples from a dynamic media, even where print media seems relatively static compared to the Internet.

2005) and I adapted additional categories following examples from Baker (2003) and Goldman (1992), as follows:

1. the number of advertisements;
2. whether the advertisements use text only or include a photo;
3. the size of the advertisements, for example: small ads, box ads, ¼ page ads;
4. the inclusion, visibility or description of the model's face;
5. the inclusion, visibility or description of the model's body;
6. the use of specific references to price;
7. visible, or references to, race or nationality;
8. references to age;
9. references to particular services or other Unique Selling Points (USP).

I started this stage with the issue from 1996 because it included the broadest range of text formats: verbal, graphic, and photographic texts were available, in different combinations and configurations. I found Item 3 (size of ads) offered little insight that addressed my research question and it was abandoned. Item 7 (visible race or nationality) was problematic for both material and theoretical reasons, which I discuss in Chapter 6. From the remaining seven items, I developed 26 categories, subsequently compared with 23 categories developed in another study which I discuss in Chapter 5 (Phua and Caras, 2008). I compared these categories to the categories that I was constructing from the other texts. Triangulating my findings helped me to focus and support the emerging theory. In the next section, I discuss my procedure for applying codes to texts, and the equipment I used for polytextual analysis of multimodal data.

#### **4.3.4. My customised research toolkit**

I have identified a number of challenges in collecting and analysing an extensive range of multimodal data: organising data from diverse sources such as magazines, interviews and web pages, capturing data in enough detail to be useful, managing large digital files that require even larger digital resource, and making good use of the visual elements in 'texts'. In the same way that SPSS, and its kind, is used for statistical analysis (Pallant, 2007; Salkind, 2007), Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) is described as an

effective and efficient way to manage qualitative analysis (Gibbs, 2002; Howitt, 2010). I am a staunch believer that technology can be used better to help qualitative researchers and from the outset I was keen to employ a digital strategy to capture, organise and analyse my data; however, this turned into a project in and of itself.

I started to use NVivo for the analysis of both my visual and interview data. The NVivo Version 7 software was useful for my interview coding, but could not be used for visual images. I used it to store and play-back recorded interviews, create, code and annotate transcripts, create a research diary, and organise a plethora of notes and references from other sources. It has been excellent for written and audio material, but I did not find it suitable for doing visual analysis on individual small advertisements (n=982). I note that during the course of my research, the NVivo software has since been developed to enable researchers to capture visual images and web pages (from NVivo Versions 8, 9 and at the time of re-writing, Version 10). The software (in its current version) still requires the researcher to adopt a relatively linear approach and it is still limited in its application to visually analysing relationships *between* codes – the limits being the ability to see more than one screen at a time, and more than one code at a time. I sought solutions elsewhere which I describe later in this chapter.

Based on Baker's (2003) work, I hoped entering the individual ads into a database would be useful for identifying collocates (word pairings) but – in the early stages – was stuck at how to *analyse* the visual data without re-constructing it as verbal text. My assertion was, and remains, that visual data can be analysed usefully – and perhaps more meaningfully – by employing *visual* tools (Reavey (ed.), 2011; Rose, 2007, 2012). For me, this includes theoretical 'tools' such as semiotics and software applications that incorporate appropriately designed user interfaces for analysis of spatial and structural elements within visual signs.

Early on, I attempted an analysis by transcribing the verbal data and entering visual data using text descriptions to a database. This proved both inefficient and unproductive given the volume of ads (n=982) and the diverse content and form. It also meant that all visual data was converted to limited descriptions. On one hand, I saw this as an initial coding. On the other hand, a level of richness of detail from the actual images was immediately lost.

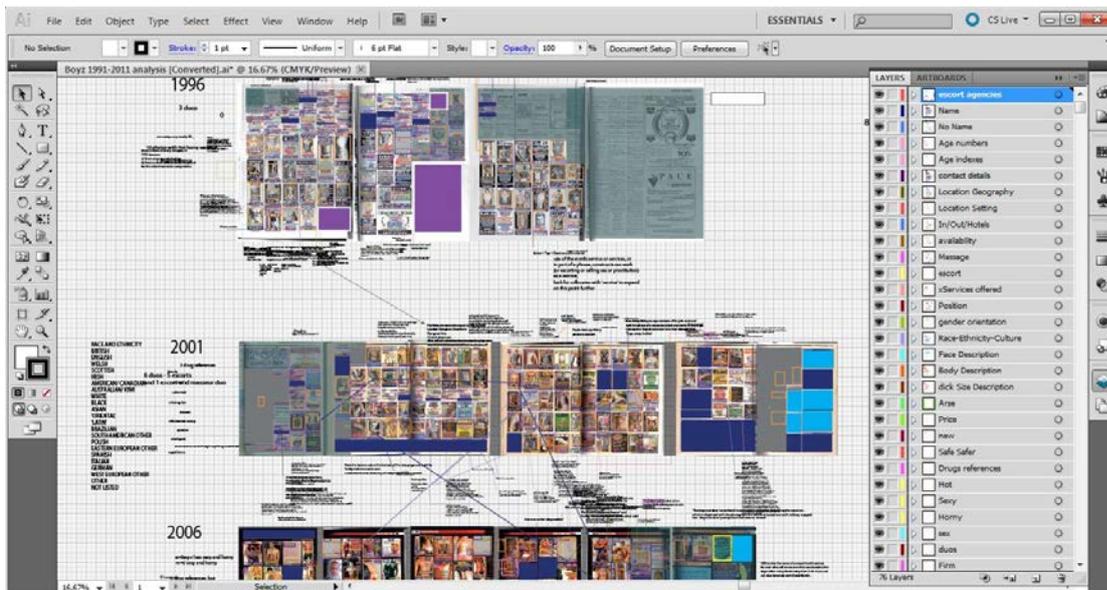
A further problem I had in designing a computer-assisted framework for my analysis was that I was not sure what elements I wanted to look for in the images, outside of (the rather vaguely defined) 'representation of identity' and (more specifically) depictions of faces, bodies, and 'sexual content'. In retrospect, this might have been enough given the size of the corpus, but as with all grounded theory, at the early stages it was unclear to me what data would be important. This feature of grounded theory makes using CAQDAS difficult. My uncertainty at the early stages further disrupted my plan to use database software, where – as I discuss earlier – it was unclear whether a meaningful 'text' or 'unit' would be the individual ad or whole pages.

From my analysis, a database of individual ads would have some benefits such as automated searches (albeit after ads are coded by the researcher). Using a database to analyse individual ads would require an additional code to show that ads appeared on the same page. Additional fields could be added – if the memory and programming resources were available – to add fields that would *show* collocate (adjoining) advertisements, to allow researchers to address how meaning is made not by individual units, texts or signs, but also by reading them in conjunction with each other. Future work can be done to develop these resources for researchers in academia and industry.

*Digital stationery workspaces*

Whilst software developers catch up with progress in visual analysis theory and methods, I explored and settled upon the solution of using graphic *design* software. This is the same type (if not brand) of software that will have been used to *create* the advertisements and page layouts in the first place! My aim was to replicate the intuitive and hands-on processes that researchers describe when they use ‘pen-and-paper’ methods. I refer to as ‘virtual stationery coding’. Some qualitative researchers playfully refer to having ‘a stationery fetish’ (e.g. Brown, 2012) and advocate that hands-on, pen-and-paper processes can’t be replicated in software. My standpoint is not ‘can’t be replicated’ but ‘haven’t yet been’ for reasons outside this discussion; that is, except to note that researchers recognise and enjoy a number of the benefits of technology in other processes of academic production, such as word processing and file sharing, where digital technologies were once derided or unimagined .

As a solution, I used a digital scanner and Adobe Photoshop to scan the Trade pages of the first issue (*Boyz*, 4 July 1991), the first issue where the ‘Escort & Masseurs’ ads first appeared (01 August 1991) and every issue for the rest of that calendar year where Escort /and Masseur ads appeared. From there, I scanned the first issue of each new calendar year. *Boyz* now publish digital copies of the magazine that can be viewed online or downloaded as portable document files (.pdf), but did not keep digital archives until more recently because of the large file sizes. Where that content was available, in particular for issues that were published during my research, I used Adobe Reader and Photoshop to archive the digital copies directly off the internet.

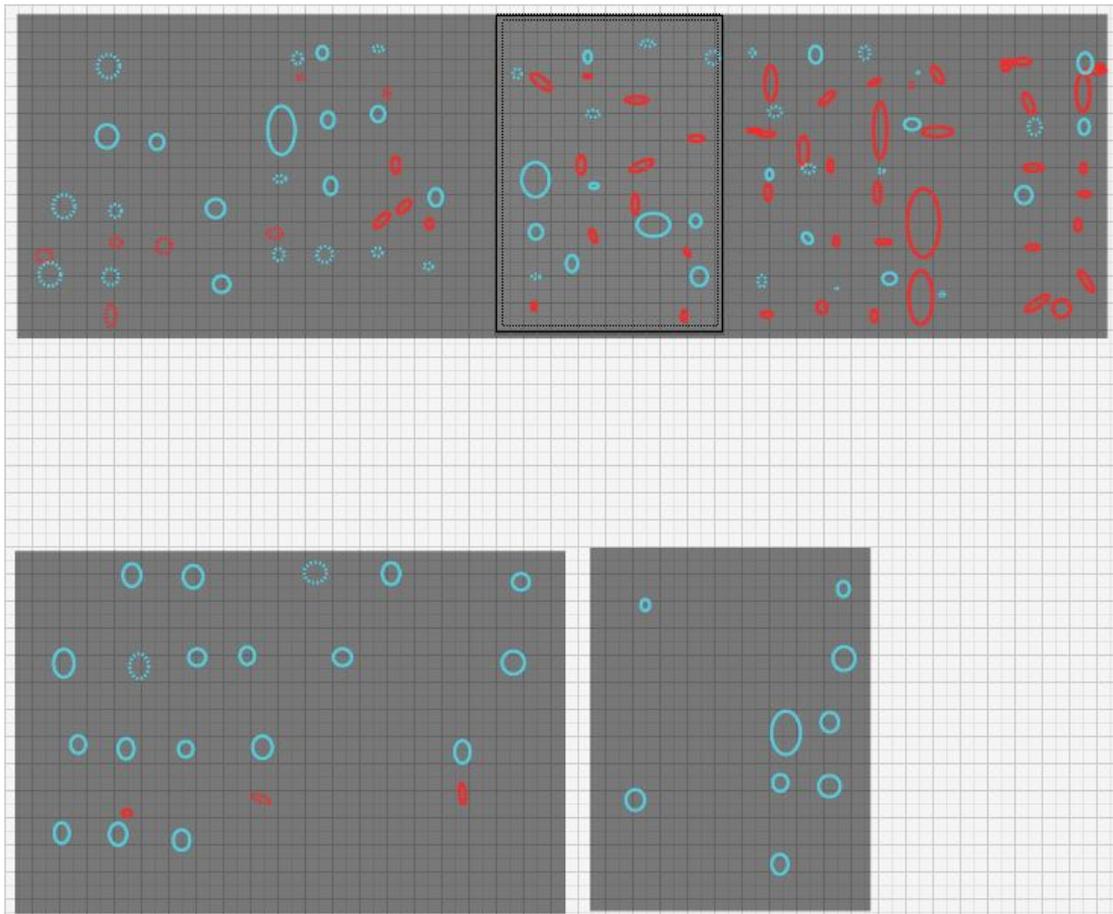


**(Figure 4.3, Screenshot of Adobe Illustrator's layers interface. See Appendix Q for more detail)**

Adobe's interface uses a structure of layers. On top of the scanned pages I created separate layers for each of my codes. Each layer covers all of the previous layers. Layers can be rearranged and linked together, and data can be moved from one layer to another. This allowed me to code my data in a non-linear path, using a non-linear coding strategy. Each code (on its own layer) was given a unique colour and a shape that was useful for representing its signified data. For example, faces are coded in blue ovals, bodies are coded in orange rectangles, and penises are coded in red oblongs. Shapes can be modified for variations: solid oblongs are a revealed face or penis, dotted shapes signify hiding or covering. Codes could be combined or separated, allowing the iterative flexibility advocated and required in qualitative analysis, and particularly grounded theory. Annotations and memos are made on the pages for separate codes or specific years, as required, and copied to NVivo for analysis alongside the interview data (or pasted directly into chapter drafts in Microsoft Word).

The Adobe Illustrator coding structure is able to be applied to verbal, photographic and graphic texts, allowing analysis amongst and between them and making (literal) patterns

instantly visible within and between individual advertisements and across the history of the publication. This allowed me to make ‘maps’ of whole pages of ads and reveal for example, that in 2006, escort ads were laid out with the least ‘sexual’ content (faces) at the front and progressively more graphic content (full-frame penis close-ups) towards the back, and that magazine advertisements have become less explicit since then. See the images below for examples of my workspace in Adobe Illustrator.



**(Figure 4.4, Faces and Penises in 2006 and 2011)**

Future analysis and coding can also be applied to other titles and media, to make the analysis more multidimensional.<sup>28</sup> Using the Adobe software to create a digital stationery workspace allowed me much greater flexibility than conventional graphic tools and stationery. Future research can draw on the findings of this (early) polytextual analysis of body-sex-work

<sup>28</sup> Multi-page internet media still presents a challenge to organise in Adobe Illustrator, but future research might employ webpage content design software to analyse webpage visual content in the same way graphic design software has been used to analyse content of the printed page.

advertising by deploying methods that are more focused on pre-defined criteria, informed by some of the possible directions outlined here and in the following chapters. Future researchers might choose to compare the ads between different parts of a year to look for patterns and determine whether the early January issues are representative of patterns across the whole year. (Certainly, Christmas themed ads provided an interesting insight into the creativity of the advertisers, and in one case helped to identify the advertiser had placed more than one ad within the issue, which was a common trend and an interesting finding (see Chapter 5.)

#### **4.3.5. Limitations**

I fully acknowledge that my sample is as not intended to be representative of *all* men who sell sex in London, or even all men who advertise to sell sex in London. My requests for interviews were either refused or ignored by most of the men I contacted online or by telephone<sup>29</sup>. Several men did agree to be interviewed on one of three conditions: the first – perhaps most obviously – was that I pay them their working rate for their time. One potential participant phrased it thus, ‘It don’t [sic] matter if you want to talk or fuck. The price is the same’ (Field notes). When I would explain that I had neither the permission nor the resources to pay more than travel expenses, I was refused or ignored.

The second, possibly more interesting and certainly more surprising terms of agreement were requests for sex with/from me. Other men who have done research with men who sell sex report that some men may use this as a possible method of shifting power in the relationship between the research subject and the researcher (Walby, 2012, 2010). Again, explaining that this was not an option, I was usually refused or ignored. Conversely, on two occasions, men who agreed to be interviewed (with no suggestion of sex) still greeted me when we met with

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<sup>29</sup> I admit I failed to keep an accurate record of how many people declined to take part or the total number of people I contacted which would have provided some context to the relative challenges (or opportunities) I had for recruiting participants.

the expectation that I was seeking sex. In both cases, we mutually apologised for the misunderstanding and they agreed to go ahead with the interview.

Often, a third condition that potential participants made was that the interview should take place immediately, sometimes without even allowing a realistic amount of time to travel. I missed the opportunity to interview at least two men who ‘agreed’ to be interviewed, one because I could not meet him within half an hour, the other because I had other commitments later that afternoon (Field Notes). Neither of those men responded to future contact. Other men agreed in principle to be interviewed in the future but later declined. Apart from disappointment, I did not interpret this with a particular motivation apart from the usual ‘busy-ness’ of Londoners; although, in hindsight, this could have been a hedging strategy to defer me without explicitly rejecting me, on the chance that I might not be one of the ‘time wasters’ I heard about in interviews.

The value of this sample as presented is it is a wider, better representation of the histories and channels of sex work and selling sex than I had anticipated or than perhaps I would have found had I only made cold-calls to the men who are visible in the current escort ads. My research also demonstrates a richer understanding of how ‘sex’ and ‘sex with men’ is defined, accessed, and offered. This disrupts distinctions and boundaries between ‘sex work’ and ‘body work’<sup>30</sup> and demands broadening or rethinking those definitions or distinctions. Where my research question seeks to specifically address the diversity of subject-positions when gay men advertise to do body-sex-work, this sample has proved very beneficial. I argue the relative homogeneity of my sample has both advantages and disadvantages, and hope that further research can be done with different recruitment criteria.

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<sup>30</sup> Body work is defined as ‘paid work on the bodies of others’ (Twigg *et al.*, 2011, p.171). It is used to describe a range of services including massage, acupuncture, hairdressing and emphasises the both bodies and labour in diverse ‘treatment’ settings. Here, I use it to denote a narrower range of services that men provide such as massage and touch that is not marketed as explicitly sexual.

#### 4.4. Summary

In this chapter, I have attempted to provide a detailed rationale and description of what I hoped to actually do, some of the challenges I have had to address, and what I have finally done. As a very brief recount of my methodology, I have used multiple forms of data collection: semi-structured interviews, archived magazine advertisements, contemporary online profiles, and personal observations recorded in field notes. I refer to my ethnography as ‘queer’ in regards to its subjects and content, as well as its narrative (characters, timing, settings and structure). My methodology is very much a typical grounded theory in so far as I had come to the subject of sex work with as little experience, involvement, or understanding of it as is perhaps possible. My ambitious design to incorporate multiple data sources certainly fit the notion that ‘everything is data’. Whilst this created several challenges for me, my solutions were found in my own immersion in the data, and the constant comparison across my ‘data sets’. Even my adoption of – or my realisation that – *my* grounded theory is valid as a *constructivist* grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006; Mills *et al.*, 2006) emerged from my analysis of the data. My reflections on the queerness and fractal properties of sex work (and grounded theory itself) were grounded in that process of memo writing and constant comparison, including a return to the literature and the concurrent production of new texts.

In the following chapters, I describe the development and evolution of commercial sex advertising in gay scene media, specifically *Boyz Magazine* and Gaydar.co.uk from 1991 to 2012 and consider these advertisements as spaces of meaning-making, as well as sources of historical and sociological data (Chapter 5). In Chapter 6, I focus my analysis on semiotic readings of advertisements and triangulated with interview data to explore the constructive interrelationship of queer scene advertising and embodiment for gay and bisexual men. I draw on selected themes (the visual, ageing, ethnic identity, and ‘agencies’) and explore how

identities and representations mythologise M\$M in London. In Chapter 7, I draw on more interview data and participant-observation data to discuss how selling sex is rationalised as sex that is not unlike the sex that many men in London's gay scene are having, and in Chapter 8 I go on to examine payment phenomena and attitudes to money. I look at how commercialising sex is rationalised and executed, from the perspective of men offering sex and sexualised body work services. In the Discussion (Chapter 9), I illustrate how my findings on queer scene advertising, queer sexual cultures, and market ideologies problematise the use of typological models to understand men's experiences of selling sex in contemporary London. I go on to outline a more relational model that aims to better address the multiple subject-positions of men who sell sex to men by interpreting the significance of their actions which Address Scarcity, Define Performativity, Utilise Embodiment, Locate Contact(s), and Think Temporally.

## **CHAPTER 5: QUEER AND ‘SEEN’: MEN ADVERTISING SEXUAL SERVICES TO MEN**

### **5.1. Introduction**

In order to explore the subjectivities of men who sell sex through advertising in London over the past twenty years, I use queer theory as a theoretical framework to guide a grounded theory analysis of a dataset collected through a queer ethnography (Herbst, 2009), as outlined in the previous chapter. To address the broader research question, in this chapter I focus on answering two more focused questions: First, ‘How can classified advertising be used as a source of data to learn about men’s lives selling sex in the gay scene in the late 20th century and into the 21st century?’ What can we learn from studying M\$M advertising? I illustrate my argument that M\$M advertising is a rich source of data that has remained almost completely unstudied and unreported. My second objective in this chapter is to explore the question, ‘How have men used different types of magazine advertising and Internet promotion to sell sex to men in London from the beginning of the 1990s to the present?’

Ads in ‘gay scene’ spaces (re-)construct discourses about sex work and men who sell sex. For both of these objectives, I have drawn on Queer Theory to frame my findings and explore my data as useful queer texts (Leckey and Brooks (eds.), 2010). My third argument for this chapter addresses some of the ongoing epistemological tensions about how academics and activists, regardless of their ideologies, can gather meaningful data about people selling sex. Using examples from the advertisements and my interviews, I demonstrate that whilst the data is discursively constructive (and constructed) and is part of a performative ‘truth’, there are limits to how it can be read realistically or used as factually representational.

In this chapter I explore the advertisements themselves as both a mode of contact, and to elicit some of the context of selling sex through advertisements. In doing so, I explore a part

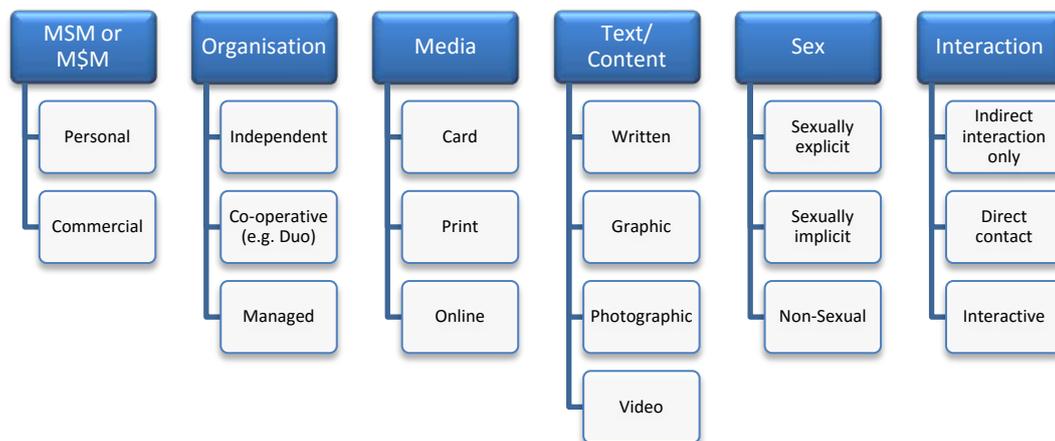
of London's queer scene that has scarcely been documented or researched (Cameron *et al.*, 1999). I hope to create a picture for the reader of what 'the gay scene' looks like, and what 'the gay scene' sees. I do this in order to contextualise the directions that are taken by (young) men coming out and coming into (London's) queer scene, and to illustrate – both figuratively and literally – the context of how men sell sex to men through advertising. Throughout my writing, I will refer to London's queer scene and 'the gay scene'. This is a reflexive development, acknowledging that there is a well-rehearsed language that is used to describe particular spaces; however, the 'gay' scene ignores and/or erases relational identifications and multiple experiences and the migration into, out of, and through 'the scene' which I saw and heard in my data from advertisements and participant interviews. In the first part of this chapter, I offer a brief reminder of existing literature. I describe the most visible modes that advertising has taken and currently takes. I go on to detail what kinds of data the advertisements can provide. I discuss how semiotic analysis of advertisements reveals both the queer social *constructions* and also limitations of how the data can be interpreted. In the second half, I analyse some of the stereotypes of men who sell sex to men and how the data from M\$M advertising and interviews reveals, challenges, or obscures the mythologised 'escort', 'rentboy', 'hooker' and 'masseur'. Finally, I describe how the advertisements influence men's choices about selling sex and the choices men make about advertising themselves.

### **5.1.1 Analysing Ads: Structure and Content**

Examining modes of performativity, embodiment, contact and temporality through the development of ads and profiles in the gay scene provides some context to how selling sex can be seen and understood in different ways: as a (sometimes temporary, sometimes independent) income, as independent entrepreneurship or a solution to scarcity, as commercialised sex or as sexualised body work. Closer analysis of the form and content of

the advertisements (including both print ads and online profiles) reveals how these ideologies are constructed, reconstructed and reinforced.

In this chapter, I discuss some of the ways that ads from men selling sex to men can be read, based on a multimodal approach (Jones, 2009) using a semiotic toolkit (Williamson, 2002). As I explained in the earlier methodology chapter, ethnography is useful for data collection, but is not a method of analysis (Bryman, 2004) and semiotic analysis is useful in exploring data and phenomena from a spectrum of realist through constructionist perspectives.



**(Figure 5.1, Initial advertising analysis framework)**

Throughout the chapter, I analyse advertising from men selling sex to men by comparing the advertisements and profiles they use with other forms of advertising: personal ads, small commercial ads, personal and commercial profiles, print ads and online profiles, written ads and photo ads, and advertisements from individuals and organisations. The table in Figure 5.1 gives an overview of how I developed categories for the modes of advertising and ways in

which different types of advertising intersect and normalise or are normalised, to eventually appear as ordinary or dominant repertoires.

## 5.2. Gay \*Seen\*: Where men advertise

Advertising for M\$M remains largely out of the mainstream visibility and consciousness. Occasional features have appeared in newspapers (Francis, 2012), magazines (Taylor and Sunderland, 2003) or documentaries (Waite, 2005) that portray the experiences of male escorts or stories of run-ins with celebrities (e.g. Roberts, 2007). M\$M advertising in mainstream publications is scant, but present, and often presented with a ‘sister company’ advertising services of women selling sex. In that context, by moving to London and coming out and coming into the gay scene, escort advertising and explicitly sexual advertising for massage is highly conspicuous to the ‘outsider’. Newsstand magazines like *Gay Times (GT)*, and free titles such as *QX* and *QX Men* publish whole sections of advertisements for men who sell sex. In interviews, men talk about their own histories, their entry into the gay scene and how selling sex became familiar to them, in part from seeing the advertisements as part of their social media, either as part of their migration to London, or closer to their original homes. I use this triad of places, people and signals to define ‘Modes of Locating Contact’ as a way into the narratives of M\$M. ‘Locating Contact’ is a theme that emerged from interviews where men described their migration to London and into a queer identity, as well as the people and the signs who/which were influential – both encouraging and discouraging selling sex.

Whether looking at examples from Ancient Greece, Victorian London or modern day Los Angeles, there have been places where people sold sex and common signals that were used to indicate that sex was for sale (Evans, 1979). Print, and more recently online advertisements, act as both place and signal. In Ancient Greece, outside the barber shop or the perfumery

boys wore long hair and make-up (Evans, 1979). In London, Picadilly Circus was once renowned as the location to find a particular type of male company and one understood the meaning of fingering one's lapels as a signal that intimacy was available (Evans, 1979). Coded messages have sometimes been placed in mainstream periodicals, although to the knowing, present day reader, they may seem at once quite obvious and in comparison to contemporary ads, quite coy:

'Youth 21, versatile slim attractive English [offers] full personal services to gentlemen of any age, at my place or yours' (Cocks, 2009: 145).

As I go on to discuss, the advertisements have become more explicit. Marcos, 24, describes how he sees magazines continuing this pattern of accessing queerness in London.

M: Yeah. People buy magazines [...] So it's just – people from America buy the magazine, people that comes to – a lot of Arabics [sic], they buy the magazine. Because they know that it's a gay thing. They don't know – they don't go to gay places, but they go to GT and they know that there is escorts in the back of it. It's kind of a classy magazine. It's not really a trashy magazine. (Marcos, 24).

The growth and reach of the Internet in industrialised regions has been cited as dominating contemporary marketing by M\$M in many other cities (Logan, 2010; Mclean, 2013a, 2013b; Walby, 2012). Whilst anecdotally this seems true in London, my interviews with M\$M in London reveal three main spaces for advertising and promoting their services over the past 20 years: posted notices in gay pubs, magazines aimed at a gay readership, and the Internet (see also Koken *et al.*, 2010; Parsons *et al.*, 2004), where sites can be further sub-divided into individual sites, agency sites, and social-networking sites (see Figure 5.1).

Shifts in social-sexual networking develop and are practiced 'from one mode to another' within computer-mediated communication (CMC), 'in particular from the mode of written text to visual modes involving the exchange of pictures and the use of video conferencing [...] and how these "mode shifts" affect the course of the interaction and the ways

interactants manage their relationships and identities' (Jones, 2005, p.70). I have used this framework to focus specifically on M\$M, but to expand perspective to modes that predated, informed and shaped the development and adoption of mainstream use of CMC. Subsequent researchers have begun to focus necessarily on smartphone applications (apps). (Fieldnotes).

As outlined in Table 5.1, modes of advertisement can be categorized by media: card, print or online. Calling cards are found in telephone boxes, or previously in 'gay pubs' (so-called, but not wishing to ignore the presence and history of LBT people). The classified ads appear in newspapers and magazines, in both mainstream and specialist titles, and are a notable feature in many gay scene magazines. In London, *QX* and *Boyz* are the two most visible titles, whilst *QX Men* is published as parallel title, specifically focusing on sex-industry advertisers: M\$M, DVD retailers, pay-per-view material, sex toys, sex venues, and so on.

Online marketing can be done in the form of a profile in a social networking site (like Gaydar) or on M\$M sites (like Rentboy.com<sup>31</sup>). Other sites for M\$M marketing include agency sites, advertisers' own independent websites, or even blogs. There are variations between different titles, 'brands' or hosts in each media, often shaped by law, cultural norms, and the editorial and management policies particular to any one organization. These variations include textual modes, sexual content and modes of interactivity.

In the following section, I present analysis of features from each of these three media: cards, magazines, and online with the objective of addressing the two questions, 'What can be learned about men selling sex to men from exploring queer scene media?' and 'How have the signs and structures developed over time into those which are now seen as common or even integral parts of London's commercial queer scene?'

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<sup>31</sup> Rentboy.com 'has been seized by ICE-Homeland Security Investigations, pursuant to a seizure warrant issued by the United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York under the authority of 18 U.S.C. SS 981 and 982 for violation of 18 U.S.C. SS 1956' [accessed 10 October 2015; redirected to <http://www.seizedserver.com/>].

### 5.2.1 Calling Cards

Postcards, also known as ‘calling cards’ (Hubbard, 2002; Sanders, 2005b) or ‘tart cards’ (Wallpaper, 2012) are a familiar site in phone boxes around areas in central London and make elements of sex work very visible. The cards most often feature images of a provocatively dressed model (who may or may not be the advertiser), with a name, telephone number, location and a brief description of services offered (Hubbard, 2002). The cards posted in phone boxes in London, even those near ‘gay bars’ in Soho, are most often advertising the services of women for male clients. Cards can also specify services from male-to-female transvestite and transgender and transsexual (both pre- and post-operative) advertisers. There are some cards advertising services by men for men, but these are far fewer (Londonist, 2012). There is no data available for cards advertising to women. In interviews, some men report putting up similar advertisements in queer spaces, specifically ‘gay’ pubs and bars which constructed a cultural visibility for M\$M in spaces where same-sex attracted men would go to meet other men.

Brian started selling sex when he was at college in Brighton. He describes how he and a friend decided that since they were both broke and both liked having lots of sex, it would be a suitable enterprise. They printed up some flyers and distributed them. They put them in gay pubs and clubs. ‘It wasn’t like it is now. We didn’t put them in phone boxes or public places because you didn’t know what kind of “crazies” you’d get’ (Brian, 42). Their system incorporated two strategies. First, they were concerned to manage wider public stigma about sex between men. They might also have attracted less attention from legal restrictions while the age of consent for sex between men was still 21.

Card posting in gay-targeted businesses has diminished or completely disappeared in London in recent years, but it is useful to note its place in advertising that pre-dates both the internet and earlier advertisements in magazines. The ads in gay bars were like the more recent

magazine and Internet examples that I discuss below. They are visible in social spaces used by MSM. In the past, those spaces were physical buildings with businesses targeted at queer men (e.g. pubs), where now they are businesses targeted at queer men in the form of magazines (some of which are still available in the premises of those physical spaces, the Internet and mobile applications. These are spaces where the general public is unlikely to be engaged, whether actively or passively. As such, the postcards would attract less attention, except from a more focused audience (i.e. MSM) and as such, less trouble in the form of curiosity, provocation, bullying, or moralising from the wider public audience and their governments. For example, The Crime and Police Act 2001 was in part a national response to local conditions in Westminster when a deterrent was sought against sex workers placing advertising cards in public phone boxes. The act makes illegal the common practice of placing a 'calling card' with contact details for sex workers who work indoors. The young men who run the errand of placing these cards can face up to five years in prison (Sanders, 2005a).

### **5.2.2 Magazines in London**

In 1991, a new free magazine called *Boyz* appeared in LGBT pubs around London. The magazine was aimed at young, gay men and offered features on pop-culture, products and services that publishers hoped would interest gay men, including listings for venues and events that were themselves marketed at gay men and whose advertisements paid for the magazine's publication and distribution. The magazine's appellation was specific to 'gay' men, as illustrated by its strapline 'Boyz is for gay adults only' (See Figure 5.2). Whilst I am analysing and reporting on this, I maintain the language used for discursive texture, with acknowledgement of the problems of bi-erasure to which it still contributes (Barker *et al.*, 2012).



(Figure 5.2, 'Boyz is for gay adults only'. Detail of Boyz cover, 4 July 1991)

The earliest editions were modelled on *Jackie* magazine – a British title aimed at teenage girls. *Boyz* included horoscopes, advice columns about love and sex, and personal contact ads like the 'Lonely Hearts' columns that many newspapers and magazines ran. Telling me about some of the material inspiration for the magazine, Daniel<sup>32</sup>, one of the magazine's founders, told me about its origins.

I think, behind it, for me, was the issue of talking to a guy who's gone out for the night, who's gone to G-A-Y [the club night]. He's not met anyone. He's gone home. He's on his own. He's sitting in his bedroom. It's 3 a.m. in the morning, and he's feeling a bit down. He didn't get a shag, whatever, and maybe he's thinking about his body, and you know, all the issues that we all deal with, and we all deal with, particularly in the harder times. Um, and that's what it was supposed to be, a bit like an older brother giving a bit of guidance. Mostly, I think over the course of most of our history, we've achieved that. [...] Um, and one of the things that we both, [my partner] and I, felt very strongly was that we needed to celebrate those parts of the gay world that it seemed to us a lot of people looked down their noses at (Daniel, magazine director).

Daniel gives different examples in his interviews of what the social and politic climate was like generally, and for young men acknowledging their own sexuality at a time when Section 28 prohibited the 'promotion of homosexuality' in schools, and as national legislation, both reflected and shaped attitudes towards queer people (Weeks, 2007). Daniel's example of the young man who feels alone in the middle of the night addresses some of the issues of

<sup>32</sup> I have used pseudonyms for everyone who agreed to do an interview with me, whether or not they requested anonymity. As well as maintaining an ethical standard of protecting confidentiality, this disrupts an assumption that some informants require protection but others might not.

isolation that queer people can face, particularly when they have sought and missed connection within a community related to an identity that feels marginalised (Nodin *et al.*, 2015; Tyler *et al.*, 2016 forthcoming). Daniel's example extends beyond the individual and he goes on to discuss different groups of people who are further marginalised within the 'gay' scene.

A 'small ads' section called 'Trade' appeared towards the back of each edition which included ads for local trades and services, including electricians, plumbers and builders, hairdressing and body piercing, language or music tuition, and rooms for rent (for the first example, see *Boyz*, 1 August, 1991, p.27). The section included a column titled 'Escorts & Masseurs' with eight advertisements in the column's first appearance (see Figure 5.3, below).

**ESCORTS & MASSEURS**

- ◆ **ISLINGTON/HACKNEY/CENTRAL:** slim, sensuous swimmer gives full, satisfying service. Jon 071 [REDACTED].
- ◆ **BUTCH ESCORT,** 38. Pedro 081 [REDACTED].
- ◆ **TALL, TANNED, muscular, leather rubber masseur. Karl 071 [REDACTED].**
- ◆ **DON,** muscular Colt guy - firm, relaxing massage. Leather etc. 071 [REDACTED] anytime.
- ◆ **STEVE** gives full body massage. In/out calls. Tel 071 [REDACTED]
- ◆ **MARTIN (24)** - body builder/despach rider gives firm massage. Home & hotel visits only. Ring anytime 081 [REDACTED].
- ◆ **SEXY BLOND GUY,** W13. 081 [REDACTED].
- ◆ **NICK.** East End Lad. 071 [REDACTED]

(Figure 5.3, from *Boyz*, 1 August, 1991, p.27)

The inclusion of 'Escorts' and 'Masseurs' in a single column raises interesting issues – theoretically, empirically, and in the lived experiences of those reflected in the research –

about the distinction (and sometimes lack thereof) between 'sex' and 'body' work. There is a blurring of boundaries both between what is (or is not) on offer *and* what is (or is not) legitimate, legal and without stigma or legal ramifications. This is an important point, and one I expand upon in Chapter 7.

■ Complete your advert on this form. One word per box. Please use block capitals. Complete the section box.

**TRADE**  
**ONLY 40p**  
**a word for**  
**any section!**

The cost is 40 pence per word for all sections. Cheques or postal orders (see below for credit card details) should be crossed and marked A/C payee only and made payable to BOYZ and sent with your ad to: TRADE, Boyz, 77 City Garden Row, London, N1 8EZ. To arrive by Tuesday 12 noon, the week before publication. If you require a box number there is an additional charge of £3 per week.

I would like my ad published for this number of weeks

I enclose payment of £

Please charge my Access or Visa Card

TICK FOR SEMI DISPLAY (£3.00)

Expiry date  /

**TRADE SECTION ?**


Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**For Office Use**  
 TO ISSUE NUMBER   
 BOX NUMBER

35

(Figure 5.4, *Boyz* 19 September 1991, p.35)

The early magazine ads, charged per word, were sometimes very brief, including only a name (usually a pseudonym), telephone number, identification as an escort, and one or two words that serve to be both physically descriptive and inspiring.

**MARK. Athletic physique. Escort. 071[...]** (*Boyz*, 24 October 1991, p31).

**HUNKY, versatile escort, 30s. Kevin 081[...]** (*Boyz*, 24 October 1991, p31).

Abbreviated codes such as VWE (Very Well Endowed) had crossover with personal ads. The abbreviations served not only to save the ad-payer money where ads were charged per word, but also constructed a knowable culture that could literally be read, which was at the same time familiar to readers of classified ads (Livia, 2002). Often, as in the ad for Garth, below, the reader is not alerted to the commercial aspect of the advertisement or the intended exchange, except that the advertisement appears in the column for Escorts (or ‘Escorts & Masseurs’).

**GARTH, 25, blue eyes, dark hair, 6’4”, 46” chest. 071[...]** Or **0831[...]** (*Boyz*, 24 October 1991, p31).

Garth’s ad illustrates how the textual body is quantified for the audience, with ages and measurements in order to convey a representation of himself. This queer, verbal and numerical construction of an imaginary body changed again as social and technological change permitted widespread use of visual texts which I discuss in the next chapter.

Within the first month of the column’s appearance, the staff at *Boyz* added a request for copies of relevant qualifications from anyone wishing to advertise a massage service (*Boyz*, 29 August 1991). Within three months, the format was changed so that there were two separate columns for advertising ‘Escorts’ separately from ‘Masseurs’ (*Boyz*, 24 October 1991).

The number of ads in each column were roughly equal for the next few months; thus, I was able to extend that range between volumes to saturate a theoretical sample to points where significant changes in the data were observable (Charmaz, 2006). As described in the previous chapter, I counted individual ads in annual editions to find patterns of change and stasis. My analysis of the number of advertisements in each column in subsequent years

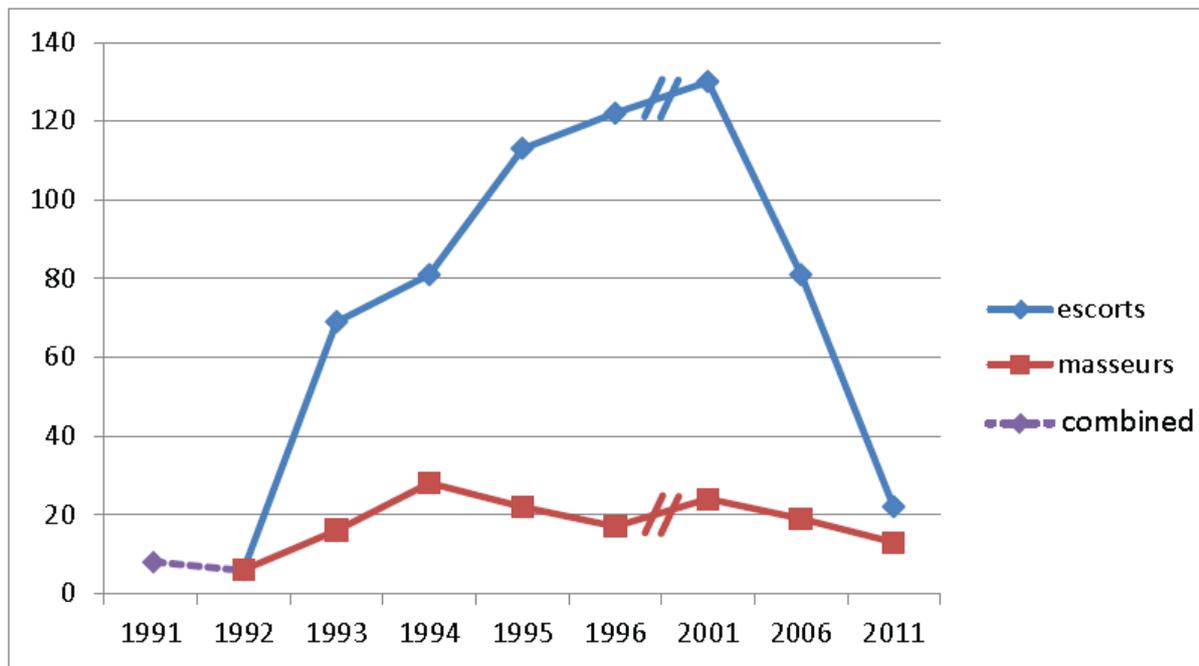
reveals that there was a dramatic increase in the number of Escort and Masseur advertisements overall, but that there was a significantly more dramatic increase in the number of advertisements for Escorts than for Masseurs (See Figure 5.5, below). For example, by 1996, there were 122 separate advertisements for Escorts compared to 17 advertisements for Masseurs<sup>33</sup>. The proportion of Escort advertisements to Masseur advertisements remained significantly higher throughout the magazine's history until it changed its editorial policy in 2007 to exclude sexually explicit material (*Boyz*, 18 October 2007). Prior to that, all Escort and Sensual Masseur ads were moved to a separate insert/pullout magazine-within-a-magazine called Tug from 4 March 2006 to 11 October 2007. As well as the escort and sensual masseur ads, the more sexually explicit and sexually specific material was published within this title, as is still the case for *QX* and *QX Men*, as mentioned earlier.

The very first issue of *Boyz* [...] it didn't have escorts in and it didn't have explicit pictures of escorts in, but it did have a pinup, which at the time was a, was a, you know, non-erect cock. [A: Mm-hmm.] Obviously, the history of *Boyz*: we went from that to an erect cock to pictures of escorts without their cocks to pictures of escorts with their cocks to fairly explicit pictures inside that went way beyond anything that I would ever have published before (Daniel, magazine director).

In our interview, Daniel talked about some of the social changes that he had witnessed, and arguably has had a part in changing. It was his description of Jackie magazine as the inspiration for young gay men. In 2010 the management team decided to stop running the Escort advertisements altogether, a decision they later reversed (Field notes).

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<sup>33</sup> There is an additional advertisement for a masseur in the 'Health & Beauty' column that is not counted (*Boyz*, January 1996). The placement of ads in various columns added to the decisions I was required to make through the processes of data collection and analysis, particularly in reviewing which columns to include when the content between them could be similar or even literally identical. These ongoing challenges provide additional support for the use of theoretical sampling and applying semiotic and content analysis within a constructivist grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2006).

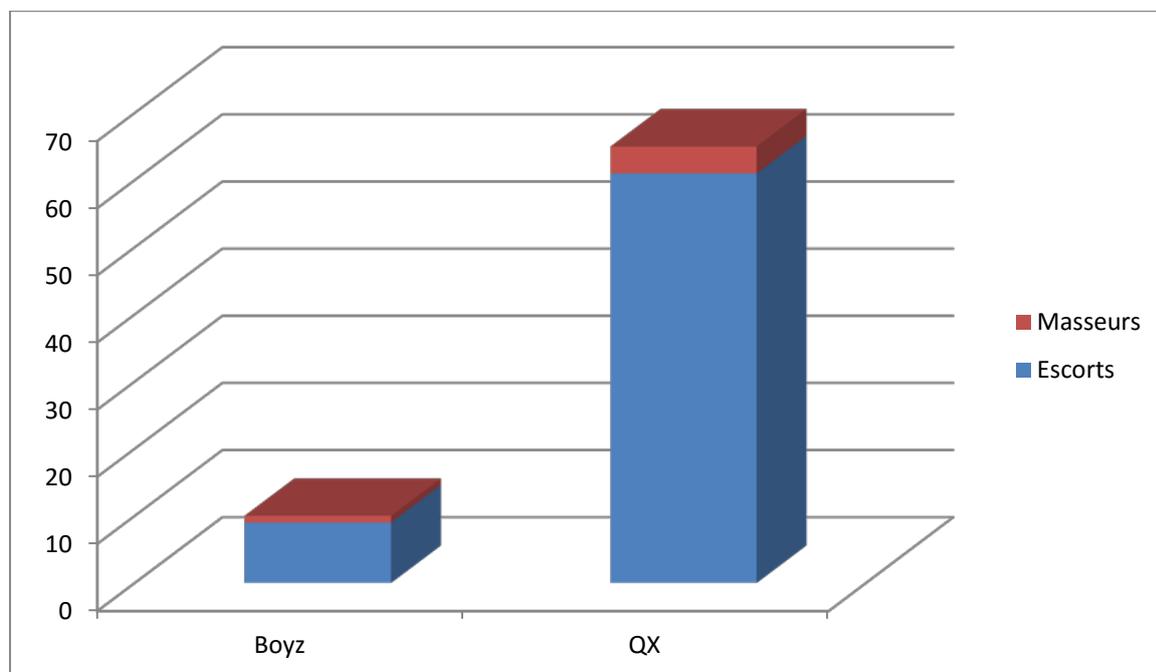


(Figure 5.5, Number of ads per issue in samples of *Boyz* magazine from 1991 – 2011)

It was not uncommon to see one M\$M advertiser with *more than one* advertisement in a single publication. I coded for repeated ads when I noticed that some ads were literally identical, some used the same name *and* telephone number (Matthews, 1997), and some used the same photograph or the model was recognisable as the same person. This caused additional challenges because some advertisers used photos that may not have been their own. In those instances, I evaluated the possibility of the photos' origin, in some cases finding the originals online using the Google Images search engine. Any attempt by researchers to use the number of advertisements – particularly from a single title – as an accurate indicator of how many people sell sex in a location would be deeply flawed.

London is unique to many other cities in that it has several free titles targeting the gay scene, and three that advertise Escort and Massage, which allows for comparisons to be made between titles, controlling for national or regional differences (e.g. Phua and Caras, 2008) in economics, geography, law and culture. A comparison of *Boyz* with other free titles such as *QX* and *QX Men*, and with newsstand titles such as *GT (Gay Times)* show variations in how

M\$M advertise that are reinforced from the data collected in interviews with the M\$M advertisers themselves which I discuss later. From a sample I analysed in June 2012, there were only 9 Escort and 1 Masseur ads in *Boyz*, where there were 61 Escort and 4 Masseur ads in the edition of *QX* published the same day (See Figure 5.6).



**(Figure 5.6, Comparison of numbers of ads in different titles, June 2012)**

The variation between competing titles (c.f. Deaux and Hanna, 1984) illustrates how sex work and body work advertising – and social visibility – is also influenced by the magazines' management decisions about whether to include or exclude sex work and body work advertising, editorial policies about sexually explicit content, and the marketing choices made by M\$M on how they spend their money on advertising. Daniel tells me that Escort and Masseurs advertisements created a significant stream of revenue for publishers and websites in years when the number of ads gained critical mass. We discuss the decisions he has to make about the magazine's 'brand' and the way it is positioned. As a title that is available for free, its business model is more like websites on the Internet. In our discussion, I mention that Gaydar has advertisers like international fast food restaurants. We share our surprise and

Daniel points to the scale of the user interface on the Gaydar website. ‘I know! I know! I can’t believe it. Based on traffic, of course. It is extraordinary, that.’ The introduction, accessibility and uptake of online advertising have also had an impact on the number of advertisements placed in magazines. Print media faces increasing competition with online media generally (Cane, 2009).

Equally, or perhaps more importantly from the perspective of men who advertise, the cost of buying advertisements must also be considered in assessing and evaluating the choices that people make about doing sex work. I discuss marketing strategies in detail in Chapter 8.

### 5.2.3 New Media

Where the 1990s saw a dramatic increase in the number of M\$M using print media to contact potential clients, the 2000s were the decade when the Internet became a significant medium for M\$M promotion alongside magazine ads, and in then later largely replacing them. The first web address to be included in an escort ad in *Boyz* magazine appeared in 1999, alongside the usual contact telephone numbers, names and photographs. In some cases the descriptions in the ads themselves started to become shorter, perhaps because more content, and so more information about the M\$M advertiser, was available online. Perhaps not by coincidence, the first picture of a penis – and an erect penis at that – also appeared in the same year (*Boyz*, 4 December 1999, p62). I return to sexual explicitness in detail in Chapter 6.

As the use of the Internet became more prolific for personal and domestic use, so it was also adopted for M\$M advertising. Examples from 2001 (*Boyz*, 3 February 2001) show some of the advertisers provided links to their own web addresses (e.g. [www.latino\[...\].com](http://www.latino[...].com)), some provided links to their own profiles on websites (such as ‘Leong’ using [www.london-lads.co.uk/\[...\].htm](http://www.london-lads.co.uk/[...].htm)), and some feature the same web address as other advertisers ([www.independent-escorts.com](http://www.independent-escorts.com); see Figure 5.7 below). From 2004, the magazines

themselves were adapting and expanding their business models with web addresses devoted not only to their titles, but to sites devoted especially to M\$M advertising (www.boyzescorts.com) which they promoted within the M\$M sections of their magazines (e.g. *Boyz*, 25 December 2004, pp100-105).



**(Figure 5.7, Examples of ads with web addresses, *Boyz* 3 February 2001, p.120)**

Magazines like *GT* (*Gay Times*) have adapted their business model and now include online advertising bundled with the purchase of print advertising space. The GTescorts.co.uk homepage displays a welcome message, an advertisement for an escort agency, and a small number of ‘featured’ escorts. Just as escort advertisements appear towards the back of the print editions of *GT* along with other small ads, GTescorts.co.uk can be accessed from the ‘Scene’ pop-down menu on the gaytimes.co.uk website, which also includes a ‘Gay Guide’ section listing pubs, clubs and other services. As in the print media, M\$M advertising has become a part of the consumable gay scene even to the casual observer, social consumer or ‘accidental tourist’ and forms a part of the backdrop to how life for gay men is constructed, represented and reconstructed. Further research could make comparisons between mainstream media and media aimed at gay and bisexual male audiences to look at how prostitution and sex work advertising are constructed, styled and used.

*The social networking site as a virtual escort introduction service?*

Social networking sites are locations where representations of sex work appear and where they are 'performed'. Definitions of queer sexualities and queer sex work are constantly constructed and reconstructed in these spaces, as well as being shaped *by* these spaces, through both the ideological and material structures. The content from the user-members and advertisers is a representation of ideals of queer, masculinities, sexualities, identities, and performances, as well as performatively (re-)constructing those ideals. Gender, body types, race, class, what is considered 'attractive', 'desirable', and 'acceptable' are (re-)made and (re-)enforced in (queer) social networks. Within these performative spaces, sex work itself continues to be queered.

Before Facebook became a worldwide<sup>34</sup> phenomenon, social networking sites like gay.com and gaydar.co.uk<sup>35</sup> were widely used by gay and bisexual men, sometimes for sex (real or virtual), sometimes for more urbane exchanges. Early interfaces for social networking sites allowed users to log in by creating a 'handle', a name or pseudonym that both identified them (us<sup>36</sup>) – perhaps by name, age or interest – and allowed them to be anonymous (Livia, 2002; Mowlabocus, 2010), or 'anonymised' where IP addresses could be traced by the site host if required. Men wishing to indicate their interest in compensatory<sup>37</sup> exchanges sometimes used signs (whether words or symbols like the dollar sign) that flagged their financial interest (for example, 'generousdaddy' or 'hot\$stuff69'). Users could also add a brief description of themselves, however fantastic, and/or what they were seeking. An example of one of these

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<sup>34</sup> The limits of 'worldwide' in reference to internet social networking are noted.

<sup>35</sup> The URL for Gaydar.co.uk, the Australian .com.au and other regional equivalents are now directed to the single address Gaydar.net, a change that was made between my data collection that started in 2008 and editing the report in 2014.

<sup>36</sup> For consistency of style, I have written this section in third person, but acknowledge that some of the data is derived from my own participant-observation. It is not my aim to remove myself from the narrative, but to minimise both linguistic shifts and 'in-group' and 'out-group' identities between MSM, M\$M, and myself.

<sup>37</sup> Some researchers talk about 'transactional sex'; however, I interpret a transaction as being possible without compensation of money, gifts, or drugs. For example, in the next chapter Keith discusses transaction and exchange in heteronormative couples where engagement rings, marriage contracts and disparate income levels are negotiated in the context of nuptial relationships.

temporary 'profiles' is 'todd24 – 6'2", bl, bl, 42c30w15b, hung for now'. One could read todd24 as a name or pseudonym and age (real or exaggerated, as a 'pseudo-age'). The audience reads the person's gender as male, whether this queers or erases gender, and as being alone unless otherwise stated, so queering and/or erasing bodies more generally; thus, *his* height is given as 6 feet 2 inches, blonde, blue eyed, 42 inch chest 30 inch waist and 15 inch bicep measurement, well endowed, looking for an immediate meet for casual sex. A whole system of signs and codes was read, learned and understood by users who adapted to restrictions of the interface (such as the number of characters) similar to how abbreviated classified 'Lonely Hearts' ads had been read by previous generations (Cocks, 2009). Descriptors that become overgeneralised such as 'swimmer's build' were replaced by the use of specific body measurements or 'stats'. All of these signs were constructions (both constructed and constructive) in an 'appearance potent' sub-culture that values and ranks bodies by shape, muscularity, and size (Jankowski *et al.*, 2014). The descriptions, like the handles, allowed M\$M space to advertise, and coded signs sometimes allowed them to 'work around' the staff who moderated the chatrooms (Livia, 2002); however, there is a queer tension in interpreting the extent to which moderators might remain unaware of common signifiers, as whole lists are indeed detailed and available in a book copyrighted by QSoft (Jockboy26, 2010)<sup>38</sup>.

Users could then log into specific chatrooms, coded by geographic location (e.g. London, Manchester, Brighton) or other affiliations (such as race, HIV status or fetish). Chatrooms for interest in specific races always work from a 'White' standpoint and race is perpetuated as 'other'. Users could interact with other online users with text based 'chat', whether the exchange was a means to arranging a meeting in person, or an end in itself. Photographs – before digital cameras – were sometimes scanned and exchanged separately via email. The

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<sup>38</sup> I know it seems incredible, but Jockboy26 is the pen-name of the book's author(s).

temporary profile expired when the user logged out (or as was often the case, their dial-up connection was interrupted).

The Gaydar model predates what is now familiar to a wider population of users on websites like Facebook and Match.com. When Gaydar was launched in 1999, its developers created an interface – or user experience (UX) (Hassenzahl, 2008) – where members created profiles on individual pages that were constant and could be viewed by other members even when the user was not online, like a personal website. The same culture of handles and descriptions continued, but the Gaydar site included default fields that allowed users to describe themselves, based on the use of dominant codes that had previously appeared as abbreviations for height, body type, hair and eye colour, and race as well as innovative fields that indicated more social and cultural interests such as favourite foods, pubs, authors, actors and music. For a fuller discussion, see Mowlabocus (2010b) or Jones (2005).

### *Personal Question*

Comparisons between personal and commercial profiles reinforce discourses of selling sex as an intractable part of gay social life in London. The personal (Guest and Member) profiles and the Commercial profiles are absolutely identical except for the inclusion of the word ‘Commercial’. Commercial profiles are listed in the same format and in the same section as personal profiles, although the Commercial profiles are grouped together and appear after the personal profiles or can be accessed separately. The content of the personal profiles compared the Commercial profiles is similar in many ways. For example, both types of profiles may include or exclude face pictures and both types of profiles include the standard drop-down fields for age, height, weight and even ‘star sign’.

Because Gaydar profiles for M\$M exist within the same space as personal profiles for MSM, and are all but identical in both format and content, their visibility and accessibility help to

construct paid sexual interaction as very similar to unpaid sexual interaction. Personal profiles and internet chat rooms can be used to experiment with selling sex with little or no investment – either financial or social – on the part of the advertiser. A commercial transaction may be actively initiated by the advertiser or passively received, unsolicited. I explore the ways that personal interactions collide with commercial interactions in more detail in Chapter 7. I explore marketing strategies used by M\$M on websites like Gaydar in Chapter 8.

Whether it is read as recognising and meeting the needs of a community or exploiting and capitalising on social exchange, the commercialisation of social-sexual exchange extended into the internet. While American based sites like Manhunt.net (Anon, n.d.) have been bound by laws in most states that prohibit prostitution (see Weitzer 2009; 2010), sites regulated by British laws allow commercial transactions, but charge a premium for the service. Gaydar prohibits using personal ‘Guest’ (free) or ‘Member’ (paid) profiles for commercial purposes, whether for escorting, massage, or other commercial services such as personal training or men-only saunas. Commercial profiles are used by both individual advertisers and agencies at a cost that I calculated as a ratio between 6.1 and 8.7 times the rate for personal advertisers<sup>39</sup>. This may act as a deterrent for some men to promote themselves as commercially available, but others simply disregard those rules and, already having created a personal profile, attract – and solicit – mutually beneficial arrangements. As I discuss more in Chapter 7, there is significant slippage between the personal and the commercial.

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<sup>39</sup> My calculation is based on 12 month subscriptions with maximum discounts applied, correct on the date of data collection. Commercial rates were £55 per month or £150 per 3 months in a single payment. Personal rates were £8.50-8.95 per month, £17.95-18.95 per 3 months and £68.95 per 12 months in a single payment. A 12 month discount was not advertised for Commercial profiles.

### 5.3. Limits of realism and cautions to read ads as factual representations

Whilst the data available in M\$M advertising is discursively constructive (and constructed) and is part of a performative ‘truth’, there are limits to how it can be read realistically and limits to how it should be used as factually representational. For example, policies and reports against human trafficking using methodology that relies on *reading* the nationalities and ethnicities of women selling sex in advertisements (Ditmore, 2011; Hyland, 2012) or editorials that imply advertised nationalities may denote ‘trafficking hotspots’ (Bindel 2010) should be read with caution, accounting for the ways that people creating advertisements to sell sex using a range of signs, from the iconic, the indexical and the symbolic, which I define below. In other words, advertisements that sell sex may be less reliable as demographic data when constructed in part to attract the fantasies of potential customers.

For example, more than three-quarters of the M\$M I interviewed admitted to being older than their advertised age by at least one year (and as much as five years). In the same way, men report exaggerating body measurements by *adding* to their chest, bicep, height and penis size (and *removing* from their waist and age) to create a more fantastic figure. They construct their own bodies in ways that queer distinctions between categories of embodiment and performativity, and between accurate representations and fantasies. That queerness intersperses strategies for attracting paid contacts and communicating sexual performativity (or the availability of particular sexual performances)

Signs in texts, whether visual or verbal, can be divided into three categories: iconic, indexical, and symbolic (Rose, 2007). Iconic signs maintain the most likeness to their referent. Indexical signs are those signs which have an inherent but socially created and culturally specific significance, such as terms like ‘student’ to imply youth and connotations of needing money and self-improvement. Symbols have a ‘conventionalized but clearly

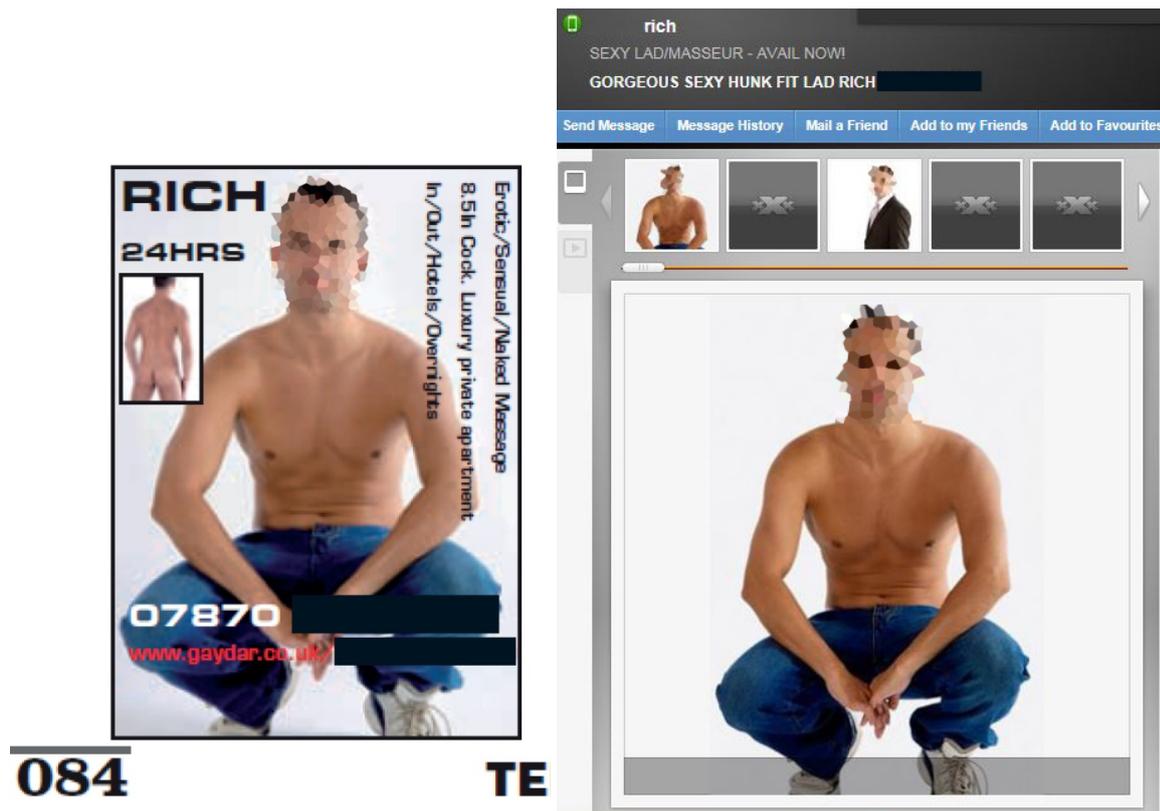
arbitrary relationship between signifier and signified' (Rose, 2007, p.83). For examples, see Figures 5.10-12, below.

Photographs are sometimes, but not always, a good example of iconic images in advertisements. The photos I analysed vary from the iconic (recent likenesses) to the indexical (older photos or retouched images) to the symbolic (a photo of another person altogether). This can be seen in the photos of 'Rich', 'Galaxy', 'Raj', and 'Matt'.

In the first set of photos (Figure 5.10), Rich's photo appeared as part of his ad which was in my sample from *Boyz* magazine 2011, after the staff at *Boyz* resumed printing ads for escort and masseur services (see Chapter 5 for more discussion). The photo appears to be taken professionally against a studio backdrop. Even with a professional composition and finish, I have interpreted this photo as an iconic signifier of how Rich looked in 2011, as opposed to only an indexical or symbolic representation<sup>40</sup>. In other words, I read this photo as an 'accurate', 'realistic', or 'true' likeness of the man who is advertising. Within the larger structure and read alongside the other signs within the ad and the section, I have also read this ad with several other assumptions: that this man is self-employed and even that the person in the photo is a cisgender man. The ad also includes a link to his commercial profile on Gaydar. The benefit of analysing multimodal data is that it challenges constructs about how I have coded images. In this case, the same photo is still being used by an advertiser using the same name and contact details in 2015. As an image that is now (at least) four years old, it may be moving away from the iconic and towards the indexical. This syntagmatic reading – organising and interpreting the ads over time – exposes that the categories, again, are 'fuzzy sets'. It is possible that Rich has maintained his appearance identically, but my data is limited in this sense.

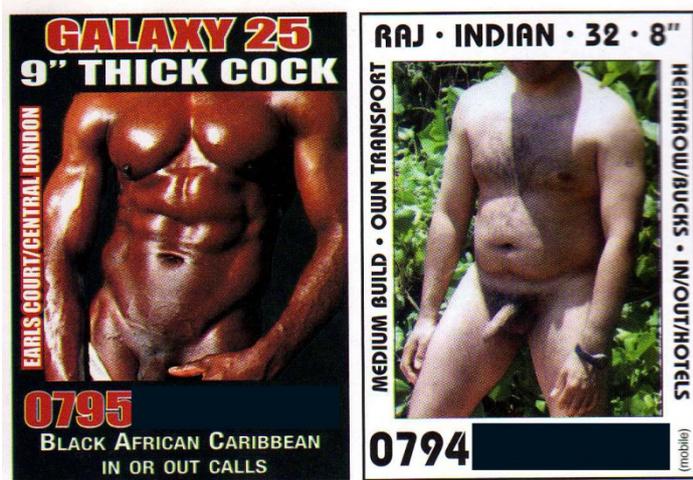
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<sup>40</sup> To preserve anonymity, I have pixelated and redacted parts of the details I have recorded.



(Figure 5.10, Iconic Rich and Indexical Rich, *Boyz* 07 July 2011, p.84 and Gaydar.net 05 August 2015. The same photo may be an iconic sign if it is viewed recently after was taken and an indexical sign after a number of years)

In my second example, I have selected a detail from a single issue of *Boyz* magazine, when the design of the magazine included all of the escort advertising in an attached insert called *Tug* (as discussed in Chapter 5.) As this detail from page 6 illustrates, an ad is not read in isolation or only syntagmatically (in position with its surrounding signs), but also read paradigmatically – compared and contrasted against surrounding signs and even absent signs. In this detail, two ads which appeared beside each other convey two men’s bodies, both framed similarly and cropped to display more or less the same parts of the two men’s bodies but omit showing their faces. Both ads use verbal and visual texts to convey and anchor their messages. Both provide a name or pseudonym, an age (or pseudo age, see Chapter 6), a ‘cock’ length (in inches), ethnic/race identities, their general location, location of meeting (‘in/out/hotels’) and mobile telephone numbers.



(Figure 5.11, Studio lighting Galaxy, Garden Raj, Boyz Tug insert, 01 January 2007, p.6. Photos interpreted as indexical and iconic signs)

Being so similar, the content displayed in one ad anchors the other and (re-)creates the expectation that this is the type of information provided. The two bodies displayed have similarities: both appear to be undressed, able-bodied, adult, cisgender men. Yet, they have different features when read against each other. The body in Galaxy's photo has been produced and built up through exercise and other 'body work' (Pilcher, 2012). The dark colour of his skin anchors and is anchored by the verbal description of 'Black African Caribbean'. Other work has been done to construct this image of his body. His physique has been oiled to reflect the light, his hand is positioned on his thigh to recreate a professional pose, and I have interpreted the photograph to be taken using a professional backdrop and lighting. Although his face is cropped from the image, he is facing square towards the camera, creating a more direct sense of appellation to his audience.

In contrast, Raj's photo appears to be taken outdoors, in natural daylight. His head and his penis both cast shadows across his body and leg. He hangs his arms at his sides and is turned at a quarter angle towards the camera which may be to accentuate a casual but planted stance. The contours of his arms and legs indicate that he does some form of exercise but the extra fat on his stomach and chest, the uneven tanlines on his thighs and the (possibly trimmed)

hair on his body constructs a different, less studied presentation of hegemonic masculinity than is typically, or stereotypically, considered ordinary for men who charge other men for sex. What might be interpreted as lack of attention to achieving one culturally ideal presentation of an 'ideal' male body image, can also be read as a rejection of attention to norms and behaviours which are attributed to 'the feminine' (Wright, 1997).

Without oil, lighting, waxing/ shaving, or obvious body-shaping exercises, different audiences will interpret Raj's body and his photo differently, whether as more, equally, or less desirable to them than Galaxy. Adding to the levels of signification, read paradigmatically, Raj's photograph can appear more iconic to audiences, who might in turn interpret professional posed, shot, and finished photographs as less realistic and only indexical of the man who is advertising. The paradigmatic placement and reading co-constructs queer interpretations of how men who sell sex to other men should look and promote themselves.

My third example is the picture which appears in Matt's<sup>41</sup> ad in Figure 5.12. In 1997, 'Matt 22' advertised using a photo which appears to be a stock photo. He may indeed have been the model in that photo, but again a paradigmatic reading of the ad next to his in this detail indicated that a sourced image was also used in the ad for 'Scott 35'. (Scott and Matt's ads both use the same telephone number.) Like Rich in Figure 5.10, 'Matt 26' used the same photo five years later. Despite changing his pseudo age (by four years), Matt had maintained the same photograph (now in colour) and the same contact telephone number (now using the updated 0207 area code for central London in place of the older 0171 area code).

The photograph had been a familiar image when it first appeared. I am not able to recall where else I had seen both it and the detail from Scott's ad. From memory they appeared on

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<sup>41</sup> Matt is not to be confused with 'Matthew' who participated in my collection of interviews.

greeting cards or other ads for tourism to Bondi Beach in Australia. Whilst I have not been able to trace the original photographer and the model remains unidentifiable to me, an ordinary search using Google images revealed that the image has continued to be used in other media and appeared on five blogs and websites, including a Pinterest board for 'Misc [miscellaneous] Ass'.

A triangulated, semiotic reading of M\$M ads highlights the hermeneutic and queer potentials within the texts. More specifically, using semiotics gives readers and researchers a structure for recognising how misinformation can be contrived or inferred if sex advertisements are mined for accurate demographic details of people selling sex, without a method of triangulation with participants who are sometimes difficult to access or mistrusting of researchers' intentions. Examples of where triangulation and semiotics should have been used include policy informing reports which have used descriptive statistics on advertising data in lieu of surveys or interviews (c.f. Hyland, 2012; Smith and Kingston, 2015).

My findings are triangulated from data collected from magazine archives and recent editions, as well as semi-structured interviews with men who sell sex or sexual massage, key informants who provide services to men who sell sex and my own ethnographic field notes as a migrant to/through some of London's LGBT 'scenes', communities and spaces. The signs I examine here specifically are age, race, ethnicity and nationality, and I discuss ways M\$M utilise these signs to (re-)create their identities in order to contact an audience of potential clients.

**BOYZ TRADE 2 81**

**SCOTT 35, 6'2"**  
**HAIRY CHEST, ACTIVE,**  
**XVWE, CUT, THICK,**  
**RESPONSIVE, PRIVATE**  
**0171-370-**

**MATT**

**22, 6'1", HOT & YOUNG,**  
**BROAD SHOULDERS,**  
**HARD, TANNED, SMOOTH,**  
**MUSCULAR, ATHLETIC**  
**BUILD, XVWE, CUT, THICK,**  
**FRIENDLY, RESPONSIVE,**  
**SAFE, PRIVATE.**  
**EARLS COURT.**  
**IN/OUT CALLS, OVERNIGHT.**  
**10AM-MIDNIGHT**  
**0171-370-**

**MATT.**

**26, 6'1", hard, tanned,**  
**smooth, muscular,**  
**athletic, XVWE, cut, thick.**  
**Safe, private,**  
**friendly, responsive.**  
**Earls Court.**  
**In/out calls, overnight,**  
**willing to travel.**  
**10am-midnight.**  
**020-7370**  
**www. .com**

**RICO**

**LEICESTER SQUARE**  
**0171-**  
**0958-**

Google Images search results for "Bondi... 2004.JPG".

Pages that include matching images:

- Nebraskabators Blog
- Kelly Jacobs' Hot Romances
- Misc Ass on Pinterest

Taskbar and system tray showing date 20/05/2014 and time 17:00.

(Figure 5.12, Symbolic Matt. Clockwise from top left: detail from *Boyz 10 January 1997*, p.81; detail from *15 January, 2002*, p. 60; screenshot of Google images search 20 May 2014. Even a photograph may sometimes be interpreted as only providing a symbolic signifier of its referent advertiser)

Particularly when modes of embodiment are taken into consideration, the findings of a verbal-text analysis are limited by the fact that they only examine the verbal-text and ignore the photo-texts as both independent and interdependent data sources (Jones 2005).

Photographs make up a significant portion of the content of contemporary advertisements. They must be considered, not just as *another* rich source of data about how M\$M represent themselves, but as primary signs that operate independently and alongside the written text, often operationally more instrumental in the construction and function of the advertisement to attract customers, and so fundamentally intrinsic to understanding M\$M advertising (see Mowlabocus, 2010 for a discussion of the importance of ‘face-pics’ in personal advertising on Gaydar). In the following chapter, I illustrate some of the possibilities of utilising the polytextual features of the advertisements and the opportunities of triangulation when combining more detailed analysis on a smaller sample within a larger corpus.

#### **5.4. Summary**

M\$M advertising provides texts that illustrate a rich social history of the place of sex work in (Western) ‘gay culture’. In the previous sections, I have discussed the advertising of men who sell sex to men by looking at how the (literal) media constructs a part of the gay scene and becomes the context for men who come into London’s gay scene. I have discussed the different forms that the text and content have taken over 20 years, why some of those changes have happened, and looked at some of the limitations that this understanding places on what we can hope to be able to know or to see from the advertisements. Focusing on queer scene magazines (*Boyz*) and queer social network spaces (Gaydar.net), I have discussed the overlap and the slippage between the personal ads/ profiles and the Trade ads and Commercial profiles, and how co-existing in those spaces on one hand creates access between men who

have sex with men and men who sell sex to men, but on the other hand, also reflects that they are not two distinct groups, and that there is overlap and slippage between the two groups.

In the next chapter, I bring together some of the queer theory and advertising theory (including semiotics) to look more closely at how pictures are used in these forms of sex work advertising to make contact(s) with other men and to represent and recreate the body. I explore the levels of signification that are constructed and to represent and define material and textual bodies. I discuss the increasingly interactive nature of the media, and how boundaries between advertising, porn, and performance are already blurred and are likely to become more so, even while content of what is explicitly depicted changes in sometimes unexpected directions.

## **CHAPTER 6: THE TEXTUAL BODY: ANALYSIS OF UTILISING EMBODIMENT IN ADVERTISING M\$M IN LONDON**

Repertoires of how the body is ‘used’ appear in discourses of sex work as well as advertising. Changes to communication technologies have provided new, fast, and affordable means for people to self-produce and self-post visual content. M\$M use their bodies to convey messages that will attract clients. Laws, attitudes, and technologies have changed about what is acceptable as content. My own assumption before starting this work was that content has become uniformly more explicit, but I was surprised by some of my findings as well as the ways the use of pictures has *developed* over time.

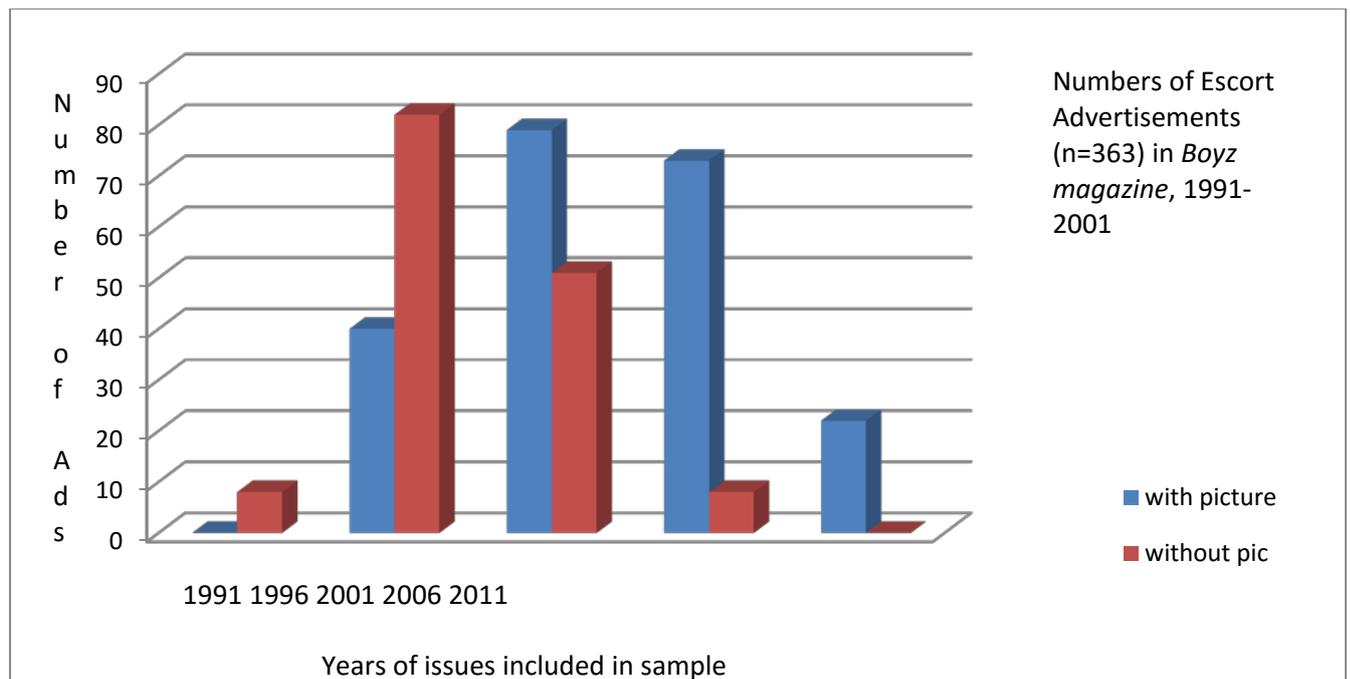
In this chapter, I discuss ways that photos have been used in some of London’s queer media. Exploring queer theory and advertising theory for ways to understand an evolving canon of visual texts, I use queer ethnography to bring together data from interviews, print advertisements, and online profiles. Comparing findings across the data which I analysed through processes of coding, memo writing and constant comparison, I focus on four constructive categories: erasing age, performing race and nationality, changes to explicitness, and assumptions of agency. These categories form a set of concepts which are interrelated and constructive of an integrated framework (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss and Corbin, 1998) which I explain as the A.D.U.L.T. model in Chapter 9. I support my development of these categories by drawing on an interdisciplinary range of theories, including modes of embodiment developed in sociology and public health (Watson, 2000) and semiotic distinction between the simulation and simulacra (Baudrillard, 1994).

### **6.1. A Picture is Worth A Thousand Words**

Print advertisement content can be categorised as: Text, Graphic, and Photographic. Video and audio content are additional categories in online and mobile media. Print ads that only

use text often used the same format as traditional ‘Lonely Hearts’ or personal contact ads, such as those found in many newspapers and magazines. Ads in UK publications prior to 1993 were limited to text and basic graphic conventions. Advertisers used photos in Masseur and Escort ads in *Boyz* magazine prior to the addition of photos in the same magazine’s personal ads. Since then, the use of photographs has been adopted for online profiles and other research has explored not only the content of those photographs (Jones, 2005; Richardson, 2010) but how viewers interpret the absence of a photograph in a personal ad (Mowlabocus 2011).

The first Photo Ads began to appear in in *Boyz* in 1993 while other titles like *Gay Times* did not adopt photo ads until years later (Cameron *et al.*, 1999). The early Photo Ads featured images that were relatively tame in content. The first Photo Ads in *Boyz* appeared in the Masseurs column, featuring a studio portrait of an attractive, well-groomed, young man in a white sleeveless t-shirt and the next week a headshot of a young man looking into the camera, exposing only his bare shoulders. This was a very different type of photo to the anonymised, headless or sexually explicit photos that were to follow. Later that month, the first Photo Ad appeared for ‘Tod’ advertising in the escort column. The photo frames the athletic, bare chested model neck to hip, with his thumbs hooked in waistband of belted trousers (*Boyz*, 16 January 1993: 23). Similar headless photos of men’s muscular, bare chests later became features of both the Escort and Masseur columns, although photos were not widely adopted as a common feature in the *Boyz* Escorts or Masseurs columns until 1996 (see Figure 6.1, ‘Numbers of *Boyz* Ads With Pictures and Without Pictures’ and Figure 6.2, ‘Percentage of *Boyz* Ads With Pictures and Without Pictures’). Between 1991 and 1996, not only did the total number of advertisements increase, but the percentage of ads with photos increased from 0 to 33%, increasing to 61% by 2001 and by 2006, 90% of all Escort ads had photos.

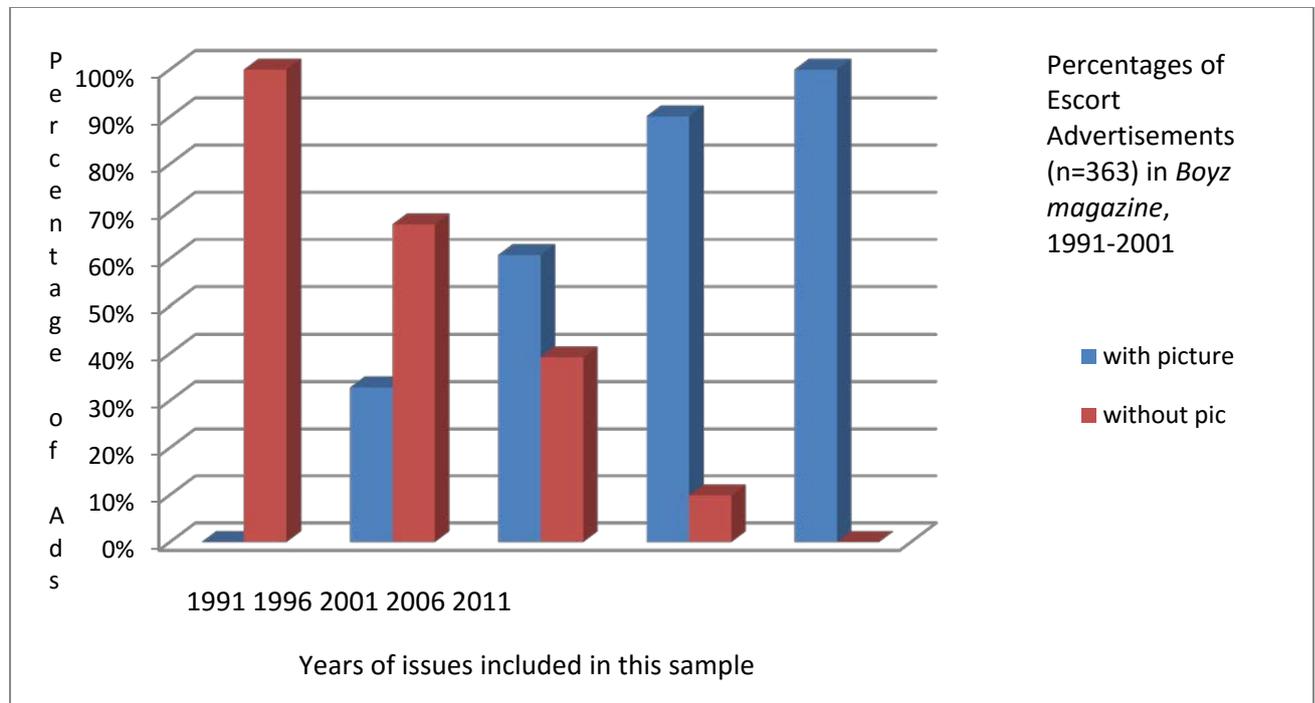


escort	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011
total ads	8	122	130	81	22
with picture	0	40	79	73	22
without pic	8	82	51	8	0
face picture	0	12	21	53	17
chest picture	0	37	67	71	19
penis picture	0	21	34	61	17

(Figure 6.1, Numbers of *Boyz* ads with pictures and without pictures)

The content of the pictures also changed over time. The bare chest had (and continues to have) symbolic and indexical value as a sign for masculinity, health, fitness, and youth (Bordo, 1999). The chest as a sign – or rather as compounding signs such as muscularity, dark or tanned skin, and hair – was the most common feature, almost twice as frequent as the penis and used at least three times as often as the face until 2006 when the balance had

changed to be more even between all three sites of the body. This longitudinal analysis demonstrates the complexity and the shifting nature of identity and representations.



escort	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011
total ads	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
with picture	0%	33%	61%	90%	100%
without pic	100%	67%	39%	10%	0%
face picture	0%	10%	16%	65%	77%
chest picture	0%	30%	52%	88%	86%
penis picture	0%	17%	26%	75%	77%

(Figure 6.2, Percentage of *Boyz* ads with pictures and without pictures)

Factors such as stigma of both homosexuality and prostitution may have influenced men's choices of whether or not to include photographs that would identify them (Morrison and Whitehead, 2005). As the culture developed and normalized the practice and visibility of

both, so the pressure may also have increased. Where there was a relaxing of restrictions on showing erect penises in the pornography laws in the UK, along with more widely available digital photography, so followed a rise in the amount of sexually explicit content. The muscular chest provides a balance of iconic imagery (being a likeness to its referent, the advertiser himself) for both the advertiser/model and his audience, whilst maintaining legal and moral codes for himself, his intended audience, and any other viewers. Codes of modesty continue to shift, not always in a more explicit direction, but a division seems to be emerging between online M\$M profiles and mobile apps for MSM which rely on a single thumbnail for appellation. With newer apps and more accepting or celebrating repertoires of queer (or at least gay) identities in mainstream discourses, there *seem* to be more instances for MSM using images with recognisable faces or only headshots as a primary than in the past or than M\$M where privacy and discretion have shifted in meaning (Mowlabocus, 2010d). This point, however, is speculative and quantifiable data is outside the scope of this thesis.

In interviews, my informants discussed how they use photos discriminately, sometimes to maintain privacy and a sense of discretion, and sometimes to encourage openness and trust. George uses photos in the public section of his profile which include a shirtless holiday photo and some portraits which look like they were taken professionally but keeps more explicit images hidden and sends them in messages as replies to men who 'seem genuine'.

Um, the private pictures are graphic, but I don't put those up for public display. If people are interested enough to message me, if they seem genuine I'll message them back and I'll put the pictures in, but if people just say, "Got any cock pics?" I'm like, "Fuck off." [Chuckles.] (George, 42).

Henrik also expresses concern about the tensions of what is public and what is private.

Henrik maintains his public profile using only the verbal text fields and pop-down menus, but keeps all of his photographs hidden. This is the exception in online ads for M\$M but is similar to the use of the earlier print ads and chat rooms, for both paid and unpaid encounters.

Even if people don't ask, I just send it in the first contact, whether it's a message or they instant message me or whatever. I just send it, sort of thing, and it proceeds from there. Either silence or, or, or, or continue chatting. It's not like I'm withholding the photo or anything like that. I mean it is just entirely the discretion – I mean I still think in a way, I mean I think it's a bit silly, I mean I just random— I mean just indiscriminately sending it to anyone who asks. I still have the same fear of someone I know seeing it as if I just put it on the profile. But then you always have that thing lurking at the back of your head of that sad MP who, you know, got caught out with his profile with him standing there in knickers and professing, proclaiming to the world that he likes being peed on or whatever else. I can't remember what it was (Henrik, 36).

Talking about how he communicates his visual data with his clients, Henrik points out that whilst he is keen to maintain his privacy from his colleagues and students, he is sending his image to 'random' strangers, some of whom have not posted their own pictures. He refers to his 'fear of someone I know seeing it' in reference to the stigma he expresses as attached to selling sex. He makes comparisons to other types of queer sex and queer images, referring to an example that had been in the news in 2003 where a male politician had been 'outed' as a Gaydar user (Moss, 2010).

As social-sexual-networking sites like Gaydar have had a role in normalising the inclusion of all types of photographs, there have also been shifts in how queer people think about 'gay'-spaces as being necessarily exclusive private spaces. British attitudes and legislation about LGBT politics have made significant gains. Some research indicates that homophobia (and biphobia) are diminishing in Britain generally, and emphasise changes amongst younger people. However, in interviews, even younger MSM expressed a kind of anthropological understanding of village privacy. Keith says he feels like he is protected from accidental exposure to family friends or people in his parents' community.

Well, I mean it's on a gay dating website, so anybody that came across it would be on that website, which is kind of, erm, like security in itself, because anyone that is on it that they know is unlikely to go and tell them. The same with the porn. Know what I mean? The porn is on a website where you have to pay to see it, so anybody that goes, finds anything

that's on the website paying to see it is.. not going to tell them about it  
(Keith, 24).

Keith uses Gaydar with an expectation of virtual and textual boundedness that builds on Bernstein's (2007b) concept of sex work as 'bounded relationships' in contexts of middle-class people. Keith's own narrative seems to fit that construct very neatly (see Appendix L for interview summaries and Chapter 8 for an expansion of his rationale for selling sex). However, Keith's inference of like-mindedness assumes a homogeneity of the users of Gaydar. He implies an acknowledgement and acceptance of sex work by men in that space, as well as an in-group (MSM, viewers of porn) and an out-group (straight people, who do not look at gay porn) (Smith *et al.*, 2015). M\$M use selected social-sexual spaces, like Gaydar, *QX* and *Boyz* in part because of the selective nature of the audience, which I discuss in Chapter 8. And so the discussion returns to understanding the advertisement as not only a promotion, but also a place.

Sometimes men use images to convey implicit messages about their personality, their own interests and preferences or what they will and will not offer to clients. In M\$M ads, text can explicitly declare roles and preferences such as 'Top only' or 'Versatile'; however, these messages can be made implicitly as well with iconic or indexical photos. As George explains, meanings are attached to different body parts. Some men post photos of themselves actually having sex (by whatever definition) which provide iconic signs (as likenesses) of *how* they provide sexual services with their bodies: in examples of anal penetration, there are receiving, prone anuses and/or erect, penetrating penises, using condoms or not. These visual references to safer sex or unprotected, 'bareback' sex do not always align with the text provided in the field answering a question about patterns of 'Safer Sex': offered on this site as 'Always', 'Needs Discussion', 'Sometimes', 'Never,' and 'Rather not reply'.

The photos do not simply infer by culturally related, conventionalized understandings or associations. They are small, two-dimensional, colour stills, sometimes videos. Men posting photos of their cropped (photographically bounded) bodies provide more indexical signs. The arse illustrates passive bottoms, the cock is the active top's phallus. The body is deconstructed to specific parts in order to signify specific sex acts – and boundaries. M\$M who post photos of themselves having sex shift the boundaries of subject/object positions (Pilcher, 2012). Their actions construct them variously or even simultaneously as subject *and* object through roles as photographer, model, actor, publisher, viewer, viewed, active, and passive).

George's embodied boundaries and his bounded performativity are relayed to readers through his use of photographs.

'Well, you know, if, if I was to show my ass pic, if I was to give an ass pic, that would give the idea that I like getting fucked, but I don't. So why show it? That's why there's no ass pics on there' (George).

In this example, I had asked him to tell me about the photos he used in his profile. His first reply is simply, 'Because they were recent, unlike most of them on Gaydar. They [other M\$M photos] just seem to emerge from I don't know how many years ago for most people. So they were a true likeness of me [inaudible] that's why they were picked. It's that simple.' Earlier, George told me about some of his boundaries with clients and how those compare to his personal relationships.

George maintains embodied boundaries with clients: he does not let clients 'fuck' him. It seems poignant that strategies of maintaining boundaries are reported from research with women who sell sex (Bernstein 2006; Sanders 2005). The emphasis on penetration and embodied, gendered roles (e.g. being 'active' and/or 'passive') seem to simultaneously

reinforce and queer repertoires of sex work as invasive. My interpretation is to compare this to other types of unpaid relationship negotiation and the ‘rules’ that people maintain in casual, newly-formed, open or polyamorous relationships (Barker 2012). I return to these ideas of embodied boundaries, consent and (dis-)satisfaction in Chapter 7.

More general social and gender roles, myths and fantasies can also be expressed in photos. Quinn is reflexive in his self-construction of his textual body, as well as his material body. He mirrors the men that he finds attractive and actively engages in strategies to broaden his appeal whilst capitalising on his muscular, greater than six feet tall build and his hyper-masculine manner of posture and speech.

I’m the sort of bloke I’m trying to sell, because that’s what I’d be looking for. And my nightmare is, is every guy likes a different look. So one of my problems is, when I go and have a shoot done, I’m thinking, “What do I need now? Do I need some more rugby pictures? Do I need some more football pictures? Do I need some more pictures in the kilt?” Or whatever. Because you’ve got like these 12 or 15 different scenarios, um, and different guys like different ones but then again, that’s just the business (Quinn, 42).

During my data analysis, a colleague referred me to read Baudrillard’s (1994) distinction between the simulation and simulacra. Quinn’s quote illustrates this loop of embodiment and performativity that came out of analysing the advertisements alongside the interviews. His print ads and profiles – costumed, posed, and professionally photographed – are simulations of sportsmen, uniformed men, and other costume fetishes (Cole, 2000). Quinn talks about spending considerable time and effort on developing a range of different looks or scenarios that will expand his appeal while still maintaining a standard of hegemonic masculinity. Quinn reconstructs himself as simulacra, the copy without an original. He positions himself as aggressive and ‘alpha-male’—his idea, and dominant repertoire of masculinity (Connell, 1995) and he uses his photographs to anchor that message.

Stuart told me about, running a media company and photography studio in London. He explained how he works with his clients, many of whom he says are escorts, to provide them with photos that ‘tell a story about the kind of person they want to present’.

Some images anchor the written message, whilst others contrast or contradict what is written and therefore construct what is often a unique representation of the M\$M. As a comparison, Henrik uses his photos to emphasise the roles of men paying a ‘student’ for oral sex.

H: ...I was thinking about this before you came and I think that the people who want to meet with me are looking for a certain, you know sort of, nerdy, academic-y, sort of student type person to have sex with, necessarily.

A: Is that right?

H: Yeah, generally. I mean, nine times out of ten they’ll say, “I love guys with glasses.”

A: Really?

H: Ya. And once people see you, me, a picture of me, either they’re interested or they’re not...

A: Mm-hmm.

H: ...just because I suppose I look academic-y or whatever, um, and either people want that, or not. So, ya, I think a whole lot of those people want that sort of thing. Ya. Want the student to give them a blowjob, sort of thing (Henrik, 35).

Henrik does not post photos on his profile but sends them with the first reply he sends to men who have responded to his profile. He explains why the lack of a photo does not seem to inhibit the number of customers he sees. At the time of our interview this is his first year advertising and he tells me the number of clients he sees is 10 per week. I discuss this more in Chapter 7. In explaining what men’s replies mean to him, he interprets this as fitting how he describes himself as a ‘sort of nerdy, academic-y, sort of student type person’. He is young-looking and slim (and a White cisgender male) which fits one of the dominant repertoire of student identities in London. His clothes are casual and he has accessories that are very fashionable for younger, ‘alternative’ men. He is wearing glasses in his photos and in our interview, inferring his academic status (Walby, 2010) and working along with his presentation of masculinity that has a softness without seeming performed or fey. These signs

perform together, not only for him to develop a mythologised age and embodied character which on a deeper level of signification form part of a narrative for his clients to rationalise his agency in selling sex and their own ethics in paying him.

## **6.2. Modes of Embodiment: Age**

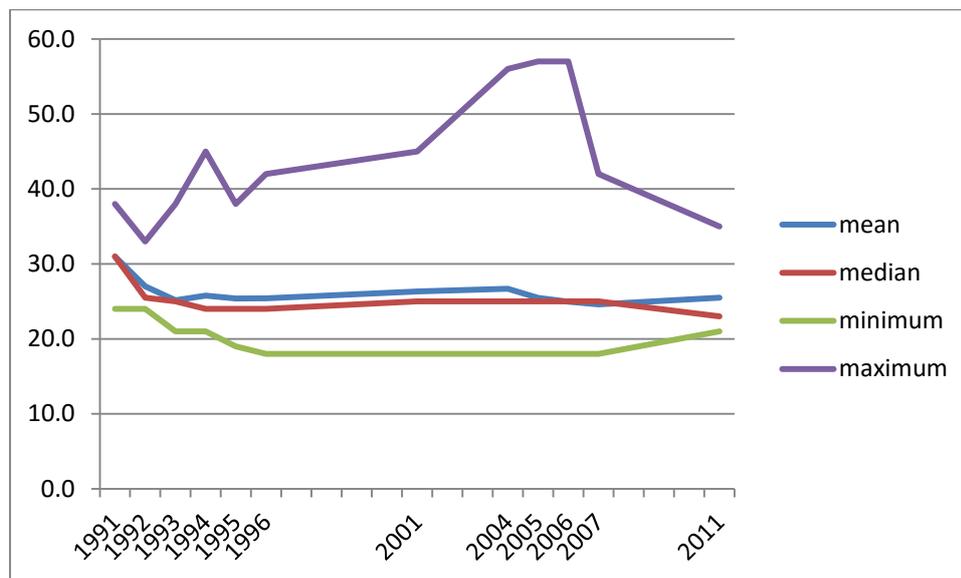
There is a recognised tension in sex work research and activism, regardless of ideological or political standpoints, about being able to determine reliable, quantifiable demographic data (Cusick *et al.*, 2009). The desire for support agencies, activists and researchers to utilise advertisement data as a basis for a realistic representation of people who sell sex is understandable, particularly so for hard to reach populations of people. This can include those who are not visible as activists, people who often value discretion or total anonymity, and people who may have competing immediate or longer-term priorities. The danger, however, is that signs are often indexical or symbolic, and not useful as descriptive data. Age is one example where triangulation between interview data, advertisement data and ethnography is useful.

In this section I illustrate ways that the age of M\$M in London's queer advertising is constructed and constructive. I use analysis from recent online profiles, archived and recent magazine ads, and participant interviews to make comparisons between what can be read by audiences and the limits to how those representations can be read as statistically or materially accurate. I explore the use of 'pseudo ages' and other examples of how age (and ageing) is hidden or erased from queer sex work advertising.

My analysis of ages listed in 444 escort advertisements taken from samples of *Boyz* magazine at 12 intervals from 1991 to 2011 (see Chapter 3: Methodology) reveals *what looks like* a mean age of 26.1 and a median age of 25, with an advertised range of 18 to 57 years. (See Figure 6.3.) The youngest age for an advertiser is listed as 18. Notably, in the 1991 sample

when the age of consent between men was 21, the youngest advertised age is 21. How this is interpreted must be approached with caution. On one hand, it fits with reports that underage people could be misrepresented as consenting adults (Kristof, 2012). Brian, for example, only spoke about being ‘at college’ when he started selling sex, at a time when the age of consent was 21.

On the other hand, it fits with my data from interviews and the online content I collected that specified measures for protecting underage people which I discuss later in this section. What came out in interview data across my sample was that men advertise younger ‘pseudo-ages’. This fits within previous research as well as dominant discourses about young men selling sex (to older men) and younger men being thought of as more attractive and sought after (Scott, 2003).



(Figure 6.3, Mean, median and range of advertised ages, *Boyz* magazine advertisements)

In interviews, men revealed that as well as using pseudonyms, they also use pseudo-ages. In other words, men may lie about their ages to appear younger as a device to attract more clients. M\$M infer that being younger is beneficial because it is more attractive and more highly sought.

A: How old are you?

Q: Um. I'm 42.

A: And is that how old you advertise yourself?

Q: Nah. // Why would you?

A: // Younger? I dunno.

Q: Do you? I can't see how anybody – why anybody would put their own – their right age? If I was 21 I'd put younger, because it's better to –

A: What age are you in your ad?

Q: Different ads all say different things. Somewhere between 36 and 39. Just a cut-off at 40. And I will carry on, that, 30-something, until I can't get away with it anymore. (Quinn, 42)

My discussion with Quinn illustrates the difference between his advertised age and his real age and that the difference can be significant. In the ad I used for my analysis, Quinn's pseudo-age was 39, 3 years younger than his actual age. As I rewrite this, his pseudo-ages are 38 and 40, and his real age is now 49. He says that he will 'carry on [as a] 30-something, until I can't get away with it anymore,' affirming the connections between the material body, his embodiment of youth and age, and how his audiences 'read' his textual body (as a photograph and a number) and his material person.

Henrik adds another dimension to this negotiation of textual bodies and authenticity. I asked Henrik his age, knowing that his profile said he was 30. When he told me he was 35, I asked him to tell me about that. Our conversation followed on from talking about identity politics and his coming out as gay at 16.

A: And how old are you now?

H: 35.

A: And you advertise as 30.

H: And sometimes people think I look younger. I mean, I think I look younger. If I said I was a 35 year old student, I don't think I would necessarily get the same response.

A: Yeah. And why 30?

H: I don't know, because I fear if I put younger I'd be pushing – well, I don't know. You tell me. I don't know. I just feel like I'd really be pushing the truth. I think I could probably pass myself off as 30 and no one would question it.

A: Ya, ya, ya. I wouldn't have –

H: Twenty-seven? I don't know.

A: I'd say you could get away with 27, 28.

H: Okay, well, there we are. [A laughs.] I'm a *23 year old* student.

Henrik was indeed quite young looking, and at 35 could still pass for being in his late-20s. He speaks about his feelings of ‘pushing the truth’ but frames that, not in fear of being inauthentic per se, but to avoid being questioned about it. Like Quinn, he acknowledges a limit to how far he can push the truth and he jokes that he’ll start advertising as 12 years younger. Henrik’s quote also illustrates the anchoring of signs with other signs in their ads. Henrik, who was finishing his own PhD at the time of our interview, explains that his use of his (other) identity as a student probably works better for him if he is read as a younger man. This is another example of the structural complementarity of multiple signs and the ways that meanings shift from one sign to another semiotically through levels of signification (Barthes, 1993; Hodge and Kress, 1988). This happens through a logic of reading truth-function propositions, or what one might call ‘if, then’ correlations (Baez and Stay, 2011). What Henrik is saying is that in order to ensure that men will respond to his profile, they need to believe his proposition of offering sex with a student. His profile, as all others, uses multiple signs which construct it as a compound proposition which means its total truth-value as an appellation is dependent on the truth-value of its constituent parts and whether they negate one another. A more nuanced deconstruction of different compound propositions is possible but not useful to the narrative of embodied age at this point, except to point back (or towards) its application of quantum theory to logic and risk (Baez and Stay, 2011; Yukalov and Sornette, 2009).

The main idea of this approach is to take into account that realistic decision-making problems are composite, consisting of several parts intimately interconnected, intricately correlated, and entangled with each other. Several intended actions can interfere with each other, producing effects that cannot be simply measured by ascribing a classical utility function. The complexity involved in decision making reflects the interplay between the decision maker’s underlying emotions and feelings and his/her attitude to risk and uncertainty accompanying the decision making process (Yukalov and Sornette, 2009, p.3).

Whilst some men advertised their actual ages (Keith, Steve, and Victor), others reduced their ages in their advertisements by an average of 7.7%. For this reason, I list interview quotes with the informants' revealed age, but I have calculated the means and medians of both their true ages as revealed in interviews, and all advertised ages (including participants who advertise their real ages; see Figure 6.4). I use this only as an illustration, accepting that the sample size is too small for the figures to be statistically significant.

	Real Age	Age for Ads	Difference	Fraction of Real Age
Brian	42			
Andrew	42	37	5	11.9%
George	42	39	3	7.1%
Philip	42	39	3	7.1%
Quinn	42	39	3	7.1%
Matthew	41	39	2	4.9%
Victor	41	41	0	0.0%

mean	41.7	39.0	2.7	6.4%
median	42.0	39.0	3.0	7.1%

Craig	38	35	3	7.9%
Henrik	35	30	5	14.3%
Pablo	36	34	2	5.6%
Steve	33	33	0	0.0%

mean	35.5	33.0	2.5	7.0%
median	36.0	33.5	2.5	6.7%

Keith	24	24	0	0.0%
Marcos	24	23	1	4.2%

mean	24.0	23.5	0.5	2.1%
median	24.0	23.5	0.5	2.1%

Key: Interview participants deviation from real age to age used in advertisements	
=5 years	
2-3 years	
0-1 year(s)	

(Figure 6.4, Interview data comparing ages with pseudo ages)

From interview data, the gap between real age and advertised ages is relatively consistent for advertisers in their 30s (mean = -2.5 years; -7.0%) and 40s (mean = -2.7 years; -6.4%), but lower for the men in their 20s (mean = -0.5 years). The gaps for pseudo-ages are, obviously, higher for all groups. In this sample, men in their 30s reported a slightly greater difference between real ages and pseudo-ages than men in their 40s (see Figure 6.4). Even Marcos, who was 24, advertised a pseudo-age of 23, supporting Quinn's comment that relatively young men will also consider an advantage in a younger pseudo-age. Read alongside Cameron et al.'s (1999, p.1526) analysis that 'old' sex workers were aged between 26 and 29, and the array of photographs that display indexical signs of youth, advertised ages illustrate beautifully the co-constructed and co-constructive myths that have been performed and perpetuated in M\$M advertising, and within similar social network spaces.

Statistically, the sample for this study was too small to make inferences about the wider population; however, findings comparing real ages to younger pseudo-ages are also supported by ethnographic findings with men who create non-commercial profiles (i.e. lots of men lie about their age to make themselves younger often to be included in lower age-range searches; field notes).

Addressing the issue of whether younger teenagers might also use (or be shown to have) older pseudo-ages, my informant from *Boyz* magazine reported that all new advertisers were required to come into the sales office in person before their ad would be run in the magazine. The offices of other magazines did not reply to my requests for interviews or information. Online advertisers are required to agree to terms and conditions which state that advertisers must be at least 18 years old, with the warning of profile termination if users are suspected of being under 18. For example, for Gaydar, non-commercial members must agree to the following terms:

- 3. Age of Consent
  - o 3.1 You must be 18 years or over to register as a Member. If We discover or have any reason to suspect that You are not over 18 years of age, then We reserve Our right to suspend or terminate Your Membership to this Site immediately and without notice. <http://gaydar.co.uk/info/tandcs.asp> [accessed 29 June 2012]

Consent, interpreted as a material marker of agency, is useful to theorise the connections between performativity and embodiment. Watson's (2000) 'male body schema' outlines four modes of embodiment: normative, visceral, experiential, and pragmatic. These modes distinguish between: the form and shape of the body (normative embodiment), the processes of the body (visceral embodiment), the ways the social and the physical are constructive of experiences (experiential embodiment), and the fulfilment of (gendered) roles (pragmatic embodiment) (Robertson, 2006; Watson, 2000). I see tensions between these modes of embodiment as providing a 'way in' for unpacking the connections and distinctions between the body and embodiment, as well as between embodiment and the performative. One example might be how the appearance of normative size and shape is used *and* read as a sign of age and the legal ability to consent.

A similarly worded item is included in the Gaydar Commercial Membership Terms and Conditions; however, there is some ambiguity with regards to age for those Commercial profiles which may feature advertisements from more than one person.

- 3. Age of Consent
  - o 3.1 You must be 18 years or over to register as a Commercial Member *on behalf of Your enterprise of business*. If We discover or have any reason to suspect that You are not over 18 years of age, then We reserve Our right to suspend or terminate Your Commercial Membership to this Site immediately and without notice. <http://gaydar.co.uk/info/TandCsComm.asp?type=info> [accessed 29 June 2012, *italics my own*]

Presumably this places the liability on Commercial Members to adhere to laws which aim to protect young men under the age of consent. However, one might argue that the text ought to

make explicit reference to the age of *any* persons featured on or using the contracted profile<sup>42</sup>. In comparison, equally graphic content is also available on Twitter (field notes) and edited content profiles for 'Male escort services' are viewable on Facebook (fieldnotes)<sup>43</sup>, where audiences/users can be as young as 13 years of age (Bennett, 2014).

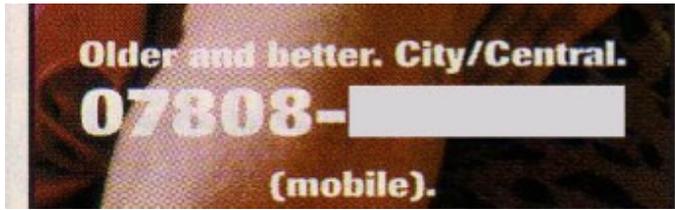
More data needs to be obtained to examine how online networks moderate profiles of young advertisers and whether any problems have been identified. As I say in Chapter 4, my request to interview a key informant from Gaydar was refused (field notes). With some work done to explore agency and experiences of younger migrant men in Europe (Mai, 2011), further research might specifically focus on the experiences of 18-21 year old men who are currently selling sex, where the average age of my participants is much higher and many participants are reporting on long term or past experiences, in part because of the historical framework for this study.

The views of 'older' men who sell sex have not been widely reported. The oldest advertised age in my advertising sample is 57. Whilst this looks like an outlier, it is also imperative to look at the number of advertisements that do not list an age, as well as the aforementioned finding that pseudo-ages are widely used and have been identified as much as 10 years younger. Given these findings, inferences about an absence of older advertisers must be made with caution. Quantities of listings of older ages do not necessarily correlate to the number of listings of older advertisers, or more correctly, the number of older advertisers is not correctly identifiable or represented in the ads with ages listed. Andrew, 42, made this point when I asked him what age he lists on his profile. He said, 'I don't tend to put my age. If they ask me I'm mid-thirties. [Laughs]'

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<sup>42</sup> The specifics of phrasing for international law, however, are outside the scope of this thesis.

<sup>43</sup> I have a Facebook profile and a Twitter account. As I do not use other mainstream social networking, I have not set specifically set out to expand my participant observation for the ethnographic data.



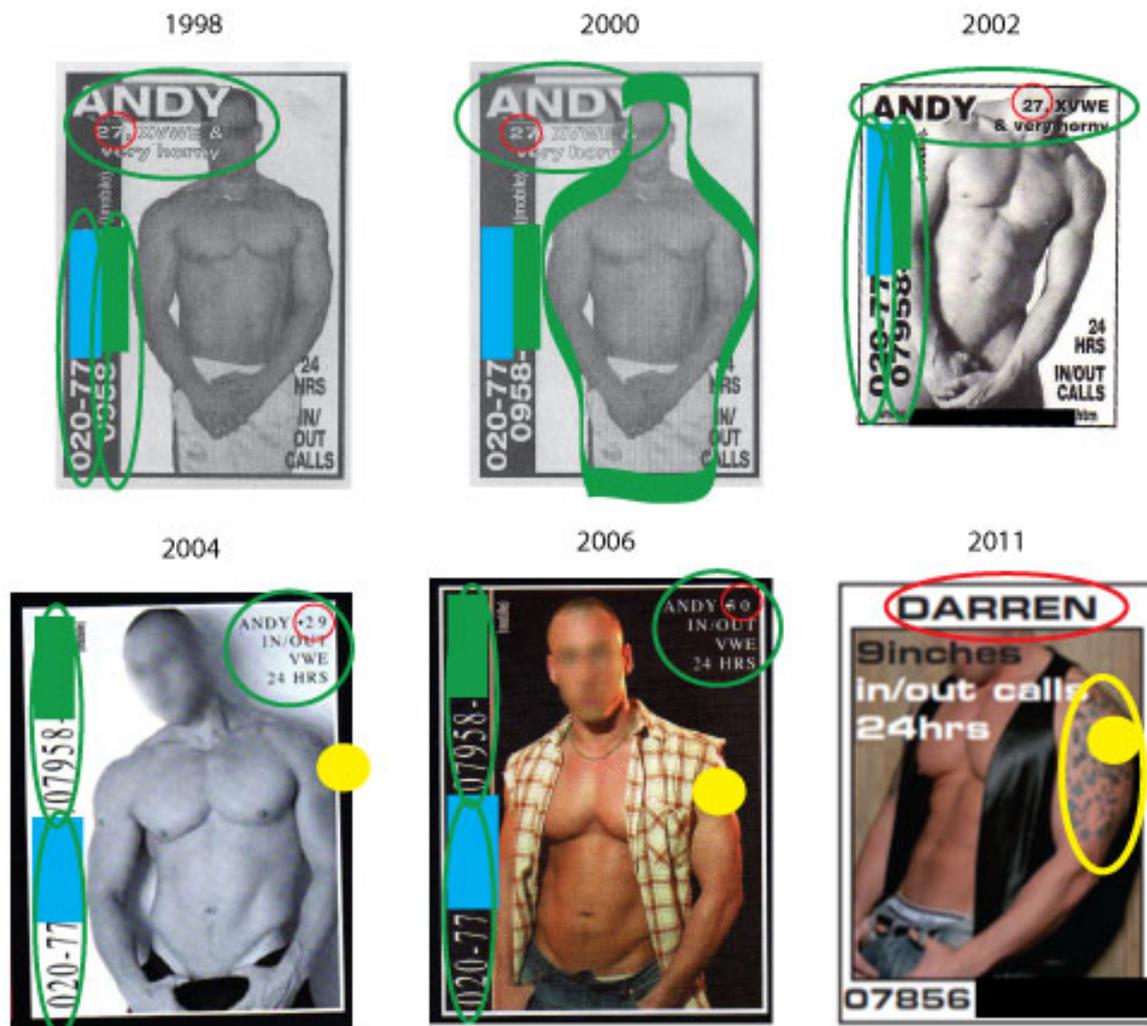
**(Figure 6.5, Detail ‘Older and better...’ *Boyz* 05 January 2002, p.58)**

“Greg’s” advertisement features his mature age as a unique selling point, positioning himself as ‘older and better’ (*Boyz* 2002, p.58, see Figure 6.5). Greg’s ad is different from most of the ways that age is given meaning in the advertisements. Where “youth” is described and anchored in images of mostly slim or athletic bodies, Greg’s ads promote his age whilst also disrupting the inferred contrariety between age and athleticism by featuring photos of a body that is equally or more lean and muscular than many of his competitors.

Analysis of the magazine corpus further reveals that some advertisers used the same pseudo-age, or sometimes the same entire ad including the same age, for several years. A sample of ads are identified as being from the same advertisers over several years either because the same ad is observed for several years, or because signs are read in relation to each other, such as a combination of the same phone number(s), photo, and name are used (Hubbard, 2002). I refer to this as longitudinal semiotic matching, or in other words, using signs within ads to identify connections over a longitudinal sample. Two such examples are “Andy” (see Figure 6.6) and “Dev” (Figure 6.7).

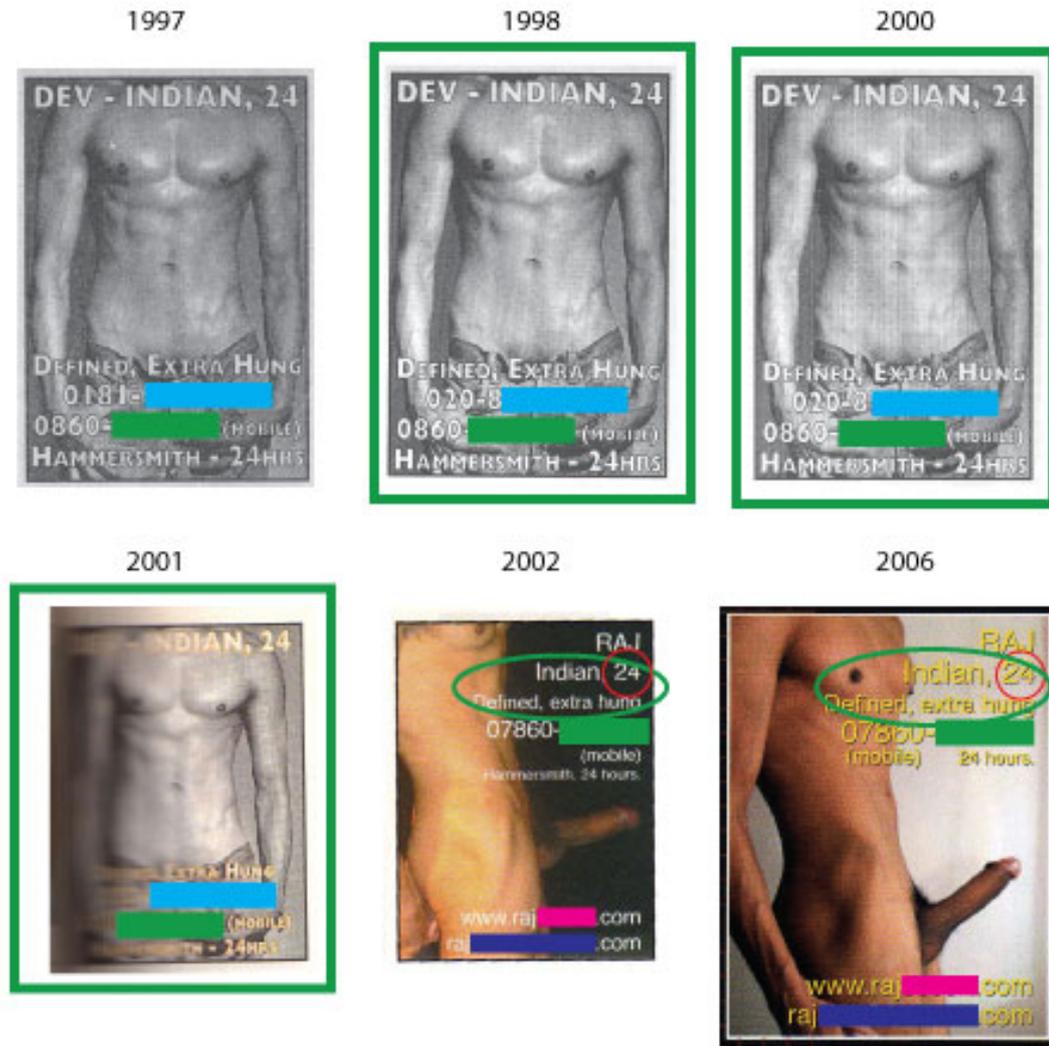
Ads for ‘Andy’ appear in the sample in issues sampled between 1998 and 2006 (see Chapter 3: Methodology for details about the collection of the sample advertisements). Between 1999 and 2002, his pseudo-age remains 27. In 2004 his pseudo-age is 29, and in 2006, his pseudo-age is 30. For comparison, if Andy’s real age were 27 in 1999, he would have been 34 in 2006. In my analysis, I later matched the tattoo and other signs in an ad in 2011 for ‘Darren’ to match Andy’s ad. The 2011 ad does not list an age. A recurring ad that appears in my

sample first for ‘Dev – Indian, 24’ in 1997 appears only to change to ‘Raj, Indian, 24’ in 2004, but the telephone and mobile numbers<sup>44</sup> and age stay the same with Dev/Raj’s pseudo-age listed as 24 from 1997 until 2006. Andy/Darren and Dev/Raj are two examples.



(Figure 6.6, Longitudinal semiotic matching: ‘Andy’/ ‘Darren’, *Boyz* 1998 - 2011)

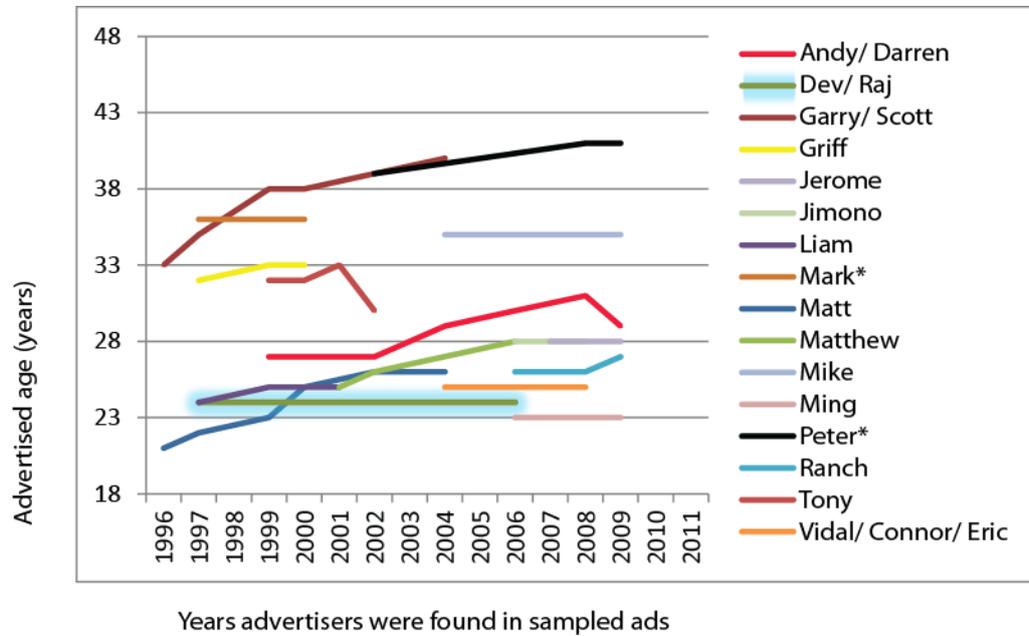
<sup>44</sup> London telephone numbers and British mobile phone numbers were adjusted in the period. I have accounted for those structural changes to refer to the number allocation as staying the same.



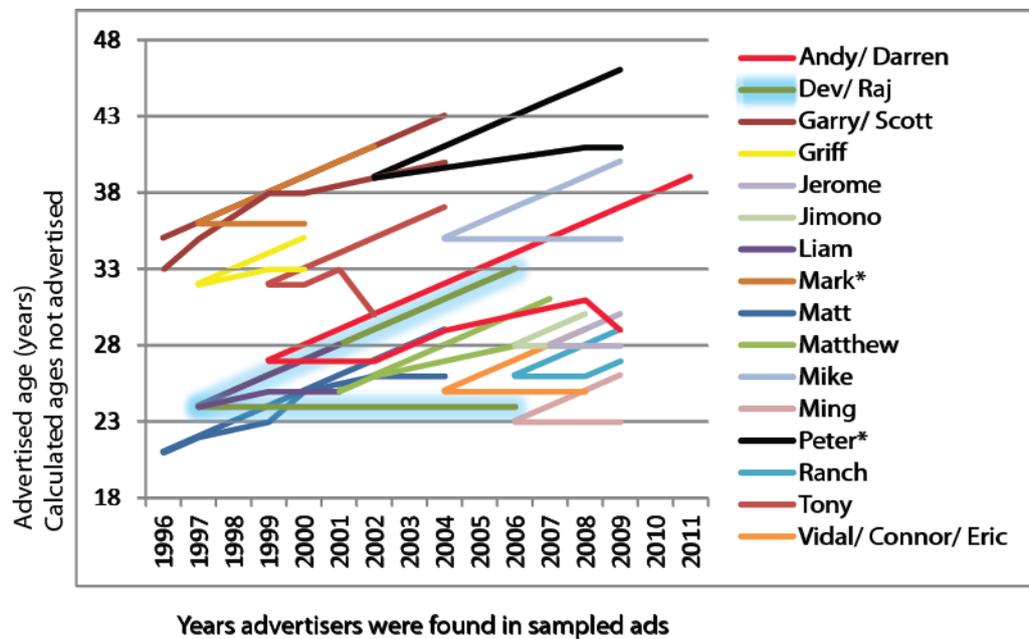
(Figure 6.7, Longitudinal semiotic matching: 'Dev'/ 'Raj', *Boyz* 1997-2006)

Having identified these two cases through the immersion in my data and processes of constant comparison, I revisited my data set to collect data from 16 other longitudinal semiotic matches using only the single issue per year. The pseudo-ages from the repeated ads are shown in Figure 6.8. The unadvertised increases in M\$M ages are shown as comparisons in Figure 6.9. If I allow for M\$M advertisers to have used their legal age in their first advertisements, advertised pseudo-ages are lower than real ages by an average of 2.31 years, or 8.1%. This is in line with the type of discrepancy between real and pseudo-ages reported in interviews. As such, whilst the mean and median *pseudo-ages* can be read as 25.0 and 25,

there is no data available on the real ages of advertisers but the data here shows that older advertisers do not identify their age in the main, and a large number of advertisers of all ages use a pseudo-age.



(Figure 6.8, Advertised ages where the same advertiser is identified over 3 years)



(Figure 6.9, calculated year-on-year age increases for the same advertisers).

These pseudo-ages exaggerate the mythologised youth of M\$M in London. They also serve to exaggerate the mythologised attractiveness of young(er) men's bodies (Jankowski *et al.*, 2014). When sex work/ escorting is signified by photos of (what is discursively constructed as) attractive men's bodies and a young(er) age is also signified with some of those bodies, the inference then made that the other similar/ similarly attractive bodies are of the same ages. As either a simulation or as the 'copy without an original' (Baudrillard, 1994), the youth of many of the advertisers is implied by semiotic complementarity (Chandler, 2007; see also Appendix R) with the ones who have given a young(er), fantasy age. The ages of older men are seemingly hidden and/or erased from the ads and the collective habitus of the gay scene and spaces where men sell sex to men. Other conventions such as cropping heads out of pictures or obscuring faces with photo re-touching, as in the two illustrated examples for Dev and Andy, serve to further mask older men from being recognised.

These findings demonstrate that M\$M may use a pseudo-age in their advertisements, that pseudo-ages are often younger than real ages, and that the pseudo-ages listed by M\$M advertisers cannot reliably be reported as realistic or demographically representative. Any inferences made from analysing the ages and pseudo-ages in M\$M advertisements should be framed as *indexical* signs – socially created by the advertisers and culturally specific to an age that is related to their appearance rather than their true, chronological age and understood when 'read' by other men seeking transactional sex as part of a discursive practice to emphasise youth. Further, M\$M enact a performativity that exaggerates the youth of the ('gay scene') population and perpetuates stereotypical — and perhaps mythologised — characterisations and modes of understanding men who sell sex to men.

### **6.3. Modes of Embodiment: Race and ethnicity**

As in the previous section on age and ageing, here I illustrate ways that constructs of race and ethnicity are used by M\$M in advertising in London's queer media. Again, I use my analysis from online profiles, magazine ads, and participant interviews and make comparisons between what might be read by audiences and how those representations might be approached as appellations to customers within wider cultural repertoires. I consider standpoints and practices – those of my subjects as well as my own – that reconstruct or assume repertoires of 'the exotic' but also of 'otherness' as a collocate of sex work. From this, I then go on to also look at how these repertoires have shifted when British nationalities have been used or omitted differently over time.

As in some of the examples I presented earlier, advertisements can also include basic descriptions of colouring. A notable omission is skin colour. In ads without photos, skin colour seems to be read as 'white' unless advertisers specify 'olive', 'coffee-coloured', 'black' or an identifying nationality or ethnicity. A previous analysis of self-descriptions of race in advertisements in Brazil and the United States has also explored how race is used or rendered invisible in comparisons of the written text of Brazilian and White American MSWs (Phua and Caras, 2008).

In my interviews, I was sometimes surprised by the fluidity in which race was both used and ignored. White-Anglo participants describe South American and Eastern European men with disdain and even hostility with regard to their negotiations, obligingness and pricing strategies, while some South American participants' constructions of belonging and scarcity relate to the strategies they use to assimilate as European, and downplay their Brazilian identity, which is read symbolically in London's queer scene as a metonym for prostitute (Field Notes).

I encountered several problems in coding races, ethnicities and nationalities from advertisements. As for other codes like body shape or age, I only coded where a *marked* signifier was present. At first, this seemed like a more straight-forward endeavour in the verbal ads. Examples in 1991 included nationalities, initially ‘Italian’, ‘American’, ‘Australian’, ‘Indian’, ‘Mediterranean’, and ‘Caribbean’. Examples from issues in 1991 use nationality to specify non- British identities (for example, see Figure 6.10). This is possibly as a unique selling point (USP). The other ads are then, through complementarity, read as British, perhaps even English. ‘East London Paul’, uses the symbolism of being ‘cropped and booted’. Read together, these signs imply he is – or is presenting – a particular version of an ‘East End lad’, perhaps capitalising on a particular intersectionality between nationality, race, and class.

Notably, Race is not explicitly mentioned at all in this column. I had read ‘East London Paul’, ‘Peter, 30, continental’, ‘Italian athlete’ and ‘Jordan’ the ‘American escort’ as white along with all of the other advertisers. I had coded for race, first with an unreflexive, White Anglophone standpoint of only coding ‘non-white’ signs. I was ignoring, for example, that Jordan, might be African-American, or assumed that he would have specified that identity. The two ads in the following issue that referred to ‘Indian, 26’ and ‘Damian, 5’11”, Caribbean/ American, coffee colour’ reinforce that complementarity. If Damian is ‘Caribbean/American, coffee colour’ and Jordan is ‘American’, it seems to imply that Jordan is white, like East London Paul and the others, when presented to an audience in Queer London in 1991.

That I was coding ‘Race’ to mean ‘non-White’ became materially obvious because I was also faced with questions about how to code the 1996 data where there were more diverse advertisers, a greater number of advertisements, and the inclusion of graphics and photographs. Here, two things were reflected differently. First, some ads use indexical or

symbolic signifiers, such as a name like Fabrizio, Angelo, and Ricardo (*Boyz* 1996, p.40).

There is a cultural value attached to a name when it is read in a British magazine alongside names like Jack, James, Tom, and Rick. Again what this highlighted was the inference that nationality was British unless specifically signified.

**ESCORTS & MASSEURS**

If you wish to advertise a massage service, please enclose a copy of a relevant qualification

- ◆ **MASSAGE/ESCORT** for the mature guy. Dave, 5'5", tache, 24 hour. 071 538 4352.
- ◆ **EAST LONDON.** Paul (28), cropped and booted, ready, for escort. 081 517 9044.
- ◆ **PETER.** 30, continental, tall, dark, handsome. A man not a boy. 071 233 7737.
- ◆ **TONY,** 25, 6ft, very muscular masseur. SE1/visits. 071 708 2516 or 071 820 0769.
- ◆ **FLINT,** 24, 5'9", muscular masseur. SW8/visits. 071 820 0769 or 071 708 2516.
- ◆ **STEVE,** 24, handsome, fit, well-equipped guy. For a firm massage nationwide call me anytime. Full leathers etc. 071 372 7475.
- ◆ **SIMON/SEAN** (22/24) available for fun escort service. 071 277 9102.
- ◆ **ITALIAN ATHLETE ESCORT.** Out calls. 071 515 8070.
- ◆ **JORDAN.** Tall, good-looking, gym-trained body, American escort. In/out, 24 hours. 071 402 1786.

**TALL, TANNED,  
MUSCULAR, LEATHER  
RUBBER MASSEUR.  
KARL 071 241 0391.**

- ◆ **ISLINGTON/HACKNEY/  
CENTRAL:** slim, sensuous swimmer gives full, satisfying service. Jon 071 249 9641.
- ◆ **TROY,** 24, Australian. Full body massage and tension relief. Spoil yourself. Telephone 071 792 1947.
- ◆ **I'M 40** and give a full relaxation massage. Windsor (0753) 869004.

(Figure 6.10, 'Escorts & Masseurs' column, *Boyz* 29 August 1991, p.27)

Some nationalities, ethnicities and races seemed to be stated explicitly ('Canadian', 'Black'), but read alongside each other critically, I realised that I was assuming *White* Canadian but not Black *British*. In part, this was because the second development was that other advertisers used collocation, meaning they placed words together to modify or reinforce particular meanings (Baker, 2003; Baker *et al.*, 2007). For example, ads in 1996 portrayed 'Blond, blue-eyed, Sydney lifeguard', 'Brighton skinhead' (see Figure 6.10).

Where I had coded for hair and eye colour, I had to recode that 'blond, blue-eyed' signified race or ethnicity as much as 'coffee-colour'. I also had to make inferences that proper names (or pseudonyms) like 'Telmo' and 'Mohan' were used to denote a markedness which was 'other' to my own standpoint shaped by my own experiences. In my coding, I was reproducing a racial *othering* (Mai and King, 2009) that may or may not also have been reproduced by the advertisers themselves. This was reinforced when signs (like 'Mohan') were anchored, or reinforced (Chandler, 2007) to more explicit signs ('Anglo-Indian') within the same advertisement (Williamson, 2002). The analysis, again, is limited to insight into how race, nationality and ethnicity are constructed in, by, and through the advertisements, rather than demographic data about the advertisers (c.f. Hyland, 2012). In 'marking' certain names, the way that analysis then reinforces an Anglo-centric knowledge centre is a problem. 'Gary', 'Jamie', 'Kevin', 'Simon', 'Luke' and 'Daren' (*Boyz* 1996, p.40) *could* also be coded. Names and pseudonyms as signifiers, then, continue to present a challenge that is reinforced in my interview data. At this stage, I present mostly caution about any findings on race and ethnicity using names and pseudonyms from advertisements for analysis.

Explicit verbal signals of non-white races (e.g. 'Black', 'Oriental', and 'Chinese') are visible; however, as pictures began to be used as texts in advertisements, race has been named less. In some cases, race is visually signified explicitly, such as where very dark skin colour is emphasised. Ironically, medium skin tones are hard to differentiate in black-and-white and

even many colour photos, making it difficult or impossible to code. Advertisers may choose to emphasise, de-emphasise, erase or alter race as part of their identity like they do for age. In photographs where heads have been cropped or faces blurred or obscured, facial features are also unavailable, although, again, their usefulness in coding has practical limitations and recreates theoretical problems.

Through my use of memo writing and constant comparison (Charmaz, 2006) with a longitudinal corpus (Baker, 2003), the other key point was the emergence of *British* markedness. Early signifiers marked M\$M as regional ('Manchester lad') or 'native' to London (inferred from 'East End Lad'). These signs became greater in number and visibility as Scottish, Welsh, Irish, English and British identities were all used as USPs for comparison and competition with the increasing number of 'Latin' and colonial advertisers. This was something I was able to explore from how men spoke about other M\$M advertising in London.

Andrew is White, English, and wears his hair cropped with clothes or uniforms that are iconically 'skinhead'. He is slim and well-spoken but presents a 'harder' image to clients. When he is telling me about the men who call him or are in his 'stable' of regulars, he lists being English as the first thing that sets him apart from other M\$M who are currently advertising.

I get people who prefer, um, a – English, because a lot of them [other escorts] are sort of Eastern European, I think, and Brazilians and stuff, and doesn't want a – what we used to call – "chicken" [a very young gay man] escort. They want somebody who is a bit more kind of switched into [the same kinds of] things that they are. (Andrew, 42)

In listing different attributes, Andrew constructs the majority of the men advertising in London as younger immigrant men, and lists the same two geographic regions that are repeated in other interviews: Eastern Europe and Brazil. Again, through collocation, these men are constructed collectively with a particularly young age, which in turn implies

particular notions of appearance and body types. Philip makes similar connections with embodied nationality, performativity and age.

When I sold it through my Gaydar profile without having to try it was for those reasons. Somebody thought, “Oh right I want a [describes himself] guy of that age who is a top,” or “I want a Scottish guy who wants to treat me like a cunt boy,” or whatever – or they just liked my face. [chuckles] (Philip, 42).

In this example, Philip describes himself as attractive to men who were interested in him for an intersectional, performative, embodied identity. Just as I found collocates in the advertisements, Philip presents them here, connecting his physical description [redacted for anonymity], his age and the role he performs. In his second example he imagines, or perhaps recounts, the fantasy of some of his clients as “a Scottish guy who wants to treat me like a cunt boy”. Even within a British context, his Scottish identity is set apart from the English the south of England, and London, the city in which he lives. His Scottish ‘otherness’ is constructed as not just assertive but aggressive, as he is made out, not just to be someone who will be dominant, but who *wants to* dominate: misogynistically and with authority.

In interviews, I was sometimes surprised by the fluidity in which race was both used and ignored. White-Anglo participants sometimes describe South American and Eastern European men in physical terms with admiration but also disdain and even hostility, particularly with regard to their pricing strategies.

Some of them are very nice. Some of them are downright ruthless. Just out for the money, they’re out for what they can get. They don’t give a particularly good service. They drop their prices, quicker than they can drop their knickers most of the time. *Those are the kind of people* I would avoid. They tend to give, they give the business a bad name. They’re usually Brazilian. And most of them shouldn’t be here in the first place (George, 42).

He equates reducing prices and dropping their pants, framing a concept for men who devalue sex by (practically) giving it away. This illustrates a tension in the idea of attaching a monetary value to sex which I explore in more depth in Chapter 7. His language infers the

kind of ‘slut-shaming’ more often directed at women, even with the casual phrasing which dresses them in ‘knickers’. This is perhaps a reference to ‘camp’ or the queer patois of polari. In interviews, I was not listening for gendered and nationalised language, but in my analysis I am intrigued by how it is used, particularly when British and Anglo M\$M describe the ‘other’ escorts who advertise.

George reinforces the common stereotype of Brazilian men in London selling sex, and in a way that is constructed as disruptive to established economics and workers. These discourses of othering the migrant in the context of employment competition and ethics are certainly not unique to men selling sex (O’Rourke 2006) but are perhaps ironic in the context that George is himself a migrant to London from Europe.

In interview and in his various advertisements and profiles, Marcos downplays or omits his Brazilian identity, which is symbolically read as a metonym for prostitute through stereotyping. Instead he identifies with his ancestral-European heritage. His constructions of belonging and scarcity relate to the strategies he uses to assimilate as European. In contrast, Steve, whose identity is white South African, promotes his ethnicity as ‘Latin’ on his commercial Gaydar profile.

The stereotypes of Brazilian and Eastern European men selling sex in London do not appear to be anchored explicitly in the data from advertisements; however, the ads also include a number of indexical signifiers, such as names (for example, ‘Ygor’) as previously mentioned, and photos as discussed in the next section. Searches for the terms ‘Brazil’ or ‘Latin’ revealed no more than three results per issue sampled (as in 2001, see Figure 6.11), the same as ‘Australian’ or ‘Indian’ (n=3/130, 2.3% each) and fewer than ‘Italian’ (n=4/130, 3.1%)<sup>45</sup>. Yet there is no stereotype (within London’s queer-scene or reported from participants) to infer

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<sup>45</sup> In 2011, the sample is only 22 advertisements. Single advertisements coded for Australian, Italian, and Spanish each appear, making the proportion for that sample (4.5%) higher than 2001.

that *most gay Australians in London are hookers*, although there is some mythologizing of men from former British colonies. Matt, Quinn, and Keith each tell me stories about working with Australians. Quinn told me he had been thinking about the ‘mentality’ of men from different countries.

I used to love working with Aussie guys, South African guys and Kiwi guys because they’ve got a sort of great mentality to them, even if they don’t fancy the guy. “It’s just a root. Let’s do it.” And they’re good fun to be around. They’re sociable and they’re chatting and etcetera, etcetera, and they got, they’ve got almost like the perfect mentality for escorting in my, in, in my mind. And, uh, but they all fuck off back, back, back down the Southern hemisphere and they’ve been replaced by the Polish lads, the Brazilian lads, the Eastern European lads, and they just haven’t got the same mentality (Quinn, British, 42).

Quinn ascribes positive attributes to some groups of ‘migrant workers’ such as ‘Aussie guys, South African guys and Kiwi guys’. He uses stereotypes and the mythologies of nationality to make positive attributions to these men, whilst others make negative comments about Brazilian and Eastern European men.

In explaining the phenomenon of Brazilian men selling sex in London, Jack, the director of an organisation that provided healthcare and other services for M\$M, offered a reflection on how structures of community at home and abroad might play a part in who has contact with selling sex and others who can be open about having sold sex.

I think what my experience of Brazil is that it’s while Brazilians tend to be more like, more like the English or the Australians or the New Zealanders, that when they’re young, they’ll travel if they have the means to do so. Um. And so they will often come to another country, where their only other social network related to their, kind of, origin is other young Brazilians. (Jack, health services director)

Understanding social networks and the roles they play in locating opportunities through existing contacts repeated the notion of Dorais’ (2005) *Insiders* whilst a focus on economic priorities simultaneously constructs some groups of people as *Outcasts*, relative to language, culture or financial opportunity.

### 6.3.1 Online nationality, identity and representation

Exploring other texts for data, 100 commercial profiles sampled in 2012 from Gaydar.net reveal a greater proportion of men using their Brazilian and Latin identities, 13% each: 13 results for Brazilian and 13 for Latin. The number of men advertising a Brazilian identity in this sample seems disproportionate to the population of Brazilians in London compared to other migrant populations (Kubal *et al.*, 2011).

Source	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011	Total
Sample size	8	122	130	81	22	363
British*	0	2	1	0	0	3
Irish	0	0	2	0	0	2
Brazilian	0	1	0	2	0	3
Latin	0	0	3	2	0	5
Spanish	0	0	0	2	1	3
Italian	0	0	4	0	1	5
Polish	0	0	1	0	0	1
E. European	0	0	0	0	0	0
Australian	0	2	3	0	1	6
American	0	2	1	0	0	3
South African	0	0	1	0	0	1
Chinese	0	0	2	3	0	5
Oriental**	0	0	5	4	0	9
Asian	0	1	1	0	0	2
Indian	0	1	2	1	0	4
Black	0	12	8	2	0	22
Total	0	21	34	16	3	74
Percentage	0.0%	17.2%	26.2%	19.8%	13.6%	20.4%

\* I have included specific references to England, Wales, Scotland as well as to 'British'

\*\* 'Oriental' is the specific word used in these ads.

Shading indicates relative frequency in comparison to other identities, where green is the greatest frequency and red is 0.

**(Figure 6.11, Coding verbally explicit Nationality and Race in *Boyz* ads, 1991-2011)**

The limitation of my aim to purposively sample a relatively small group of participants and saturate a smaller category is that I have a homogeneity in sample that lacks the voices and

experiences of Black and Asian men. More work must still be done to understand the experiences of queer Black and Asian men who sell sex in London. Race, ethnicity and nationality are constructed as performative as well as embodied. As such, they can be read as fluid rather than fixed. Like age and other signs that might be sought and compiled from advertisements for demographic data of people who are selling sex, race, ethnicity and nationality should be read as symbolic. An understanding is required that M\$M advertisements are constructions — by their subjects — as means to create a mythologised character with desirable characteristics that will attract potential customers. Dominant patterns of nationality might be useful for understanding modes of contact through informal networks and communities, acknowledging that men who do sex work have intersectional identities. People who sell sex are subjects, not simply a fixed *category* of objects that can be found and studied. This data is useful to understand trends in sexual storytelling (Plummer, 1995) and online representations (Sanders, 2005a), but may have limited applications for agencies seeking more realistic data (Hyland, 2012).

#### **6.4. Sexually explicit and interactive**

Advertising data can be useful for analysis of modes of embodiment through semiotic structures. Sex work advertisements and commercial profiles offer rich data sets for observing expressions of interrelationships between normative embodiment (forms and shapes of bodies), visceral embodiment (physiological processes of bodies), experiential embodiment (ways the social and the physical construct and are constructed by experiences), and pragmatic embodiment (the fulfilment of roles which are often gendered) (Watson, 2000). In these examples, the (male) body can be explored as ‘simultaneously material and representational’ (Robertson, 2006, p.450).

‘Dack, model, Earls Court, 22, likes kissing, oral, and anal. 8”, very good looking, passionate and versatile. 078...’ (Boyz, 2006: 62)

As the quote above illustrates, multiple signs of embodiment are used to construct ‘sex’ and ‘sex work’. Those signs contain multiple referents which in turn are represented by another multiple of signifiers. Because a kiss can mean many things, even ‘kissing’ can be read as a sign within a sign. And what does ‘oral’ signify that is different from kissing? What collocates with oral to make its meaning more explicit? Is oral understood as ‘sex’? Does the inclusion of ‘anal’ anchor its meaning or make the definition of sex more ‘fuzzy’? Regardless of whether a reader is immersed in ‘gay culture’ or unfamiliar with ‘the languages of sexuality’ (Weeks, 2011), the volume of (shifting) interactions between and within signs which construct ‘sex’ and ‘sex work’ would require an entire thesis. In this section, I unpack some of the ways that sex and commercial sex are signified more (or less) explicitly and some of the ways that interpretations of the law in England and Wales impact contact advertising for M\$M.

#### **6.4.1 Explicitly selling sex**

Sex and sexual experiences may be advertised explicitly or implicitly. Explicit mention of sex is less common than an implied message. First, neither the advertisers nor the publication refer to ‘sex work’ or ‘prostitution’. The one exception is ‘Rentboy.com’ that uses the colloquial term for a (young) male sex worker. Advertisers sometimes make the disclaimer that clients are only paying for their time which is a rationale observable in places where selling sex is illegal. Having learned that it is not illegal to sell sex as an individual in the UK (Brooks-Gordon, 2006), I had changed my interpretation that this might also be the rationale for such a disclaimer in the UK. However, conversations in interviews exposed a lack of understanding about the law.

There are national and regional regulations in place about how sex is sold, which makes the definition of ‘illegal’ fuzzy for M\$M and others to understand (Mai, 2009b). Some participants expressed confusion about local and national laws related to selling sex.

Q: It is illegal to sell sex in this country.

A: No.

Q: It’s not illegal to be an escort?

A: It’s not illegal to sell sex.

Q: Yes it is.

A: No.

Q: Selling sexual services? Yes it is.

A: No.

Q: Yes it is, you fucker.

A: I promise you, it isn’t.

Q: As far as I’m concerned it is. (Quinn, 42)

Quinn and I discussed some of the various legislations and by-laws about where or how sex can be sold, but he remained adamant that it is illegal to buy or sell sex in England and Wales, despite his identification as an activist in the sex industry. Quinn seemed to be one of the more experienced men I interviewed, so it surprised me that he did not have more information and familiarity about the laws that regulate how and where he can legally sell sex and his own rights and responsibilities.

Quinn expressed some of the same rationale I wrote as my original proposal for this research — the question of how escort advertising that is explicitly selling sex does not attract the attention of the police.

Q: I must admit, when I first started with guys — you know — “Oh! Is this a copper trying to trap me?” To some extent. You know — so, so literally, you keep off the subject — I can remember doing that for like the first month, to some— you know, then — you — it’s utter nonsense. [...] If you wanted to clamp down on escorting, you could just get a copy of *QX*, phone up every number in there (Quinn, 42).

The impact of this misperception is not something I have explored in depth. I asked men about their experiences with the police and the law, but none of my informants had ever had

any dealings with the police relating to selling sex. A belief that selling sex is illegal may be deterring men from becoming involved in selling sex; however, misperceptions about the law may also deter men from seeking support (Bryce *et al.*, 2015).

#### **6.4.2 The ‘Boyfriend Experience’**

In place of terminology that refers to sex workers, and often used as a section heading in magazines, is the term ‘escort’ which is read by a knowing audience to be synonymous with sex work, but to the uninitiated still carries connotations (or even denotes) an image of a public companion. Advertisers who wish to differentiate themselves from other advertisers or ‘low class’ stereotypes might position themselves as offering a ‘high class’ service. With this, men often list social activities they attend with clients.

‘Good looking, educated , well travelled and very discreet guy, working as a part time escort. Very good companion, for dinners, meetings, travel and overnights. Very discreet clients only. Booking in advance please. Contact me for more info 078...’ (Gaydar, -----, 9 March 2012).

This advertiser collocates several signs to convey not only how he wants to be perceived, but also the kinds of men he prefers to contact him and the types of activities that will anchor those impressions. He emphasises his discretion by repeating it along with his construction of a ‘boyfriend experience’ (Phua and Caras, 2008).

My interview informants did report accompanying some clients to dinner or on trips, which I illustrate in the next chapter (see also Salamon, 1989); however, all participants made it clear that sex was *almost always* a part of the requested itinerary. While companionship, public or otherwise, may be a part of an escort’s role, informants report that being paid for sex makes up the largest number of jobs they take.

### 6.4.3 Take Two: Duos arranged

One example of the laws that regulate how sex is sold in the UK is the prohibition of two people selling sex together. This is debated as a deterrent to brothel keeping which then restricts people from working alone or criminalises them and anyone who works with them (Brooks-Gordon, 2006). Still some advertisers do offer services for duos or agencies that would contravene those laws.

Ben/Sam, horny duo (32/27) good looks, WE, versatile, friendly skinhead types. Call 0956-[...] (mobile) between 10am and 8pm.  
(Boyz, 10 January 1998, p79).

Hot and spicy  
Eduardo, Mexican, 28,  
Connor, Irish, 26.  
Two very good-looking lads,  
very fit, masculine, horny and  
VWE. 1-on-1 or duos (with  
discount). Central London.  
'Eat in or take away'.  
Evenings and weekends only.  
Mobile: 0973-[...]  
(Boyz, 10 January 1998, p80).

ACTIVE LONDON LAD/ DOMINANT SPECIALIST  
kink/uniforms & leather  
earl's court in/out & travel  
duos arranged  
07986[...]  
(mobile)  
withheld no. & texts ignored  
[website address]  
(Boyz, January 2006, p60).

In these three examples, duos are used as an exclusive service, an inclusive service or an extra service. In the first example, Ben and Sam are only offering their service as a duo.

Whether they agree to negotiate otherwise is unknown. One possibility is to compare their ad from 1998 to more contemporary 'personal' profiles for couples who 'only play together'.

Following the structure of propositional logic, I have categorised this type of advertisement as a conjunct proposition (conjunction) – when the proposition is available only if both subjects are hired.

Eduardo and Connor's ad offers an inclusive duo service. They are advertising together but offer one-to-one service *or* can be hired together, for which they note there is a discount<sup>46</sup>. I categorised these as inclusive propositions. This describes the logic of 'and/or' statements such as inclusive disjunctions. Active Lad's also offers to arrange duos but he is advertising individually. Individual advertisers can still be categorised as offering inclusive propositions.

As the ads for Eduardo and Connor and Active Lad both illustrate, there are multiple inclusive propositions within individual ads, for example, such as options for in calls (clients going to the M\$M advertiser) or out calls (M\$M going to the client). In some advertisements, pairs of men promote other complementary differences like mythologised identities of Irish Connor and Mexican Eduardo or more explicit references to 'versatile bottom [...] total top'.

Philip, now 42, shares some examples with me that illustrate details about what it might have been like for an advertiser like Active Lad who advertised on his own but promoted the possibility of arranging 'duos'.

*Occasionally* they did ask for other things, like one guy [...] wanted me to have sex with other people, and I was *really* concerned about that. I was really concerned because I thought who on earth is this going to be? I thought some – he talked about some "young friend" of his from [the area] and this guy was a university lecturer or professor or whatever, and, and he, and I'm just imagining some *awful* little student that he's, you know, got under his wing, and when I agreed to do this, it turned out it was some guy I used to have a thing with from [the area] who'd started advertising independently under a different name from his own, and I was delighted, I mean he was one of the guys I most fancied [...] and so it was, it was just a *delight* to take extra money for the pleasure of fucking him, and I don't remember what I did with the client, but you know it was putting on a show as well as involving the client (Philip, 42).

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<sup>46</sup> Their ad might also imply that they do other work or have other commitments during weekdays. The number of details and interpretations of multiple signs made difficult work of organising material thematically.

Philip's emotions include some worry about who the additional person is going to be. His references to the language used by his client to describe his 'young friend' and the meaning he has associated with that because of the occupation of the client, 'a university lecturer, or professor or whatever'. This might express disinterest in being involved in an unknown, already established power dynamic and one that feels inherently exploitative. It might also infer his disinterest in men who were unattractive to him, portraying the friend as 'some *awful* little student'. His description disrupts a repertoire that would define youth as an absolute preference over age; however, at the same time his collocation of descriptive signs reinforces hegemonies of a masculine size as antithetical to the (post-)modern, academic 'body'.

As a triangulation of other data, Philip's interview also demonstrates the use of pseudonyms in advertisements, the relative anonymity of M\$M and possibility of maintaining privacy with published ads – even within the queer community, and the intersectionality of identities. The friend turned out to be 'some guy I used to have a thing with [who] was one of the guys I most fancied'.

What I also take from this quote is an illustration of the fuzzy boundaries or fuzzy definitions of what 'sex work' is, even for one individual. Philip's role shifts between having knowledge and a lack of information. His role also shifts from having sex with the client to having sex with another person for the client to watch and possibly also participate. Queer definitions of 'sex work' treat it as a synecdoche, in part because the definition of 'sex' is fuzzy and itself a synecdoche – as is 'work'.

Examples of definitions of sex work that are queered and/or reinforced through my participants' examples of 'duos' are these shifts into private live sex performances, coordinating the logistics (where, when), resources (who brings the condoms and lube?) and

human resources of performances. ‘Guys turn up here to do duo jobs, they don’t even have condoms on them. “Oh, can I use yours?” You know, like you turning up without your pen, you know?’ (Quinn, 42). Other examples include performing in porn, viewing porn with clients and sometimes providing it.

Quinn expresses scepticism about how some advertisers balance the expectations of the clients for a ‘duo’ and their own motivations with proposing and performatively defining the service.

Like “Duo partner.” Please, please pay for me and my boyfriend to *fuck* together, with you in the bedroom, and you will feel like the third peg. You will feel like the odd man out there, you know. We’ll be having sex on your paycheck. We’ll do bits and bobs with you occasionally, but threesomes can be very, very hard to balance and duo partners, duos, when they pick their *regular* duo partner, that’s invariably, it’s somebody that they like having sex with. And the client becomes the odd man out. So, you know, none of that works, as far as I’m concerned, for business. (Quinn)

There is a tension in what he says here. ‘When they pick their regular duo partner, that’s invariably, it’s somebody that they like having sex with.’ This fits and supports the repertoire that sex work can be enjoyable for M\$M and disrupts overarching repertoires that sex workers’ are only rewarded through material incentives. It also acknowledges tensions between competing hierarchies. There are hierarchies of attention and attendance to negotiate, as well as priorities of performing, being interactive, negotiating and delivering the agreed service for remuneration, earning money and practicing self-care. I spend more time exploring these balances and tensions in Chapter 7.

In the context of Philip’s earlier accounts, it made sense to me that he had experienced a sense of agency and did not feel exploited by his experiences of selling sex. Much later in my analysis, however, I was struck by another interpretation of what he has said. Positioning the client and sex workers on binary spectrums of agency and structure is complicated by these narratives of men selling sex together. Philip gave me another example:

And then on another occasion that same chap asked that I provide two *other* young guys, specifically young he said, who he wanted me to fuck and I did and obviously on that occasion I got to choose exactly who I wanted. Not only did I get to choose who I wanted, but I got paid *more* for fucking, *much more* for fucking them *and* I kept a fee for arranging it. What do you do? It was very, very *easy*. [Laughing.] I'm getting sexually excited thinking about it, actually.

Philip's story here still positions him as the sexually active 'top', and he constructs his position of relative power associated with being in his thirties with younger men whom, in this case, he arranges to fuck, gets paid to fuck, and keeps an extra fee for making the arrangements. Reading this example out of context of the others, my perspective shifts from the narrator to the younger men and their remembrance of the transaction.

Six of the men I interviewed discussed duos with clients in ways that both disrupt *and* fit dominant repertoires about hierarchical structures and coercion, depending on the interpretation and standpoint. These illustrations help to develop my argument that (men's) actions of defining performativity, utilising embodiment, and locating contact(s) interact together through multiple modes of embodiment and the 'male body schema' (Watson, 2000, p.117). Understanding the relationality of these modes is essential to understanding the complex patterns of practice, experience and rationale that fit into the larger categories of sex work or even men who sell sex. I continue to explore these interrelationships before discussing how the A.D.U.L.T. model comes together in Chapter 9.

#### **6.4.4 Escort Agency Advertising**

*Boyz* and *Gaydar* also feature advertisements for escort agencies. I found agency ads appear in two formats: appeals to clients seeking masseurs and escorts and appeals to men wishing to/ willing to do sex work (see Figures 6.12 and 6.13 below).

The first makes a direct appeal to clients seeking sex or body work. The professional element of the service is emphasized by the agencies through the language they use in their advertisements. 'Our Masseurs and Escorts are carefully screened' tells readers that there is a

vetting process in place which adds to the value of booking through an agency rather than taking an implied risk on independent advertisers who are implicated within dominant discourses as dirty, dangerous or on drugs (Scott, 2003; Scheaffer, 2014).

**American Style Massage  
Professional Escorts**

Relax in Our Luxurious Central  
London and Brighton Locations  
Or Call For An Escort to Home/Hotel

**ELEGANT CLIENT DRAWING ROOM**

Our Masseurs and Escorts  
Are Carefully Screened and Use  
The Latest Vibro-Heat Massage

**Noon til 2 am**  
**0171 [redacted]**  
(Appt's at all other times)

Details telefaxed locally or  
internationally within minutes

**LONDON • BRIGHTON**

(Figure 6.12, 'American Style Massage...' (Boyz, 6 January 1996, p.41)



(Figure 6.13, 'Exclusive agency requires...' (Boyz, 6 January 1996, p.40)

The second type of agency ad makes a direct appeal to men who will work for them as escorts. These ads also make an indirect appeal to potential clients in making clear the specificity of their screening criteria. 'Exclusive agency requires handsome, straight-acting escorts and masseurs (18-25). Please *only* ring us if you have classic good looks, an excellent physique, are well-spoken and have a comprehensive wardrobe of good quality clothes' (Boyz January 1996, p40). Strict criteria for age and physical features are specified publicly to potential applicants and thus potential clients are led to assume all enquiries will be answered by someone meeting the rigorous standards of the agency. Some of the detail of Matthew's experiences responding to, working for, and leaving an agency to work independently are detailed in the next section.

### 6.5. Agency and agencies: Matthew's story illustrates the A.D.U.L.T. Model

As I stated at the beginning of this chapter, repertoires of how bodies are 'used' are common in discourses of both sex work and advertising. Here, I present illustrations which draw together the themes within this chapter (modes of embodiment and performativity; expressing, concealing and interpreting age, race, nationality, sexuality, and agency) to point to how meanings interact (Plummer, 1996). These stories illustrate ways that advertising,

bodies, age, ethnicity, sexual acts, sexual identity, intimacy, ‘agency’ (an ability to act), and ‘escort agencies’ (hierarchical management structures) link in ways that are inextricable and which demonstrate the interrelationships between scarcity, embodiment, performativity, contact, and temporality.

For example, Matthews’s stories illustrate the various contact points he had with sex work prior to operationalising his idea to sell sex.

‘How did I start? I started by thinking I wanted to do it so I looked at *QX Magazine* and there were advertisements placed in the back of those magazines by escort agencies – not by escorts, by escort agencies – and I phoned one of them that I liked the look of and they asked me to come in for an interview, which I did and then I went onto their books’ (Matthew, 38).

This was not a starting narrative that I would have anticipated from someone who sells sex independently as a part-time endeavour, whilst also maintaining a successful career in The City. In the same vein, the open style of interview that I used allowed Matthew to expand his story. Matthew simplified the starting point of his narrative to centre on a single Contact narrative: thinking he wanted to do it and looking at the back pages. However, the details of his story for how he arrived at ‘thinking I wanted to do it’ involve a longer, multi-faceted narrative that includes references to all five of the action categories which I developed from my grounded theory analysis, and have defined in the A.D.U.L.T. model to understand the relationality of the multiple actions and rationale of M\$M: Addressing Scarcity, Defining Performativity, Utilising Embodiment, Locating Contact(s), Thinking Temporally. For example, in Figure 6.14 I present one of the action category summaries I developed. (Other examples of summaries are included through the following chapters as I continue to make comparisons across data.)

Action categories from GT Analysis	Matthew (Matt)
Addressing Scarcity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ not financial scarcity but a desire to ‘prove’ that he ‘could’ sell sex.</li> </ul>
Defining Performativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ liking sex;</li> <li>▪ liking sex with men;</li> <li>▪ knowing about sex work;</li> <li>▪ presenting as culturally masculine;</li> <li>▪ being comfortable with kissing other men</li> <li>▪ and comfortable kissing older men</li> </ul>
Utilising Embodiment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ being young,</li> <li>▪ handsome,</li> <li>▪ muscular, and</li> <li>▪ well-endowed;</li> <li>▪ and White, Commonwealth, English-speaking</li> </ul>
Locating Contact(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ knowing a friend of a friend who had sold sex</li> <li>▪ seeing escort ads in magazines</li> <li>▪ seeing an agency’s ad and contacting them</li> </ul>
Thinking Temporally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ his knowledge developed over time;</li> <li>▪ his ideation and his practice were not simultaneous;</li> <li>▪ his experiences were bounded to particular times of the week;</li> <li>▪ his experiences were (mostly) bounded to a particular time in his life</li> </ul>

**(Figure 6.14 ADULT action category summaries for Matthew)**

As Matthew’s interview illustrates, some M\$M may choose to advertise through an agency rather than independently because it allows them to maintain more distinct boundaries between their sex work and their lives outside of sex work. Many men, like Matthew, have jobs and careers apart from sex work. Matthew’s agency received all enquiries and screened clients on his behalf, in exchange for a percentage of the advertised fee. Clients and workers were instructed not to exchange details and to make all contact through the agency, allowing the agency to maintain some control of the interactions, and particularly the financial transactions, but also allowing both client and worker a level of ‘removedness’ that maintains privacy, anonymity and security from one another.

Matthew describes his experience of responding to such an advertisement in 2000.

M: ... They just asked me questions about myself, why I was doing it – I suppose that was one of the questions. Actually, I don't think it was. He wasn't that keen. The guy that was interviewing me didn't seem particularly interested from memory. Um. I suppose the big question is did I have to show off my "wares", yes.

A: Really?

M: Oh, okay, well, yeah, I did. Yeah, I gave them my name and telephone number, said what I was prepared to do, when I was available aaaand they wanted to see – my cock.

A: And so you got it out?

M: Yep. I think I had to even get it hard. [...] I remember them asking me if I would kiss and I said yes. Um, I didn't rule out anything, but I don't think they asked me – the agency wasn't very – the agency was very, um, mainstream, I suppose. They weren't into anything S&M, or B&D<sup>47</sup>, or anything like that. They wanted nice boys, they didn't want anyone with tattoos or earrings or anything like that. They wanted nice boys with nice haircuts who wore nice clothes to go out for dinner with men and then stay in their hotels for the evening and that's generally what I ended up doing. They didn't ask me if I'd do watersports<sup>48</sup> or anything like that. It was basically, "Will you do vanilla sex?" and I said yes, I would. There wasn't anything more than that.' (Matthew, 38)

Matthew told me wonderfully detailed stories about everything from his first interview to how he stopped working for the agency. In this extract, he was describing what seemed like quite an ordinary job interview in an office until he told me he was asked to show his interviewers his 'cock'. Matthew had responded to an advertisement looking for men to apply to be escorts but the way we privilege specific parts of the body as private made me surprised that his interview also involved an element of display and performance.

His interview went on to solicit his consent for participating in different forms of intimacy such as kissing. As he talks about what the agents are looking for, he differentiates types of sexual activities from 'vanilla' to 'S&M or B&D, or anything like that'. His 'othering' of 'kink' (Chaline, 2010) is reinforced by describing the men who are employed by this agency as 'nice boys' who are set apart from queer men who have queer bodies with 'tattoos or earrings or anything like that.' Whilst offering a sexual service, he said the role was offered

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<sup>47</sup> Slave and Master or Sadism and Masochism; Bondage and Domination

<sup>48</sup> Watersports refers to urinating on or being urinated on by a partner/ partners.

to men who looked like ‘nice boys with nice haircuts who wore nice clothes to go out for dinner with men and then stay in their hotels for the evening’. Even Matthew’s language softens, almost mockingly echoing the banality with his repetitive description of the homogenous, monotonous ‘nice’.

The ‘agencies’ visible in the advertising take various forms. Some are structured as typical agencies with a hierarchical management structure (cf, Salamon, 1989). The power relationship of the agency with the worker is complex and may include difficulties, not limited to those of mainstream employer/employee relationships such as negotiating working hours and availability, but compounded by issues more unique to selling sex such as managing (or exploiting) the stigma of sex work (c.f. Smith, Grov and Seal, 2008).

Some independent advertisers specified working only at particular times. Examples in my data included ‘Weekends only’ (*Boyz* 2011, 3 February, p.121) and ‘New Gary... in daytimes, out evenings’ (*Boyz* 2011, 3 February, p.118). Matthew used the agency to manage the boundaries between his work and social life in the week and his escorting on Fridays and Saturdays. He told me the director of the agency tried to coerce him into working during the week and when he refused, the man attacked him, albeit with a folder.

But he always liked fists to slap to stir a little bit. And um, which gave me the idea that he must, he must be able to push around his other escorts quite easily and we often crossed swords because I pushed back against him. I had a real job. And I expected him to be an employer but he behaved more like a schoolmaster [A: Right.] and he called me in on this day and said, “Oh, we’ve been crossing swords quite a lot,” and he said um to me, “You know, you argued with me that night when I phoned you at the gym,” and I said, “That’s because – one – I’m never available during the week and – two – you wanted to send me out on a job then and there.” And he said, uh, “Well, you told me you were available on that night at, from seven o’clock,” and I said, “I did no such thing. I’m never available during the week because I have to work.” He goes, “No, I’ve got it written in my diary here. [Matthew taps the table firmly.] And I said, “Well, you’ve got it wrong.” And he goes, “Are you telling me I’m a liar?” And I said, “I’m telling you, you’ve got it wrong.” And he just went off, he flew off the handle at me. He called me a liar. He called me a snivelling little bitch. Um, so I yelled back at him. And then I remember just getting up and saying, “Listen, it’s all finished. I’m leaving. We’re not talking again.” And he got up out of the settee

and he picked up the folder and came at me, he came at me with the folder! And I thought, “My God, he’s going to hit me.” And I got ready almost to hit him back and I thought, no because he’s – he was about 70-something, and there’s no way you can hit a 70 year old man. So I just like left, I walked – I high-tailed it out of there, and never spoke to him again. Ha ha. And that’s how I left the escorting business.

In comparison to his earlier recollection of whether or not he had aroused himself to be erect for his interview, Matthew narrated this exchange with specific detail for me. He positions himself as being less vulnerable than some of the other men who worked for the agency because he was ‘older’ (at 30) and he ‘had a real job’. For Matthew, then, there is an inference that selling sex was not ‘real’ work, but he queers his position when he says ‘And I expected him to be an employer’. One of the tensions of addressing sex work as being like *any* other work is that there can be elements of coercion and manipulation in many industries. Employees such as freelance workers, workers in customer facing service industries, and salaried staff who entertain clients are regularly asked to work longer hours, flexible shifts, and respond to demand. When those demands include sexual activities, hierarchical management structures will remain problematic.

Ultimately, Matthew faced verbal abuse and an attempted assault. He interpreted his resilience to being older than his colleagues and otherwise employed, but also to being much younger than his 70 year old attacker. He said there was ‘no way’ he was going to hit the man, but in his account we both took for granted that he could have. Matthew is a tall, active, and athletic man. Discussions of vulnerability cannot be simplified to gender or blind to it, but an embodied and performative ability to respond to conflict and manage or escape aggression and avoid violence is an asset for any person.

### **6.5.1. Flat management structures**

However, some men working independently also advertised *as* agencies. Two of the men I spoke to, Philip and Will, each described advertising with one or two other men, promoting themselves to potential clients as escort agencies. Will worked out of a friend’s council flat

where he said the ‘punters’ would wait in the lounge while they were having sex with another client in the bedroom. Philip’s friends, interested in his ability to make money from picking up men in nightclubs and then asking them to pay him (as discussed later in this chapter), collaborated with him to develop his enterprise into something more formal.

Some friends of mine who were mightily impressed at my resourcefulness said they would like to try it too, and these friends were a couple and one of them was a very entrepreneurial type and well he suggested we advertise, and we did. We advertised in Gay Times, a picture of me with more hair and [...] I had jeans on, topless, the jeans were slightly open. [Both laugh.] I was looking good at the time, as I say. (Philip, 44).

Different from Matthew’s story, their story used the advertisements to reframe what Philip was already doing – taking money for sex – and discursively reconstruct it as sex work by situating his appellation as a printed signifier rather than the less formal physical appellations he made in pubs and clubs that resembled ‘cruising’ or more conventional unpaid ‘pick ups’. In doing so, they created flat management structures, ‘like a workers’ co-op’ and directed calls to one another depending on their own availability and the requests of the clients.

‘Well, the way it worked at that point was we had this front of being an escort agency...[laughs] But it was just...me and two mates, a workers’ cooperative. And, so you know, all three of us would end up having sex with the same guy if he was someone who was looking to, ah, have some regular, um, involvement with prostitutes and then he’d find his favourite. Um. Yeah, the calls normally went through one of these friends and then he’d call me...’ (Philip, 44).

Philip is active in queer politics, something of an advocate for social change and from his interview and keeping up with him, he blends both assimilationist and radical standpoints in how he lives and communicates. That he used his privilege as an attractive, extroverted young man to make money from having sex with other men – at a time when ‘equality’ for gay and bisexual people was less far less of a reality in Britain – describes the kind of

bravado which he extends to promoting himself as an agency. His politics are also reflected in his construction of this as being ‘a workers’ cooperative’.

The invention and introduction of the agency structure disrupts the dominant repertoires of hierarchy and exploitation. Philip sold sex, then his friends suggested a group venture, then they organised it, then they worked together. The temporal order does not fit neatly with prohibitionist or rescue frameworks that seek to protect vulnerable individuals. In this case, the men seem to have more protection from potential dangers by creating a network to support their business model and notify each of them of their location and their return.

Activists who campaign for people to sell sex in pairs or with a maid or drier advocate that the safety of the person selling sex is improved in these conditions (Mai, 2009b); however, opportunities for abuse remain (Bryce *et al.*, 2015).

The trend of conspicuous consumption continued from the 1980s through the 1990s and with it emerged a recognition of ‘the Pink Pound’ and a somewhat mythologised demographic of men with expendable income that was not (generally) prioritised for supporting wives and children. Stereotypes of gay men as educated, creative and affluent played alongside narratives of ‘deviance’, inequality, and sickness. Disgruntled by low pay and long hours in his design job, Philip began selling sex by picking up a man in a ‘gay’ club. Philip’s actions in Addressing Scarcity, Defining Performativity and Locating Contact are expanded across the same modes of Utilising Embodiment and Thinking Temporally as I described for Matthew earlier in the more traditional Escort Agency structure, and further expanded along different modes of Contact (working with friends, advertising), Embodiment (featuring Philip’s torso in the ads) and Performativity (promoting themselves as ‘escorts’ in ‘an escort agency’). Again referring to Baudrillard’s distorted simulacrum, the men’s escort agency became the copy without the original, reflecting a pretence of reality which then became its own reality.

More recent structures of escort agencies include online profiles which have links to a *number* of different M\$M who also advertise independently (see Figure 6.15, below). These online profiles are similar to websites that are devoted to attracting clients and directing them to profiles for M\$M. Like bricks-and-mortar agencies, the virtual agencies act as a ‘screen’ for both clients and M\$M. Men, whether selling or seeking sexual services, may be required to provide email and credit card details and an Internet Service Provider (ISP) address can be recorded and traced by the host site. This allows interactions to take place in an *anonymised* but not completely *anonymous* environment, and affords at least some level of protection to sellers and buyers. Examples like the one illustrated can also be read historically to show the adoption of new mobile technologies and the interaction between print media and online media strategies for business-to-customer (B2C) advertisers.



(Figure 6.15, ‘Men4Rent.com mobile...’, QX, 21 June 2012, p81)

Virtual agencies commonly charge the seller a monthly fee to advertise, with M\$M paying premium fees to buy better positioning on the website or within the listings. Virtual agencies may also charge potential clients a membership fee for access to additional content.

## 6.6. Summary

The use of visual images, including photographs and videos, in sex work advertising is concurrent with their increase in more mainstream canons. The availability of new, fast, affordable technologies have made conditions for self-produced and self-posted visual content to become both ordinary and more extraordinary. Material bodies are represented

through visual texts and textual bodies are performed by the representations as well as the 'body work' which men do to prepare themselves to be photographed. Representations have become more sexually explicit as laws, attitudes, and technologies have changed. Sexually explicit content is not recognisably different for M\$M and MSM profiles. Some stakeholders – in other words advertisers, user-members and staff working at magazines and applications – have divided opinions about how and where sexually explicit content should be shown. As such, different spaces (re-)construct and are (re-)constructed different representations and performances of queer, sex, and sex work.

Age, race, and nationality are all performed and represented in a variety of ways. Queer sex work advertising might be read as a record of shifts in cultural views; however, I advise against interpreting these texts as records of statistically accurate material identities. Within advertisements aimed at attracting clients, the ages, races, and nationalities of advertisers must be read as socially constructed (even) more literally than theoretically. Similarly, notions of 'agency' (ability to act), as well as 'escort agencies' (hierarchical management structures), self-employment, and 'control' (personal or coerced) are complicated by organisational structures which may be constructed differently in advertisements than in practice.

Internet advertising may be created as individual websites, blogs, profiles on social networking sites, or profiles on agency-style 'Index sites'. These spaces not only create a visibility for sex work to be seen as ordinary, but also create easy entry to trying or starting selling sex. M\$M may advertise independently or through agencies, although advertisements are not always as straight-forward as they seem. Further study of these widely available texts, including the increasingly visual and interactive elements, will no doubt offer exciting new insights into the often hidden experiences of men who sell sex.

## CHAPTER 7: QUEER RATIONALE AND QUEER SEX IN LONDON'S QUEER SCENES

### 7.1. Introduction

Patterns of seeing clients are constructed by M\$M in interviews as being alike to queer men in London 'hooking up' and 'dating' in queer scenes. Here, not only is sex between men normalised, it is recreationalised. Jeffrey Weeks has suggested that researchers allow for variations of other forms of gift giving as well as '*quid pro quo*' transactions. To do so, prostitution might be defined so that 'activities be determined along a continuum between instrumentality and expressiveness and only those transactions in which the "instrumental" (that is, the sexual services for money) is greater than the "expressive" (the degree of affection generated) be called prostitution. The crucial question becomes: would the transaction go on if goods and services were not exchanged? – a question involving self-concepts and identity as well as affection' (Weeks, 1991, p.58).

From my findings, a spectrum of instrumentality and expressiveness to define commercial exchange is problematic. Certainly men (and all people) can be 'expressive' with or without genuine affection or even attraction, even more so in the age of Viagra and within communities where drugs are recreational. Even so, affection is a synecdoche, signified by and/or signifying physical and/or emotional signs.

Second, a model of prostitution that marks the expressive in contrast to the instrumental leaves aside the argument that *procreation* is itself an instrumental motive whilst assuming affectionate motivation within heterosexually parented family structures as a universal given. Arguably then, that which has been constructed as an authentic sex is also instrumental. The crucial question becomes, what counts as 'goods and services'? The definition and spectrum, then, are redundant, as this was the symbolic challenge which prompted the question.

Third, many of my respondents report context, or the plurality of contexts as defining the rationale for their priorities and actions. As I am detailing in this chapter, some of their customers are men with whom they would happily have sex for free, but they *do* still charge. It does not make their appointments any less a form of income, although perhaps makes it *feel* less like work. Some M\$M I interviewed screen their customers so they are only meeting men with whom they would otherwise agree to sex for free. Some of them reported that part of their motivation was to earn money at the same time as continuing to have the kind of sex they enjoyed.

Building on Weeks' theory, I have followed Elizabeth Bernstein's (2007b, p.21) approach 'to complicate the view that the commodification of sexuality is transparently equitable with diminished intimacy and erotic experience'. Looking at data from interviews with men who advertise to sell sex to men in London, I explore and illustrate some of 'the ways in which the spheres of public and private, intimacy and commerce, have interpenetrated one another and thereby been mutually transformed, making the post-industrial consumer marketplace one potential arena for securing authentic, yet bounded, forms of interpersonal connection' (Bernstein, 2007b, p.21).

In this chapter, I use illustrations from interview data to illustrate how men who advertise selling sex in London construct the sex and services they have sold, particularly in relation to dominant discourses of sex work, as well as 'gay' sex in London's queer scenes. Here, I continue to develop a constructivist grounded theory to bring together literature on social attitudes about sex between men and mythologised repertoires about sex on the 'gay scene' with analysis of interview data. I deconstruct some of the similarities between paid and unpaid sex in London's commercial scenes for queer men. I explore some of the ways in which some queer men in London's commercial scene think about sex and feel about sex. I focus on how they see sex in London's commercial scenes as comparable to more explicitly

commercial exchanges. From the interviews, I illustrate some of the breadth of feeling that was expressed about both paid and unpaid sex with other men. Repertoires that mythologise sex in London's queer scene as casual, anonymous, unstigmatised, and unlimited are repeated as well as disrupted in my data.

## **7.2. Capitalising on Ordinary Behaviour: Utilising Embodiment, Defining Performativity, and Locating Contact(s)**

The actions, behaviours and experiences of the men I interviewed who have sold sex to men are similar to those of some men having (unpaid) sex with other men in London's 'gay' scene (The EMIS Network, 2010). Sex between men that includes a financial reward (or cost) follows many of the same patterns for sex between men on the gay scene in London: first, sex between men is *normalised*. It may be *recreationalised*, *casualised*, and/or *anonymised*. It may also be the basis for developing emotional intimacy and personal knowledge (rather than *based on* emotional intimacy and personal knowledge). Whether or not payment is involved, the exchange can include elements of instrumentality that are dictated by differential resources, which in turn structure different levels of agency between the actors (Foucault, 1998). This tension between structure and agency is widely acknowledged and continues to be discussed and debated amongst sociology scholars generally and sexuality scholars more specifically (Bersani, 2011; de Lauretis, 2007; Segal, 1999; Turner, 2000).

My position is to refrain from attempting to dissociate the two and rather than focus on agency, my suggestion is to analyse and discuss *priorities*. Priorities acknowledge the relational and multiple *possible* and potential actions and choices to address the equally relational, multiple and intersectional structures, challenges and obstacles (Bezdek, 1993). 'Priorities' are talked about in terms of policing and resources (Matthews, 2005; Whowell, 2010), but not used for subjects whose actions are policed. This section builds on the A.D.U.L.T. model, focusing on Defining gendered and sexual Performativity, Utilising queer

Embodiment and Locating Contact(s) as ways that illustrate how men selling sex to men is constructed to seem comparable to sex between men on the London gay scene.

### **7.2.1. Normalisation of sex between men**

Sex between men has shifted towards becoming ordinary in the United Kingdom in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century (Weeks, 2007). I build on Weeks' distinction between 'normal' and 'ordinary' with Seidman's (2002) distinction between normalised and normal. Using a more relational model of subjectivity (Emirbayer, 1997; Foucault, 1998) allows recognising the shifts and shifting between 'normal' and 'deviant', the ordinary and the extraordinary, and what seems acceptable or unacceptable) – and that the shifts are not always unidirectional. Legislation and public attitudes have changed dramatically from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century when sex between men was illegal (West and Wölke, 1997). This is a point that is easily overlooked when first considering sex between men in urban London today, but it is a point raised by a number of the men I interviewed, in particular with regards to the dissonance that exists between the sexual identities and the sexual desires of some of their clients. When I asked Henrik, 35 to tell me about the men he was seeing as clients, his reply was, 'So, lots of business men, lots of married men. Um, younger sort of city boys. Um, I mean it's definitely lots of people who are straight or bi, by and large.' His description of the men who have paid him for sex both emphasises and disrupts repertoires about sex work, as well as other heteronormative repertoires. Men who pay for sex are often described in unflattering or even violent terms (Field Notes), and their identities are often discursively conflated with characteristics of older age, loneliness. Conversely, discourses of marriage in Britain emphasise monogamy and fidelity. 'Business men' can be constructed as hardworking, responsible, perhaps conservative, sometimes experiencing high levels of stress and taking calculated risks. Henrik's profile emphasised discretion and as mentioned earlier, did not include a public

photo but attached photos to his messages. Both the lack of public photos and the inclusion of private photos anchored his message of discretion.

When I asked Matthew how his experience working for an agency compared to his expectations, he described the tone of making first contact as being ‘very low key’. He went on to describe the ‘flavour’ of the appointments he attended and the activities he was requested.

M: It was very *vanilla*. And my experience of all my clients was exactly that. Probably even less than vanilla. Almost quite juvenile in some cases, with some of the fellas I met. Well, when I say that, not juvenile, I suppose. I mean, a lot of my clients were straight. And were married. And were generally over 40. Um. Not always. Some of them were under 40. But what they wanted and what they got off on was pretty low-level sex. Generally no fucking and sometimes not even any oral sex. So just wanking and kissing. So I sort of – I mean I was pretty – initially I was probably quite surprised by how little I had to do. Which suited me (Matthew, 41).

Matthew creates a hierarchy of tastes and performances by describing them as ‘vanilla’ and ‘juvenile’, comparing sex to a sweet, like ice cream, contrasting the men who hired him with men whose sexual tastes might be ‘mature’ or ‘sophisticated’. He categorises their requests and the activities that stimulated them ‘as pretty low-level sex’. He constructs a scale where kissing and masturbation are this ‘low-level’ and escalates that to oral sex and (ultimately) penetration. Again, through the descriptions of sex and requests, the participants (in my interviews, and in their encounters) queer the notion of Rubin’s (1993) ‘Charmed Circle’, disrupting but also emphasising some of its elements. These fractally patterned configurations of ‘sex’ and ‘sex work’ contrast the headline-catching stories of horror and abuse that are reported about women and girls who are forced and coerced to be penetrated by multiple men per day (Jeffreys, 1997, 2010).

S:... you get some really harmless old guys and I have a good old laugh with them and you know, “Come on! You those hands aren’t allowed.” They’re harmless. They’ve been married for forty, fifty years’ time [...] and they finally want to come out of the closet or want to experiment with something, you know, there is nothing wrong with that and there is very little *harm* in that (Steve,33).

There is a marked contrast between the self-descriptions of the men I interviewed and their descriptions of many of their clients' sexual identities. In interviews and 'in the field', participants described themselves as having been out and relatively open about their gay or bisexual identities for a number of years. The way they described the experiences and sexual identifications of many of their clients included men who were as often closeted, sometimes married to women, and sometimes inexperienced or even hesitant about expressing and experiencing physical and sexual intimacy with another man. Keith, 24 shared a story about a man who was too nervous to take off his t-shirt and boxers and with a condom on underneath his boxer shorts he ejaculated as soon as they touched.

K: ...And I think it got as far as he sort of got on top of me and touched me and he like came, without any sort of – I mean, that was it, and then after that, like obviously I could, I had a sort of chat with him about things that happened before and he sort of explained to me a little bit about what was going on.

A: Do you find that quite difficult sometimes?

K: I find, yeah, I mean, I find it quite difficult when I, when it's somebody who you see is quite vulnerable and there's certain situations where you think, "Should I be charging this person?" [pause] You know what I mean, especially when it's a younger guy, as well, but at the same time, I mean, you have to think about – you know what I mean – I mean it's not a charity. [A: Yeah.] You know, it's a job. It's a business...

Keith had a conversation with the client after the man's climax. He told me they talked about the man's religious and family background and how those were influencing his relationships and shaped the means by which he had sought contact with another man. His quote illustrates a point that came up throughout the interviews: the ways that power is experienced between one man paying another man for sex are not static and are gendered through heteronormativity. Repertoires of heteronormative and patriarchal power can be emphasised, but also disrupted through the normalisation of queer identities.

The interviewees made numerous references to their own past, present (and future) boyfriends and partners, dating. In my sample, every man made general and specific

acknowledgements of having or wanting to date, have relationships and sex with other men as ordinary and desirable. This affirmative sense of self-regard in relation to their own same-sex sexuality, identity, experience and culture constructs power for M\$M that is a relatively stark contrast to performative questioning or hiding of closeted men (who are talked about in the context of this research as being some of the men who pay for sex and body work).

Starting from a position of seeing sex with other men as normalised or even positive adds power to the position of the man selling sex. Discourse of sex worker agency that work from a position that sex with men is not desirable will understandably point to distress. Certainly the performative repertoire of an individual must be central to understanding the context in which they sell sex (when/ if assessment of risk or resilience is required or invited).

This understanding of power from the standpoint of the sex worker in relation to the client also disrupts dominant discourses about clients having exclusive and/or totalising power over sex workers through macro social structures and the micro socially contracted exchange. By extension, this finding may apply to some women who sell sex and employ power through their knowledge and experience of sexual activities (Schreiber, 2015). The characteristic of being positive towards sex with men is a key (starting) point to unpicking discourses about how that sex is negotiated, a point that is often egregiously ignored.

### *Hierarchies of embodied satisfaction and pleasure*

Having sex with men is not just seen as normalised, it also can be seen as desirable. In our interviews, men talk a range of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the sex they had and their paying clients. Their constructions of their experiences on a spectrum of positive or negative were related to their interpretation of their assignations with clients as having qualities that gave them pleasure or distress. I turned to feminist theory on embodiment and its

relationships with empowerment and gender to interpret these accounts (Holland *et al.*, 2004).

The absence of effective empowerment [has been] linked to the absence of bodily pleasure in the accounts of most of the young women [...] While sexuality and aspects of embodiment are clearly socially constructed, the bodily contact entailed in unsafe sex has a material grounding which requires practical management. Although the body which engages in sexual activity is always socially constituted and managed, it is also always material, hairy, discharging, emitting noises, susceptible to pleasure and pain (Holland *et al.*, 2004, p.7).

The authors' observation of the interrelationships between material embodiment and gendered performativity are supported by my findings here. Holland and colleagues (2004) contrasted the experiences of men and women and explain that their findings illustrated gendered divisions between young women and young men; however, I found this excerpt was very useful in framing the accounts of the men I interviewed as well as the observation that '[it] was male sexual performance that constituted the point of the bodily encounter' (Holland *et al.*, 2004, p.8) . With my data from men who are same-sex attracted describing their experiences of selling sex to men, I argue a troubling of 'the intrusion of the male body into the intimate social relationship' is *not* unproblematic (Holland *et al.*, 2004, pp.7–8). When men sell sex to other men, they also express the problematics of disciplining 'their unruly bodies into conformity with male desires' (Holland *et al.*, 2004, p.8). The ways they construct their bodies with clients, in their advertisements and in our interviews shapes how they experience satisfaction or distress.

Victor, 41, also referred to a range of feelings about his paid sexual experiences, saying that 'most of time it was fine, sometimes fuckin great, sometimes [I] just got through it'. Philip, 42, also talked about a range of experiences. 'I mean I've had some really good sex with paying punters, and some just fairly nice encounters. The occasional one where I thought, "Hmm, not keen on you, mister.'" He emphasised this throughout his interview.

Uh, yeah, I enjoyed it. Usually – I mean, I very seldom – I never had sex with anybody where I thought, “This is absolutely awful. Why am I doing this?” You know, I might not have always got off on them, but you know, I had, I had, I had fun (Philip, 42).

There is a literature on the ‘strategies’ used for ‘coping’ with sex in sex work (Sanders, 2004; Vanwesenbeeck, 2013; Weeks, 1991). In our interviews, I was initially surprised that men talked about ‘good sex’ and ‘great sex’ as well as the times that they did not enjoy. Given the range of experiences that men described to me, and some of the tensions that highlights in a discourse of ‘coping’, I have not expanded those findings to the extent that my data allows but do offer examples here. For instance, Keith made some reflections that expanded on Philip’s point that attraction was not felt evenly with all clients.

Yeah, I mean, I can usually find something that turns me on about the situation. I can be quite mechanical about it. Like, I mean I never take, normally, take Viagra or anything. Um, I mean there’s only been sort of like one or two occasions where I’ve really struggled to.. to find anything.. horny about the situation. I mean, I can seem to get it up (Keith, 24).

Keith mentions what I refer to as ‘the mechanics of desire’ in my coding. The ways that attraction and arousal are felt and the ways men’s bodies react to visual, physical, verbal, and social stimulation is significant in how men’s sexual agency and consent are recorded and interpreted. Keith uses the metaphor of being ‘quite mechanical’ about his sexual performance with clients. He builds on this metaphor as a physical, or physiological, construct, moving away from a consideration of the affective. My interpretation is that he emphasises the physical by referring to the drug Viagra, instead of mentioning other types of drug use that affects inhibition, sensation, or emotion such as alcohol, other prescription drugs, or illegal substances which are discursively associated with repertoires of ‘coping’. Quinn, Marcos and Paulo all referred to Viagra; however, reviewing the sex work literature I found relatively little reference to it (Mai, 2009b; Mimiaga *et al.*, 2009).

Keith also told me about the sex he had when he was in a long-term relationship with a boyfriend. He told me about growing up in a smaller city where his romantic and sexual

options with other men were more limited than in London and from that, how it seems quite ordinary to be intimate with a person to whom he is not physically attracted and to have sex with a man he does not ‘fancy’. I asked him to tell me about how he compares his personal ‘sex life’ with the sex he has professionally.

Um, they’re different because obviously I’m.. going for a guy that I find attractive and that I – something about them that turns me on. Whereas if it’s a client, something about me turns them on. Um, and same – what’s similar about them. Mm. Quite a lot probably. I mean, the thing is, the reason I find it easy is because when, because I’m from [Anonymised City] when I was younger, because there’s just [chuckles] not very many nice guys in [names city], I found myself – I was like, I would be so horny that I would just end up having sex with somebody that I didn’t really.. like.. that much, just because I was so horny, so having sex with guys that I don’t fancy.. has been.. really, like something I did. I did it for free, you know what I mean? [A: Yeah, yeah, yeah.] So that’s why it’s ea– I don’t have much of a problem with it. (Keith, 24)

We discuss sex in relationships and the problems he sees with binary models of expression in opposition to instrumentality (Weeks, 1991) which would ignore or erase the instrumental mode of sex at different times in long term and/or civilly recognised relationships. He makes comparisons with heterosexual couples who meet at work, have disparate levels of income, and act to have a single income family where one spouse supports the other. We agree that the level of attraction between partners is ideally but not realistically matched equally all of the time. I asked him if he had experienced that himself.

A: Have you been in that situation not for money, where you’ve.. kind of looked for the thing that would.. would –

K: “What am I here for?”

A: Yeah, or where you’ve kind of been in the situation where you’ve just thought, “Actually, let’s just get through this,” like, you know?

K: Um, Yeah, with my first boyfriend...

A: [I burst out laughing.]

K: [Laugh.] I remember that specifically. It was like, “Oh, God. This is really not fun.” [Laughing.] (Keith, 24)

This was something we both laughed about and something to which we could both relate. I chose this excerpt from our conversation to illustrate that ‘coping strategies’ and structural coercions are not limited to paid sexual encounters, again disrupting and queering a neat

binary of expression and instrumentality. An ideological and political aim to protect people from explicit coercion, sexual assault and rape must make use of critical theory in order to be robust on behalf of people who genuinely seek protection from abuse.

Whilst his own replies were overwhelmingly in favour of selling sex, Quinn was not unaware that for others the experience was not as favourable. He made references to some of the problems or 'downsides' he recognises and warns others to avoid.

I tell these guys, you know what, two months later, they've stopped because of all the down sides, all the things they don't like, or they can't get it up with guys they don't fancy or can't get it up at *all* without drugs or fuck knows and they realise, "Oh, it's a much harder job than we thought." And they just tend to think, certainly the young lads tend to think, "I like having sex. Why don't I get paid for it?" And they start getting paid £100 an hour. "Fookin' hell! I'm going to do that." They always think they're going to get 23 year old lads. Who are hiring them. 23 year old lads are exactly the sort who can't hire them. They get hired by *loads* of 55 year old guys. To them it must feel like absolute work. Absolute nightmare. It must show in their eyes, in their body, and all, etcetera, etcetera, and all the rest of it. And um, ah, then they've got to do fucking drugs to do the job and they've got to keep the job going to do the drugs. God. None of that applies here. I don't do any drugs at all. Ah. So. Go on. There you go (Quinn, 42).

Marcos, 24, echoed in his interview some of the feelings and reactions that Quinn had projected onto the experiences of younger men. On his profile, Marcos had listed the age range as 18 to 50 years old for the men he was interested to meet. His explanation was that he felt uncomfortable with being held and became impatient with men who insisted or would not 'get off' and would sometimes slap them. 'After 50 they aren't looking for sex, they want a cuddle and they are wanna kissing. And I said to you, in the beginning it was fine. But after four-and-a-half years, it just annoyed me' (Marcos, 24). Marcos reflects that some of his reactions are related to his father's quick temper and feelings that came up around his mother's terminal diagnosis and her recent death. He then expands his explanation about choosing to cap the age range of clients he will see.

Also, one thing that men – the main thing, they take too long to cum. Which, most of my clients: they cum, they go. Old people, they take an hour, just take an hour. It's

like. [I chuckle.] And it's a lot of hell, you know. I think, "God would you just cum?" but – I know you it's not the right thing to say. [A: No! It's—] I'm not saying anything like, [in high-pitched voice] "[inaudible]" not like that, but you know, the fact the hygiene, and I don't know why, old people can have that *smell* and it just, the smell for me, I'm problematic. Smell for me is automatic no. If I'm fucking, and it happens you know, and something come out, I really don't mind because you just take the condom off and then [mimes it away] you know, all gone. But the smell, the old person's there. So. It turns me off. [inaudible] old people smell for two days. I'm no really like that. So. Some people can keep taking, doing that. But I reached a point, and I'm like, I'm not going to be putting myself in this kind of situation anymore because it's just driving me mental (Marcos, 24).

Marcos's recognition of some of the physical and physiological changes of men's bodies generally, and his own displeasure with 'old people smell', frame a limit to what he is prepared to do and whom he is prepared to see. His quote illustrates how participants describe some of the choices they make and acknowledges that his professional choices are a part of his self-care. Marcos points to having made his client range more restrictive based on his experiences and his preferences after a period of four-and-a-half years. Selling sex is his primary source of income and the way he frames his work and finances temporally are points I discuss in Chapter 8, but I want to pause to point out that when Craig experienced similar discomfort and distress with his clients' bodies, his action was to stop selling sex, but his primary income was not from selling sex. Marcos's action was to narrow his client profile. In Chapter 8, I make other comparisons with the ways intersections of Addressing scarcity and Utilising embodiment are given different performative and temporal structures by different M\$M.

M\$M also told me about the types of men that they find attractive, and how that shapes their feelings about an appointment. 'I remember this very tall, black guy arrived and he was so good looking. We played all night and defo would have done it for free. He had ten plus [inches] and he knew every trick in book' (Victor, 41). In his brief description, Victor reinforces his agency, claiming that the appointment lasted 'all night', referring to it with the

colloquial 'played', and comparing his paying client with someone for whom he 'would have done it for free'. Quinn sets this reciprocity out as his *modus operandi*.

Um, so, I've got this weird default of, it didn't happen — it wasn't planned, but it ends up the type of guy that hires me is the type of guy I like. Because I put across this Alpha Male macho image, of all my pictures, my advertising, etcetera, and I'm never bottomed on films or so and so, present – present – present whichever way you do, um, to almost create this brand, this dominant dominance brand, to some extent, so I get loads of fucking — coppers hire me, firemen, builders, rugby players. These are the guys I love to fuck. All weekend, when I'm having time out. And they're the guys that pick me to hire. Because they're saying, "Well, I don't want some fucking 20 year old. I want a fucking bloke who's going to wrestle with me and fucking hold me down or gonna be fuckin', really fuckin' dirty and nasty type sort of stuff, so I've kind of ended up, ended up say by default, by accident rather than by plan, the type of guys that hire me are the type of guys I like. (Quinn, 42)

### *Reflecting on standpoints*

The experiences where men 'just got through it' were emphasised or downplayed, depending on the overall standpoint they were offering to me in our interviews. Quinn, 42, emphasised how much he loves what he does generally and was *effusive* about his gratitude for all of the opportunities selling sex has afforded him, including the money, the free time and 'the sex'. (I discuss money and time as scarce resources in depth in Chapter 8.) However, when I asked him to expand on what he thought some of those problems were he expressed some frustration that researchers and the media focus on the problems. '[Exhales] The downside. Um. Everybody does the downside. Every interview you do, it's always the downside, the downside. And you – which is fine. And you find yourself overemphasising about 5% of the time. I mean 95%, believe you me...' (Quinn, 42).

What Quinn illustrates are his experiences *talking about sex work*. His perception that negative aspects are emphasised is a recurring criticism of much research and literature on 'prostitution' (Boynton and Cusick, 2006; Cusick *et al.*, 2009). This point remains contentious and the breadth of experiences, range of interpretations, and depth of standpoints

has divided feminist and other social sciences scholars and activists (e.g. Mactaggart and O'Connell Davidson, 2008).

This visibility of this repertoire that positions sex with men as not only normalised (or even ordinary) and also desired by many, complicates the androcentric, heteronormative ideologies that historically stigmatised sexual activity between men. Sex with men is not only acceptable to these men, it is valorised and sometimes lauded instead of stigmatised, feared or scorned. Those repertoires of stigma and scorn which have shaped popular and many academic interpretations of M\$M do remain even for some MSM: those for whom contact with other MSM is scarce, those whose embodied features do not – yet or any longer – align with dominant (sub)cultural values (i.e. of beauty, of attraction, of able-bodiedness) (Owens, 2015; Sanders, 2015; Tyler *et al.*, 2016), and those whose performative standpoint seem uncommon (e.g. specific fetishes) or extraordinary (Barker and Langdrige, 2010; Chaline, 2010). The inclusion of cash or explicitly-instrumental, material transactions remains its own performatively, extraordinary (queer) position in 21<sup>st</sup> century Britain. Repertoires of valorised, queer sex may also contrast to the now mythologised<sup>49</sup>, radical (politically lesbian?) feminisms that underscored any form of heteronormative (e.g. penetrative) sex as being coercive and oppressive (Dworkin, 1987) and the homophobic, biphobic and transphobic policies that continued to dominate British life for decades after the Wolfenden Report (Weeks, 2007; West and Wöelke, 1997). In the more than half-century since the Wolfenden committee reported on homosexuality and prostitution, there has been a marked contrast between the progress of LGBT rights and reforms and the debates and challenges related to citizenship and selling sex (Crofts, 2014; Weeks, 2011).

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<sup>49</sup> Here, as elsewhere, I use 'mythologised' in the sense that Barthes' (1993) essays illustrate additional meaning and levels of signification are added through the retelling and rehearsal of a narrative, not to infer that radical or lesbian feminisms were fiction.

*A note on men who do 'Gay for Pay'*

'Sex between men' as a category represents/ is represented by considerable variation. This relates not only to what is performed, but to modes of embodied emotions and a sense or absence of pleasures. Having discussed experiences comparing satisfaction, sensation, and performativity in paid sex exchange as well as unpaid sex that is not 'for pleasure' (e.g. Keith in relationship), any hierarchical positioning of men having sex with men is further complicated by the stories of men who are 'gay for pay'. Past research has not purposively sampled for only same-sex attracted men, but has combined men with a range of sexual identities (e.g. gay, straight, bisexual) into a single category of male sex workers<sup>50</sup> (Allen, 1980; Caukins and Coombs, 1976; Dorais, 2005). My sample was designed to be men who have identified as gay (with all the caveats that entails) so I did not attempt to recruit men who have sex with men solely in the context of being paid. More research might be done with a sample of only men who have sex with men when seeking payment and certainly findings around how they Define and defend performativity will vary from this sample, although patterns of Addressing scarcity, Utilising embodiment, Locating contact(s), and Thinking temporally are likely to show more consistency. In my research, Keith and Matthew shared details about working with other men who were paid to have sex with men despite identifying as heterosexual and *not* identifying as being fulfilled by sex with men. These stories are useful, not as simple second-hand data, but for exploring how gay-identified men discursively construct their own subject-position and its interrelationship with their own agency in what they do without explicit material transactions (e.g. having sex with other men) and what they do for money (having sex with other men for money). As for the previous examples, I checked these stories as secondary data against my participants' personal stories using the A.D.U.L.T. model (see Appendix T) which I developed through applying Charmaz's (2006)

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<sup>50</sup> I note etiology discussed in previous chapters on the use of the terms sex work, prostitution, homosexual, gay, and queer.

constructivist grounded theory. In my data, Keith and Matthew compare their own subject-positions (as men who are attracted to men) as more favourable, more powerful and more agentic than straight-identified men who have sex with men for payment. Keith's story comes from the work he had done for a porn film. He told me about filming a scene where he had a threesome with two other men, who identified as heterosexual. He described the experience to me first, telling me it was 'really horrible' and 'really strange'. He attributed the awkward dynamic between the performers to their off-screen heterosexual identities. He contrasted what he thought of as 'a fantasy for some people, but it was just horrible. It was really horrible.' He made the observation that these men could not ejaculate and were using Viagra, but struggled with identifying what it was about their interactions that made him uncomfortable.

K: I guess, I kind of think that guy was straight though and he was just sort of doing it for the money, but it was obviously – it's a bit desperate, I think, if you're being a gay prostitute for.. [Gaydar Instant Message sounds in background] for money.. if you're straight.

A: I was going to say, but you're, *you're* doing it for money.

K: Yeah, but I'm.. gay. But I'm saying a straight guy, sort of, forcing themselves to do something that's really not.. normal to them...

A: Right, right, right.

K: ...is..slightly different (Keith, 24).

For Keith, sex with men is his norm, so 'normal' as well as ordinary – even sex with men he does not desire wholeheartedly. By comparison, he posits the straight-identified man as being desperate, and only having sex with men for money. Keith employs a binary view of sexuality (gay or straight), rejecting the potential queerness of men in relationships with women and reinforcing a heteronormative repertoire. Unpacking the priorities and identities of straight identified men who have sex with men for pay warrants further investigation from primary data sources (i.e. interviewing those men).

Matthew tells me about one of the other escorts he worked with at the agency. Here again, Matthew positions himself as being in a stronger position to the heterosexually identified man.

I did do a threesome job with one guy who was an Australian. We had to see a Dutch businessman. It was only a one hour job and this guy was – I remember meeting him outside the hotel and he was gorgeous. You know, I just remember thinking, “Oh God, you’re gorgeous.” [Laughs.] So we went up and did this job, and the Dutch businessman, annoyingly liked, preferred him to me [...] And I remember he ended up *shagging* the Dutch businessman, and um, anyway he can’t really sort of like – [pauses] I don’t know. [...] Um, but anyway, then we finished the job and I remember him being quite sad, just really down, so I said to him, “Do you want to go for an after-work-drink?” So we went up to the, um, we went up to the, uh, restaurant, you know the Fifth Floor at “Harvey Nicks” and it turns out he was *straight* and he was an *actor* but he couldn’t get any work and he was doing this to get by and he was just miserable, absolutely like, as low as low and I just thought, “This is the side of the business that you don’t see.” It’s probably the most prevalent side of the business (Matthew, 41).

Matthew’s relationship to his co-worker is dynamic. He feels ranked lower by the client but then alludes to his co-worker’s inability to perform and then his own role as the comforting companion for someone who would genuinely be employing coping strategies, even in this case a drink after the job. The story illustrates some of the complexities of agency. Although the colleague had taken employment as an escort to have sex with men, in other words that he had taken action to do this as work over other options, it was not what he wanted to be doing as a career, nor was it what he wanted to be doing sexually. Matthew openly expresses a number of feelings for the man with whom he is working. In his account, there are tensions between Matthew’s initial attraction to the co-worker, annoyance or injury that he was considered less attractive by the client, empathy with his co-worker’s feelings, surprise at his identity and then sympathy. However, his account does not question the logic of the action to use sex work as an option. He only says that ‘This is the side of the business that you don’t see. It’s probably the most prevalent side of the business.’

Jack, the director of a health services organisation for M\$M told me that for some of the men he sees who come to the UK from Brazil and Eastern Europe, selling sex is a way for them to

performatively navigate through definitions of acceptability and stigma. Men can performatively move through sexual experiences and sexual identifications with the rationale of addressing financial scarcity, and in a context which has the potential to be temporally bounded because of its cultural and geographic distance from the structures of their homes: political, religious and family.

I think again, that's the same when we look at the East European context. They're, you know – very much in most parts of East Europe it's still illegal to be gay. If you're HIV positive you'll be imprisoned. So, you know, [...] they come here and then find quite a liberated society in many ways. So, certainly, I've seen guys that I've worked with clinically who've come in and identified when they've first come to visit: "I'm definitely straight, and I have a girlfriend, and I only do this for the money. I limit the activities that I do," and then maybe, you know, you see them a couple of months later in the clinic and they're there with a couple of their friends from Eastern Europe as well, and just watching the dynamics in the waiting room, it's like, "Hang on. This isn't the typical behaviour of a straight guy." [A: Mm-hmm.] Erm, and then, you know, it gets to maybe six months or a year down the line and suddenly they're introducing their boyfriend to you. So, again, there's a kind of, you know, um, kind of observation over time about, "Well maybe it's about being in a different context and somebody maturing into their sexuality and being in a society that allows them to be who they are, that maybe there's a kind of shift, erm, and it's certainly something that I've observed (Jack, health services director).

I have maintained the details of the steps that Jack described from his own observations of men who visited his clinics so as not to construct the shifts in identity as binary or determined by singular events or thresholds. Jack constructs sexuality along a continuum, and whilst some of his interpretations seem speculative and normative (what is 'typical behaviour of a straight guy?') his perspective guided me to narrow my sample to a more homogenous focus with men who identify as 'gay' – or in the end simply 'same sex attracted'. Equally, the secondary nature of the introductions of boyfriends does not exclude instrumental or explicitly financial arrangements so my interpretation of these examples is cautious but supports other work with young, migrant men who sell sex to men (Mai and King, 2009; Mai, 2010, 2011).

The phenomenon of doing – or in the vernacular '*being*' – 'Gay for Pay' complicates

hierarchies that position heterosexuality over homosexuality or bisexuality (Rubin, 1993). Men can be paid to have sex with other men (but this is reported less often to be paid by only women, and not at all in my sample). When men who ordinarily enjoy sex with men are paid to have sex, they exercise an agency (as choice, action and empowerment) by in addressing an experience of scarcity. There is a queer disruption to dominant orders of hegemonic heteronormativity as MSM defining what they are able to do through utilising their sexual-*preference* in a way that is financially rewarding as M\$M, in contrast to ways that queer identities have denied men<sup>51</sup> the privileges of marriage, property and family that have historically been attached to heterosexual coupling.

### **7.2.2. Sex as (consumable) recreation**

Specifically in the context of London's queer sex scenes, where sex is recreationalised through its signification as recreational rather than procreational, and further short-term rather than ongoing, sexual contact can include an emotion and an emotional rationale, regardless of whether there is a payment for the transaction. Further, for many MSM in London's queer scenes, sexual contact can be constructed as a signifier of recreation but is not always constructed as signifying a primarily emotional referent. Given the definition of 'recreation' as that which is done for pleasure and not work, one might argue to compare the recreational motive against the instrumental motive and eschew 'authenticity' as any ontologically meaningful category; however, recreation can be *paid for* as in other types of body work such as massage, body contact sports such as rugby, pay to watch or for membership to play whilst others are paid. Finally, significant numbers of people who pay for recreation in whatever its form, have had to earn their money through work. To define the authentic as absent of an instrumental rationale erases the prioritisation of material and temporal resources that is a reality of even recreational consumption for the majority of consumers, if not all consumers.

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<sup>51</sup> I refer specifically to men in this context, emphasising the tensions between historical and cultural 'privileges' of gender and sexuality for all women.

The relationships between recreation and paid work are not distinct boundaries, but rather queered through structural commercialism of recreation as a consumable product.

Gaydar creates this (virtual) recreational space, similar to bars, clubs or saunas. Even in that case, M\$M compare the sex they do for work as similar to the sex they do recreationally.

Craig, 38, compares using the Gaydar chatrooms for paid sex to how he uses them in his personal, unpaid time as a fee paying member. He said, 'In fact, it wasn't *that* dissimilar to you know going around to somebody's place for a shag. It was just that at the end, you know, I think he actually *gave* me the money.'

Craig used his personal profile to start selling sex. Craig's entry to selling sex using his personal profile through the chatrooms in Gaydar was immediately available to him at no extra cost and was closely related to his ordinary practices of using the internet for social-sexual networking and casual sex. Craig's story illustrates how some participants in my research reported initially using personal profiles to experiment with sex work.

I had dated a guy in 2001 briefly – well for 3 months. He was a rent boy, um as a living and I suppose that piqued my interest in it. Um, and then after, it was sort of in the early days of Gaydar when you could go into the chat rooms and it wasn't really monitored, um and you could go and pretend to sort of be an escort, well anyone could go into the escort – there was an escort *and* client room. It was just a list in the java chat of Gaydar and you know you could – I just got chatting to a guy one night and it wasn't immediately that we met but eventually, he was like an oriental student and, um, he said that he had been dating this guy but the guy, they split up because the guy had become a rent boy and he wanted to find out what it was like to have a, get a rent boy so I pretended to be a rent boy and eventually – because it was more, it was more kind of like, as a, like a lark to see whether I could do it or not because you know, I wasn't particularly attracted to him and I just wondered if I could do it, um and eventually he lived over in sort of near [me] or something and I went over there late one night. Um. I think I fucked him and it was all over in about half hour tops. He paid me £80. It was, you know, it was a complete kind of... well it was easier than I thought. I walked away – I felt a bit like a

fraud but I suppose I gave him what he wanted. I don't know what he got out of it. (Craig, 38)

Craig already had contact with a boyfriend who earned his primary income from sex work. He described his awareness and his curiosity about how easy or difficult it would be from a contact approach. In his description of his first time being paid, he refers to another man who had his own narrative of dating a man and then breaking up with him because of sex work. Craig assumed the role and identity of a sex worker. His story fits quite well with Dorais' (2005) Liberationist Life Pattern; however, considering his Insider position in queer online social networks and queer sex work, his story eludes a single categorisation.

Craig experimented with selling sex for a brief period but gave it up because he did not enjoy the sex he was having and found the men who hired him to be physically unattractive.

Craig cites a number of different factors that influenced his decision to sell sex: experience with casual, anonymised sex, curiosity, excitement about payment, affiliation with another person who sold sex, visibility of existing marketing and access to marketing resources.

These factors are common amongst the men that I interviewed, and are repeated in other interviews.

George compares his business selling sex with the social-sexual behaviours of his 'clubbing friends'. For him, there is no moral distinction between what he does for money and the actions, choices, or behaviours of those friends.

It doesn't make me a bad person because I sleep with somebody for money. Most of [my friends] sleep with people for nothing [chuckles] as I reminded them. [Laughs.] (George, 42).

George's quote is an example of what men reported to me in interviews and something that I understood when I realised I had also been an 'Insider' on this scene at different times in my life. The meaning placed upon the explicit financial transaction takes on greater significance when the patterns of behaviour, the choices, and the social structures are so comparable.

Craig and George's interviews highlighted the interplay/ inter-relatedness/ relationality of various modes that are operationalised across a number of different typologies in models like Dorais' (2005) Life Patterns for the men that I interviewed in London's queer scenes. For example, Craig's actions are prompted by characteristics that would position him as variously an Insider and a Liberationist – in the first case, through his affiliation, knowledge of the market, spaces and subculture and in the latter through his initial curiosity and excitement.

Action categories from GT Analysis	Craig
Addressing Scarcity	<i>not</i> financial scarcity; a wish to 'prove' that he 'could' sell sex
Defining Performativity	liking sex; liking sex with some men, dependent on physical features; knowing about sex work; presenting as culturally masculine; performing as an 'active, top'; keeping his role separate from his main income career
Utilising Embodiment	being young, being able to get an erection;
Locating Contact(s)	Knowing a friend who sells sex; Seeing escort ads in magazines; Having a Gaydar Member profile; Lurking in Escort and Client chatrooms
Thinking Temporally	his ideation and his first practice were not simultaneous; his experiences were bounded to particular types of men's body characteristics; he quit within months; his experiences were bounded to a particular time in his life

**(Figure 7.1, Example of action categories from analysis: Craig)**

Craig detailed how his first commercial episode was very similar to how he might otherwise conduct an unpaid, personal exchange. I coded, categorised and labelled the processes he described and used these to check against other interviews where they were repeated as patterns in other interviews, as well as with my own experiences. Where I needed to expand or amend the categories to match all of the examples or address narrative omissions, I did so, adding step 5 to include for example, Henrik's description of requests for 'extras' after personal contact and amending step 4 to include descriptions of in-calls :

1. initial contact and social exchange (online chat),
2. evaluation of level of attraction,
3. negotiated and agreed transaction (contract),
4. travel to a proximate location, or prepare for arrival
5. personal contact (and confirm consent or renegotiate contract)
6. sexual contact (with or without other social exchange), and
7. conclusion – in this case, collecting payment before departure

For more on how gay, bi-, curious and other men use Gaydar, see Mowlabocus 2010. I return to this model of client engagement and some of the dynamics of exchanging cash in Chapter 8.

Some participants revealed that their personal Gaydar profiles were the conduit to their first paid exchanges when other members offered them money after an initial rejection.

A: Was it a sudden thing when you started? Like, what was the decision to – ?

G: Uh, my friends went out at the weekend, went to saunas, met people, did it for nothing. I thought, “Fuck it, I’ll get paid for it.” [Smiles.] It was that simple.

A: And how did you start?

G: Uh. How did I start? Somebody messaged me on Gaydar, and, I wasn’t really that interested. And then they turned around and said, “I’ll pay you for it.” And that’s what started it. And they did. And I enjoyed it. I get a buzz out of getting paid for it.

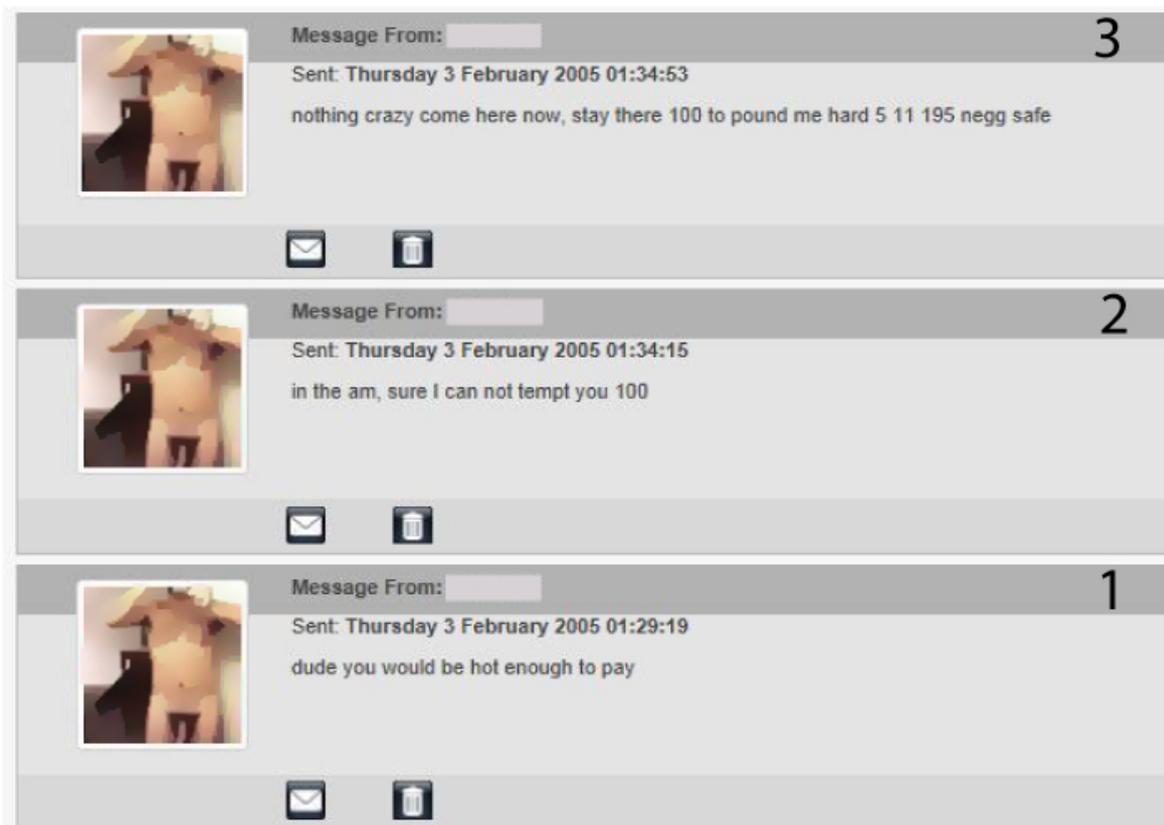
Because I would normally do it anyway. So fuck it. (George, 42)

Like Craig, George highlights the similarities between the casual, sometimes anonymous sex that he witnesses around him as a consumer in the gay (men’s) ‘scene’ in London. For him, there is no moral distinction between what he does and the casual, recreational and anonymised sex his friends are having when they go to clubs and saunas on the weekend to meet other men and have sex, whether they take someone home for what may be a ‘one night stand’ or have ‘sex on the premises’.

George’s story also brings in the multiple ways that sex is Commercially Sited for men in London’s queer scenes. His friends are accessing (unpaid) sex by paying to attend clubs and saunas. He, and others, are paying to inhabit the Gaydar network. In physical and virtual spaces, gay (and bisexual, queer, questioning and curious) men are paying to make social-sexual contact with other men, regardless of (or in part because of) the extent to which the social and the sexual are combined or distinct (Mowlabocus, 2010). The online proposition

can be seen as an anonymised, (post-)modern extension of a face-to-face proposition, and the offer of a cash incentive is an extension of both the commercial, paid-for, capitalist space as well as the practice of incentivised exchange, sex, and relationships.

Other participants in my interviews also emphasised these patterns of location and contact in detailing how they use online spaces and how the distinctions between personal use and commercial use are made fuzzy by the offers they receive. My own experience reinforces the authenticity of these stories. Even before collecting data for this research, I had been propositioned on a number of occasions by men making offers to pay me for sex. See for example, the messages from an anonymised proposition in Figure 7.2 below.



**(Figure 7.2, Instant messages from 'B', 3 February 2005)**

At just before 1:30 in the morning while I was studying for my MSc, I was online on Gaydar.

A man whose profile handle identified him as a bisexual man sent me an instant message. I



then return to stay where I am, or go to him and stay because there is 100(£/\$/pence) or go to him *or* stay and have him come to me. The ‘pound me hard’ seems quite clear and the final numbers indicate the ‘stats’ he is using to describe his body: 5 feet 11 inches, 195 pounds, last tested negative for HIV, and practices safer sex. The interpretation of his claim to know his negative status remains a tension and can be problematic for men in London’s queer scenes who have casual sex partners (Davis, 2002; Yin *et al.*, 2014) and the meanings given to ‘safe’ can vary with some men believing that both partners having relatively recent confirmations of negative status is a suitable description of safe as an absolute term (instead of ‘safer’). Whether or not I replied to that message is unclear with none of my own replies recorded and no further messages from him. I did not meet him and I did go to work the next day.

What this example illustrates is some of the detail of the types of exchanges that the men like Craig and George have had online with other Gaydar members offering to pay them for sex or including a cash transaction in their negotiation. I am not a paying Member or even regular Guest on the site anymore and with the passing of 10 years and the removal of my profile content, I have not received similar offers for several years. A survey of (possibly younger?) men who use Gaydar and similar apps like Grindr and Scruff may reveal how commonly this occurs, how often it is accepted or refused, and what contexts and terms men accept or reject. The lines *between* the social and the commercial are being blurred or eroded as divisions (and reinforced as connections) by institutional(-ised) structures.

What this example also illustrates is the value of (re-)engaging with Queer Ethnography and acknowledging the starting point of research and personal narratives are not clearly demarcated from each other nor always cleanly distinguished or determined from a single event. The fractal properties of multiply recurring patterns that can be recognised and made

visible in such data collection and analysis offers greater opportunities to code, chart, calculate and perhaps predict patterns and behaviours that are otherwise seen only as individualised or subjective.

A survey of (younger?) men who use Gaydar and similar sites may reveal how commonly this occurs and how often it is accepted or refused. The lines between the social and the commercial are being eroded by institutional(-ised) structures.

### **7.3. Queering Mythologies of M\$M**

Does all casual sex that is arranged within a capitalist society have a commercial element? (Atkins, 2015). Comparing sex work to more historically 'traditional' sites of sexual encounter reveal a transactional element as Weeks (1991) has argued. Since I started presenting my findings, the mapping of commercial sites for social-sexual contact between men takes place has been supported with research in physical spaces used by MSM in other cities such as Manchester (Atkins, 2015; Atkins and Laing, 2012), Istanbul (Özbay, 2015, 2010), São Paulo (Mitchell, 2015), Lima (Cáceres *et al.*, 2015) and many other cities (for geographically organised case studies, see Aggleton and Parker (eds.), 2015).

What I explore in this section are ways in which my interview data queers repertoires of the number of clients that a sex worker sees in a given amount of time and the amount of control that M\$M use or surrender in accepting and rejecting clients. Using queer theory, I build on those ideas about control and temporality with interview data which blurs distinctions between what is commercial and non-commercial. I then use the data to queer repertoires of 'anonymous' sex and challenge ways that M\$M can develop knowledge about their clients which is a point both overlooked and under considered.

### 7.3.1. Quality versus Quantity

Whether using models of morality, physical or psychological health, making comparisons between patterns of selling sex (M\$M) and the recreational sex behaviours (MSM) of *some* men on gay scene in London, it is difficult to identify a firm, quantifiable distinction between the two that cannot be disputed (The EMIS Network, 2010). Matthew's account of only seeing one, or sometimes two clients per week is not quantifiably unlike the social-sexual behaviour of many men who use Gaydar or 'geo-social apps' like Grindr (The EMIS Network, 2010; Mowlabocus, 2010c; Campbell, 2004)

A: So, you only worked weekends.

M: Yeah.

A: And how many clients did you see in a weekend?

M: Oh, usually just one. Usually just one. Sometimes maybe two. They normally – but most of my jobs were overnights and I wouldn't very often do two overnights in a row. So usually it was just one. But I think maybe sometimes I'd do like one one-hour one and then maybe an overnight one the next night. But I wouldn't be packing, packing them in (Matthew, 41).

Similarly, most of the men who spoke to me demonstrated some control in choosing not only when they worked and how often, but *whom* they would see as a client and *what* kind of activities they would have with each individual. This was particularly the case for the men who advertised sex work part-time. George is self-employed in another business and also works part-time in retail. He reveals that he plans to do less sex work when his other business is more profitable. George has been selling sex 'on and off for ten years'. He says he only has a few regulars and that he would like to have more steady business. 'Sometimes, it's not every day. Sometimes it could be four or five times over a weekend. Sometimes it could be nothing all week. That's just the way it goes' (George, 42). Despite this desire for more business, George maintains criteria by which he decides whether or not to see a potential client.

G: ... I tend to pick and choose. If I can see people first, if I don't like the look of them, I don't, I won't see them. I'm not, this is not my main occupation. I'm not

desperate for the money. If I want to do it, I'll do it. If I'm horny, I'll do it. If they're horny<sup>52</sup>, I'll do it. If they're not, I won't. [Chuckles.] That's about it really.

A: And what's the criteria then? Like, what's the – how do you pick and choose?

G: Um, how do I pick and choose? I know what I like. I know what I don't like. And if I don't like it, I'm not going to do it. If I don't like the look of somebody, I'm not going to pretend that I like them, for a hundred quid or anything. Because it won't work. [Chuckles.] (George, 42).

In this extract, George constructs himself as having priority of addressing financial scarcity in a way that does not overwhelm his embodied and performative priorities. He uses his profile to screen clients based on a visual assessment of physical criteria. He makes a connection between what he likes and what he does, saying 'If I don't like the look of them, I don't, I won't see them'. He emphasises this embodied criteria has to be visually performed through the production of photographs for him prior to agreeing to meet. He echoes what other participants have said about the 'mechanics of desire' and his ability to perform being intertwined with the aesthetic 'performance' of the (potential) client. 'If I don't like the look of somebody, I'm not going to pretend that I like them, for a hundred quid or anything. Because it won't work. [Chuckles.]'

This echoes the 'normative gender and identity work' that other researchers have documented in the experiences of women sex workers. This type of 'work' is work that is done to construct a culturally and physically desirable body (Pilcher, 2012, p.531). Steve gives the perspective of the advertiser.

They're not going to come here if I'm an eighteen stone fat man to massage them. It's just not going to happen. You know, you have to sell the product. I am a product. I have to sell myself so my packaging has to be right, and in the gay world it is all about looks and sexuality and sensuality and what is visually appealing to the guy. He's not going to, he can pick up anyone on Gaydar if he wants that, but if he wants a certain thing; you have to be packaged right so yes there is a certain amount of bullshit you have to put out there. That is more for their benefit than mine, in the fact that I will allow them to buy into whatever dream they want to buy into as long as it doesn't impede on my standings then I'm fine with it, you know (Steve, 33).

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<sup>52</sup> 'Horny' is commonly used in London's queer scenes to denote a quality of being sexually *attractive*, as well as the more commonly understood sexually *aroused*.

Steve uses the same language of the 'visual appeal'. My analysis of the data from our interviews reflects these metaphors consistently, but different men use different metaphors such as 'selling myself' (Marcos), 'selling my body' (Marcos, Steve), or 'selling your fucking old arse' (Quinn). Steve uses metaphors of packaging and product, performatively (re)defining himself as a commodity, and one which must meet certain criteria in order to attract a share of the market. However, George also implies there is some fluidity to the criteria, depending on whether he is feeling 'horny' as well as how much he assesses them to look 'horny'. The inter-signification and intra-significations of Defining performativity through embodiment and Utilising embodiment through the performative maintain a circular reference.

At the time of our interview George maintained a boundedness to his work (Bernstein, 2007b) both socially and physically. He tells me he does not mix sex work with his other body work, although sometime after our interview he did combine his advertising. (To maintain his anonymity, I am not including an example.) He goes on to elaborate on his physical boundaries and how he maintains a positive sense of embodied identification with selling sex.

G: Not every client wants to get fucked. Nobody fucks me. Because I don't do that with clients. It's not that I don't do it. I just don't do it with clients.

A: Mm-hmm. Why?

G: Um. Because I'd rather do that with somebody that I'm into. And, it's not so much of a head-fuck. This way I can just treat it as a business. Whereas, I think if somebody's, if somebody's fucking you it's a lot more intimate. I mean, some guys like that. Some guys don't care who fucks them. I do. So, I don't do it. It doesn't play with me (George, 42).

George's statement both supports and disputes ideologies that sex and intimacy make problematic bedfellows with commerce. He agrees that it can be psychologically dangerous – in his words, 'a head fuck' – especially in cases where agency cannot be exercised by the person selling sex when other priorities overshadow comfortable boundaries. By maintaining a physical boundary and a boundedness to what he will and will not do or allow clients to *do*

*to him*, George employs a strategy that bounds the intimacy he experiences in his commercial role from the intimacy he expects to experience in his personal relationships. Similar strategies are reported where both male and female escorts disallow certain types of contact (Bernstein, 2007b; Sanders, 2005b). A point that demands more attention in deconstructing discourses about gender, power and selling sex seems obvious when men talk about agency and the specific utilisation of their bodies. Men can sell penetrative sex to other men and may choose to never be penetrated themselves. Heterosexual penetration between two cisgender bodies is (presumably<sup>53</sup>) read predominantly as the man penetrating the woman, or would be specified otherwise and require other solutions.

For other participants, the boundedness is less rigid. Marcos prefers to advertise a ‘Versatile’ service because he says there is less pressure on him to have an erection and he will not disappoint a client or have to refuse a job.

If I put Active or Active/Versatile I get more passive guys. And, just sort of at the time for me, it was like a big responsibility. It’s the same thing for like, if a guy calls up, “I’m 100% Bottom.” I’m not going to be able to do it. Normally, I’m not saying I don’t like someone’s 100% Bottom, it’s just that, I don’t like to be responsible. You have to get hard. You know what I mean. If anything happens I get soft, he’s going to [inaudible] you know what I mean. Seems like a big responsibility. Like. Ooh. So, like if I put Active or Active/Versatile then I get more Passive guys, then if I don’t get hard the client can say, “You’re a shit escort,” or something. So I advertise as Versatile. Then I can have both. You know. A little bit of that. A little bit of that. A bit of balance. If you don’t get hard, you don’t lose your job (Marcos, 24).

In what he says here, Marcos made clear what some of the physiological limitations can be for men selling sex. He uses the language of ‘responsibility’ but also of not wanting that responsibility or utilising his body in other ways to address the scarcity of finite physical capital (i.e. his ability to have an erection). Other participants echoed this management of physical capital as a reason they preferred to be the penetrating partner. In both scenarios, men mentioned ‘other’ escorts used drugs to cope with physical experiences, but not

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<sup>53</sup> So dominant is the repertoire of gendered penetration, it is not one I sought to support.

themselves<sup>54</sup>.

Marcos quote also illustrates another perspective on the observation that George, Steve, Andrew and others made about ‘other’ escorts who seemed less bounded about what they did with customers in order to attract business. ‘If you want to compete with these Brazilian types, say, that offer *every* service and will do *anything* you have to kind of play the game’ (Steve, 33). Steve, who advertises as a masseur, said that for him ‘playing the game’ related to the content and tone of his advertising and what I have categorised as ‘Telephone Marketing’, or the way he responds to potential customers’ enquiries. ‘Now to what level you’ve got to play that game, in advertising and in talking to the person on the phone, you have to have a certain amount of frisson, because you’re not going to get clients’ (Steve, 33).

I questioned Steve about what happened from the ‘frisson’ in his marketing and the service clients expected. What he says about his marketing which I had interpreted and noted from his profile myself (Field Notes) comes across as flagging gaps in mutual understanding with clients. When I read his profile with photos of him in swimming briefs offering sensual, tantric and prostate massage in the Gaydar Commercial profiles with young men, I assumed he had contacted me because he was selling sex. I am firm that violence is never justified in contexts of work or sex. Yet evidence supports that sex workers and workers who feel stigmatised experience threats and violence in greater proportions (Bryce *et al.*, 2015; Matthews and Easton, 2010; Kinnell, 2006; Sanders, 2005b; Sanders and Campbell, 2007). Steve, however, seemed unreflexive about his marketing strategy when he told me about clients who had become violent when they were disappointed when he would not comply with their expectations of nudity and reciprocal touch. Our interview highlighted some of the

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<sup>54</sup> The data I collected on drug use from this sample of men is complex in its variety and nuance. The foundation of work to unpack the meanings of ‘sex’ in sex work is the focus of this chapter. The additional foundation to unpack the interconnectedness of drugs, sex, and ‘chemsex’ in London’s queer men’s scenes is an ongoing project for researchers in London and other cities with sexually active queer men’s scenes (Bourne *et al.*, 2014).

challenges in implementing labour, marketing, and organisational behaviour policies and legislation for sex work and body work that competes for trade with sex work.

Keith describes using boundaries in a different way. He says there is nothing that he has refused except 'bareback' (anal penetration without a condom) (Mowlabocus, 2007b). The physical act that signifies intimacy for Keith is not anal penetration, but ejaculation.

K: But I mean you try to – I think most people would try to avoid cumming.. with the client, like they – unless the client wants you to do it, then you probably won't do it.

A: Is that right?

K: Yeah. Well, I don't, I mean because I would, I would rather have my – if you don't do that then your pleasure is still your pleasure, if you know what I mean.

A: Right. Okay.

K: It's still your own and you do it in the situation that you want to do with whoever you want to do. So, yeah, I mean, it's almost like foreplay with the client then if you don't actually ejaculate. And you know what I mean, they're there to get off, so they don't necessarily need you to get off.

A: Mm-hmm.

K: Unless that's their thing (Keith, 24).

Keith uses physical pleasure and the point of ejaculation as the signifier that separates work from pleasure in order to maintain that pleasure for himself. Reflecting on this now, what I have not pursued is the line of questioning to explore what ejaculation *feels* like emotionally for Keith and men selling sex in the context of being with clients or being with unpaid partners. In our discussion, Keith reveals that *after* he has been paid to bring a client to orgasm but not had an orgasm himself sometimes he will arrange to have an unpaid assignation with someone he finds attractive himself. He describes the first, commercial encounter as being 'almost like foreplay'. Having maintained his ejaculate, he has maintained his climax of pleasure and thus maintains a separation of his pleasure from his work which allows him to negotiate and maintain ownership of his embodied feelings and responses. For Keith, control, intimacy, power and agency are maintained through pleasure which is signified not in the *entire* sexual act or in the list of possible sexual acts, but in the particular

point of orgasm – a point often considered the point of ‘completion’, particularly in an androcentric standpoint (Segal, 1994).

Understanding the complex symbolic interactions of sex work seems to require an understanding that each sign is a synecdoche, knowable as a part of the whole but also conflating the whole from a part. ‘Sex’, for example, can be bounded in as many ways as it can be defined. Those definitions of ‘sex’ might also be made for its optional parts, such as penetration or ejaculation. Returning to Weeks’ (1991) spectrum of expression and instrumentality, the variety of sexual ‘expressions’ – or their absences/ omissions – might trouble and queer even unpaid sex as being alike to prostitution.

### 7.3.2. Thinking temporally to queer ‘commercial’

Henrik, 35 tells me a story about a 21 year old client who meets him regularly for sex. He describes his client as both young and attractive, disrupting the narrative of the client who lacks physical or social capital discussed in the previous chapter. What Henrik includes in his narrative here is a construction of sex on the gay scene as ‘straight-forward’ and ‘without strings’.

H: This one *incredibly attractive* 21 year old from Manchester who takes out lots of money and meets once a week.

A: Huh.

H: It’s just crazy, but he just says he likes the ease of, you know, sort of paying someone to give him head. So, okay. I’d do it for *free*. [Laughs.]

A: And does, like, does he – did he tell *you* that? Or did you ask him?

H: Yeah, no, he said it while coming. I mean, I just sort of – well, when we first met I just sort of – when we first started chatting I just sort of said, you know, I was fairly straight forward, “Well, [chuckles] why are you *paying*?” and that’s what he said. He’s got the cash and he likes the straight-forward nature of it. But you’d think if he just went to a gay bar, I wouldn’t have imagined that he would have had much trouble.

A: Mm-hmm.

H: I mean, gay bars are fairly straight-forward places usually. [Laughs.] If you want no strings, you can usually get no strings.

A: Yep.

In Henrik's description of the 'gay' scene, sex in 'a gay bar' is seemingly just as straightforward and 'no strings' as paying for sex. Here, Henrik is speaking about a young, attractive gay man who could find an unpaid encounter, or 'usually' do, in 'gay bars'. The bar, a commercial venue where patrons pay for drinks and may pay an additional admission fee at the door, offers a similar culture of meeting men where sex can be immediate, recreational, and casual (Atkins, 2015). This supports my argument that Commercially Sited Sex should not be defined exclusively as sex work or body work. The commercial aspects, and thus the financial impacts, seem inescapably linked to intimate social life in capitalist societies. Men selling sex to men (M\$M) thus makes up a part of cultures where sex is already commercialised. The formalisation of the financial transaction is only a variation of that commercialised interaction.

However, Henrik's account also reinforces repertoires of physical capital, utilising embodiment and ways that 'gay' men performatively define how sex is available and with/for whose bodies. Referring here specifically to a person who embodies and displays the socially accepted and sometimes culturally valorised characteristics, Henrik shifted his assumption of the availability of willing or eager partners from the young man to queer men generally. 'I mean, gay bars are fairly straight-forward places usually. [Laughs.] If you want no strings, you can usually get no strings' (Henrik, 35). Henrik and I agreed that sex without commitment would 'usually' be available. First, Thinking temporally challenges that notion, given that 'gay bars' and other commercial spaces have busy and quiet times, even in London. Second, the embodied traits and characteristics of queer men (or even 'gay men') are more variable than the standpoint that Henrik and I left unchallenged, but which I discussed in the previous chapter. Locating contacts and the scarcity of time intersect further with multiple scarcities which I expand on in Chapter 8 and in the Discussion.

### 7.3.3. Anonymised sex: Thinking temporally to queer anonymity

MSM *and* M\$M in London can have sex that is anonymous, but in some of London's contemporary, queer, commercial scenes, it is more accurate to describe it as anonymised rather than anonymous. Sex between men (MSM) may be anonymous, where men meet other men for sexual encounters in public toilets, saunas, parks or other outdoor spaces, or sexual encounter venues including sex bars and specially organised sex club nights (Baker, 2005). As it is a characteristic of some MSM sub-cultures, the phenomenon of anonymised sex is not unique to M\$M. Anonymity is relative and subjective, where real names may not be exchanged, or may not be exchanged initially but may be revealed over time or as a relationship develops. The (semi-)permanence of virtual locations (i.e. profiles on websites) and the contact that they allow is an element that constructs communities of MSM, and within that M\$M, but also constructs relationships between advertisers and clients, and between advertisers and the wider 'community' who co-exist in those spaces as well as in 'real-time', physical spaces in the queer scenes, such as gyms, pubs, bars, clubs, social groups and sexual health centres. As such, anonymity is queered (problematized, disrupted and relational) as those individual and community relationships develop.

In our interviews, M\$M talked about some of their experiences with clients and through that demonstrated different ways of knowing those men. Matthew's work selling sex started through an agency that would arrange for clients to meet him (or for him to meet clients) and this most often included dinner and/or staying overnight in a hotel. In this illustration, I asked Matthew if there were any ways that he was different with his clients than he would be socially.

No. I don't think so. I would talk about my life. And talk about my job. I just wouldn't say who I worked for. I'd talk about *where* I lived. I wouldn't give specifics. I'd talk in much the same way, like I'd divulge information. Because otherwise you can't really have a proper conversation. And you're sort of always trying to cover or think of what you're saying. So no, I was completely honest and I would be, I'd be

completely relaxed with them. I wouldn't be something I wasn't. I mean, the other thing is, we weren't expected – we were just normal guys. We weren't expected to be a role, anyway, so you were going along to be just Mr. Mainstream Joe-Blow. No earrings, no tattoos, no short haircuts. So. And I know that, I mean, I mean – [pause] you're talking – most of my clients were people who didn't want anything to be known about *them* either. So, they weren't the sort of people who were going to like blab about who they'd met. So, I was never bothered about anyone finding anything out. They knew my name, Matt. They didn't know my surname or anything. They knew I worked in [anonymised]. They didn't know who for exactly, or where my office was. They knew how long I lived in London. They could tell, you know – yeah, I think that's about it. But, yeah, I wasn't someone I wasn't. I would – I didn't act (Matthew, 41).

Matthew told me about the types of information that he would share about himself, and also the details that he kept private. Matthew's descriptions of these dinners reinforced the idea of boundaries and boundedness within the conversation and the exchange of personal information. He also demonstrated the exchange and the knowledge that M\$M can acquire of the other person. A point that men emphasised in interviews comes out here when he refers to the reciprocity of discretion that is implied in the arrangement. Whilst he is managing stigmas associated with selling sex, his clients are managing stigmas of paying for sex, and perhaps stigmas about queer sexualities, including examples of non-monogamy, bisexuality, and 'kink'. Andrew and Quinn's clients sought to be dominated in ways that could be understood as challenging heteronormative and hegemonic masculine identities.

Matthew gives another example of a type of knowledge that he gained through a long-standing relationship with one client.

And normally in London, I don't spend the – he would be staying in [a hotel in London] which is not far from where I live so I'd call and see him on the way to work. He'd like to see me early in the morning. So, I'd just get ready for work as normal. Pack a bit of poppers and a bit of, like, lube and some condoms, pop it into my suit jacket pocket and then call into the hotel on my way to work. And he'd only take 20 minutes. Honestly, I could time it. Hhh. I knew by the time I was out – the room would always be dark when I'd walk into it, he'd always be showering and stuff, he'd let me in and be showering or something, and I could look at the clock on the TV or the clock next to the bed and if it said 7:20 in the morning, I knew I'd be getting dressed and walking out the door at 7:40. I knew it. It was brilliant for work. And I mean, that was 20 minutes. He'd usually give me between 300 and 500 pounds. That's ridiculous. (Matthew, 41)

The knowledge that Matthew shares about his long-standing customer demonstrates how very well M\$M can *know* their clients, by learning and remembering their likes and dislikes, points of their bodies that are sensitive, how to negotiate a safer sex experience, and what the temporal frame for the encounter will be. The ‘knowledge’ however limited, is exchanged. A discourse that claims anonymity denies that knowledge of the person is exchanged. A literal translation of ‘anonymous’ might provide the aetiology of not using a name; however, contemporary usage of ‘having no defining characteristics’ can certainly be challenged. Understanding feminist definitions that knowledge can be embodied (Brown *et al.*, 2008; Holland *et al.*, 2004) or that people can *know* each other physically queers the notion that sexual partners that are unnamed are therefore ‘unknown’. This understanding can contribute to a revaluation of people who sell sex and/or do sex work and the possibility of locating stigma more meaningfully and precisely in order to address social and individual concerns of scarcity, performativity, and embodiment.

#### **7.4. Summary**

In this chapter, I have discussed how there are similarities between paid and unpaid sex in London’s commercial scenes for queer men. I have explored ways that some queer men in London’s commercial scene think about sex and feel about sex and how they see that as comparable to more explicitly commercial exchanges. I have used data from interviews to illustrate the breadth of feelings that can be expressed about both paid and unpaid sex, and repertoires that mythologise sex in London’s queer scene as casual, anonymous, unstigmatised, and unlimited. I have used the data to queer some of these repertoires, including repertoires that say all sex work is violent and structurally coerced. These findings help to construct (and are constructed by) a super-ordinate theoretical framework which

explores how M\$M Address Scarcity, Define Performativity, Utilise Embodiment, Locate Contact(s), and Think Temporally.

In the final findings chapter, I explore ideas of structure, structural coercion, and tensions with interpreting both 'agency' and 'need'. Emphasising the constructionism/ constructivism of grounded theory, I illustrate the priorities men make in defining and addressing scarcity.

The explicit focus of the final chapter is the meaning that money has in narratives from M\$M.

## **CHAPTER 8: THE CASH NEXUS: EXPERIENCES OF MONEY, WORTH, AND PRICE FOR M\$M**

### **8.1. Introduction**

M\$M who advertise in London construct many of the same representations, actions, and experiences as MSM in London's queer scenes. In the previous chapters I have explored ethnography through interviews and found data which contextualise sex work advertising in London's queer scene (Chapter 5). I applied a semiotic framework to a smaller selection of that data to interpret some of the ways men's bodies and embodiment are represented (Chapter 6), and I triangulated these findings with more in-depth analysis of interview data to discuss the role that some men's rationale for selling sex plays in defining London's queer scenes (Chapter 7). Using these themes, I have begun to illustrate a relational model for understanding men's experiences of selling sex to men: Addressing Scarcity, Defining Performativity, Utilising Embodiment, Locating Contact(s) and Thinking Temporally (A.D.U.L.T.). This aims to develop a more comprehensive method of understanding and interpreting a broad range of subjective experiences, actions, and priorities posed by M\$M in London. In my findings, I focused first on the cultural and media contexts as a historical survey. I then explored the production of meanings about queer men's bodies generally and then constructs of 'sex' that queer men report within those systems as they are produced and read by queer men. The question that continues to emerge is how the explicit transaction of payment shifts the meanings of exchanges and relationships that are co-constructed as being similar or identical to unpaid exchanges and relationships in many or most regards. Remarkably, the phenomenon of exchanging cash and the meanings given to money in selling sex are relatively absent from literature on sex work and selling sex, outside of discourses of need, desperation, and poverty.

This chapter focuses on ‘The Cash Nexus’, the receipt of specific payments in the exchange of sex. Where the previous chapters compare and contrast the construct of sex work with the constructs of sex, there is an implicit challenge in the role that money plays as a way of constructing difference. This chapter examines in depth the subjective experiences, identities and interrelationship with money, particularly in looking at how money is symbolic and its role as a priority in narratives of selling sex. Using the A.D.U.L.T. model, this chapter details the interpretations M\$M attribute to various signs in explicitly transactional exchanges: scarcity, money, time, clients and relational constructions of power within individual exchanges. With data from interviews and advertisement, I explore these signs across their relationships, throughout their experiences (gained through) their careers and alongside constructs of ageing and male bodies.

Within these discourses, the chapter illustrates M\$M’s own experiences and lessons on price setting, constructions and determinations of worth and self-worth through the five modes identified earlier: Addressing Scarcity (bringing together feelings and experiences of ‘need’, ‘want’ and ‘exclusion’), Defining Performativity (from social and sexual skills and performances, including gendered and sexual performances and the re-creation of ‘sex work’ and ‘escort’ identities), Utilising Embodiment (including how the body is used, looks, performs and how sexual contact feels), Locating Contact(s) (developed from proximity, social networks and knowledge), and Thinking Temporally (making explicit that any occupation or application is bounded, as well as recognising that choices and decisions are often the result of longer interactions of structured agency).

In the first section, I bring together testimony from interviews with theory from literature to develop the definition of Addressing Scarcity that is a priority for M\$M beyond simplistic categories of ‘need’ or ‘want’. I discuss the ways men talk about money in interviews, profiles, and advertisements in London. They use money in three ways: first, as narrative

driver, including participants' constructions of 'agency' and 'need'; second, as a dominant sign in the negotiation of power within commercial sex relationships – linking the individual (actor), the social, and the transactional (Emirbayer, 1997). Third, I outline some of the issues that M\$M identified in handling money, common to being self-employed or doing freelance work, with some suggestions for how this information about the economic goals and financial experiences of M\$M can be useful to individuals and organisations aiming to minimise potential harm and empower individuals to make choices that enable them to meet their changing needs, situations and hopes. I say 'hopes' because, as I discuss later, some of the men I spoke to do not have specific 'goals' or 'plans' for the future, a point that I find, in itself, both interesting and useful.

What I want to emphasise in this chapter are the ways that participants talk about money, particularly in relation to narratives of starting, continuing and leaving sex work. I compare and contrast these with previous research about monetary drivers and new theoretical positions of sex work as liberationist (Dorais, 2006) and a new type of petite bourgeoisies (Bernstein, 2007). I then move beyond the analysis of monetary drivers to discuss the 'fuzzy sets' (Bezdek, 1993) of priorities and relational meanings that M\$M give to money throughout the time that they sell sex.

## **8.2. Addressing Scarcity: Constructive narratives of 'need'**

### **8.2.1. Narrative and 'need'**

As the profile excerpt below illustrates, the repertoire of 'need' can be used by M\$M to help create a story for their audience.

Poor cute student needs to make some cash and am looking to suck men dry. [...] The rate is £50 to suck you off. It's not negotiable so don't ask.  
(Gaydar profile, July 2009)

The advertiser has presented himself as a ‘poor, cute student’, combining complementary signs of the stereotype of ‘the poor student’ with its indexical signification of youth. Whilst offering his service the advertiser here is making an appellation for financial relief to his explicit need. He states that he ‘needs to make some cash’. The ‘need’ is denoted explicitly and anchored in the cultural understanding of ‘cash’ as being a liquid asset. This makes his need seem more urgent. He is also framing the transaction as ‘making’ cash, not ‘earning’ or ‘working for’. The phrasing competes against politicised activism that emphasises Marxist role of the worker (Atkins, 2015).

The audience is offered a story to explain not just that he is selling sex, but offering a character and a motivation: who he is and why. Cultural understandings of mythologised (Barthes, 1993) student costs, debt and low income, application of time and resources to study add further layers of signification to who this person might be, in comparison or contrast to other stereotypes of who might sell a ‘blowjob’ and what his needs might be to prompt him to create a commercial profile to advertise that he is ‘looking to suck men dry’ for £50.

In earlier versions of the model. I had defined a category for ‘Addressing Needs’. I wrote about ‘need’ as a relativist, constructed term (Gough 2013) because the terms of need were, for me, often indistinguishable from ‘want’. For example, none of the stories I collected included examples of local or global poverty. The men in my sample are all able bodied. There are examples of drug *use*, but drug dependence is the exception, rather than the rule<sup>55</sup>. As such, the men’s stories do not fit neatly with Dorais’ (2006) model of Outcasts, young, straight and bisexual men, often homeless or living hand-to-mouth and often struggling with addiction. Neither, however, do they fit neatly in the models of Liberationists. ‘Need’,

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<sup>55</sup> I note that this is both a *limitation* of my sample and a *defining feature* of my sample. I also note that I am consciously avoiding quantifying ‘drug use’ and any definitions of ‘addiction’, ‘abuse’, or ‘regular use’ as being outside the remit of this thesis, as noted in the previous chapter.

‘exclusion’, and ‘scarcity’ (Mullainathan and Shafir, 2013; Brown, 2012) are all presented as part of the narrative. To explore this, I will draw on theory of the *new petite bourgeoisie* (Bernstein, 2007b), an aspirational lower-middle-class whose productivity is not focused on survival, and who value an ethic of ‘fun’.

As part of every interview, I asked participants to describe how they became involved in selling sex. My question was usually worded to enquire about how they *started* selling sex. As such, it may have shaped their responses to describe the first occasion. The narrative is often constructed with a single, defined starting point, which oversimplified and ignored the intersectionality of priorities the men aimed to address, define, and utilise.

Not surprisingly, a need for money was presented in most of the narratives. Yet this was not often in line with dominant repertoires about how people sell sex out of desperation and ‘need’ was expressed as meaning very different things to different men. This challenged some of my own constructions and assumptions.

When I asked Andrew to tell me about how he started escorting, he explained that there were a number of interrelated factors, but maintains financial opportunity as a key driver.

Do you know I can’t remember how I started or why I started. I needed the money, actually, to be honest. That wasn’t the exclusive reason. I needed the money. Um. [Pause.] I’d been told by a few guys that, or asked by a few guys on Gaydar “Are you an escort?” At that point it probably put it into my head as well. Er. I can’t actually think of why I started. I think it was, I think it was, I think it was for the money. I quite fancied seeing what it was like, as well. It’d be a bit of a thrill. Because I suppose back then it was quite exciting. [A: Why?] Well! Because back then there were a lot less people doing it so you were a lot busier. You know, like I used to earn, I could earn, I earned like between 1000 or £2000 in a weekend, all told. (Andrew, 42)

As he detailed his story for me, Andrew talked about working in a shop in London and the low wage he was earning. To Andrew, the money that he made working in the shop was poor.

I return to his circumstances later in this chapter, but point briefly to how he uses money in his narrative although his recall of the exact circumstances is both complex and fuzzy.

What I took from this is first, how ‘need’ can be constructed by men living in London and second, how this sits against dominant discourses of exclusion and poverty for people who sell sex. Whilst in some instances, the starting narrative is constructed as serendipitous to Defining Performativity, Utilising Embodiment, and Locating Contact(s), in many cases the economic driver to Address Scarcity is still presented as central to the narrative of starting to sell sex, and in continuing to do so. This seems obvious, given that by the original definition for recruitment in a study of men selling sex, participants were charging a fee for sex; however, its centrality contrasts Dorais’ (2006) ideas of the liberationist. Future research could explore narratives of men who do not charge fees for sexual services, yet advertise explicitly as a service, a phenomenon that emerged through my data collection, and which I touch upon briefly later in this chapter.

Across the narratives, what I first coded and categorised as patterns of ‘need’, I later included with exclusion, as a way of constructing ‘scarcity’ (Mullainathan and Shafir, 2013; Brown, 2012). I have drawn on sources from economics and psychology to define scarcity. First, scarcity conveys a lack of material availability as described in commodity theory (Verhallen and Robben, 1994). ‘From the Old Norman French *scars*, meaning “restricted in quantity” (c. 1300)’ (Brown, 2012, p.26), scarcity is a shortage of resources, including but not limited to physical resources and time (Mullainathan and Shafir, 2013). Critically, recent definitions also include not only material phenomena for an individual or group, but also a relative *sense* of not having *enough*. ‘In economics, scarcity is ubiquitous. All of us have a limited amount of money; even the richest people cannot buy everything. But we suggest that while physical scarcity is ubiquitous, the *feeling* of scarcity is not [...] The feeling of scarcity is distinct from its physical reality’ (Mullainathan and Shafir, 2013, p.11; italics my own).

Comparisons have been made between the responses to scarcity to those of post-traumatic stress, referring to feelings of fear and anger that can be experienced by individuals and how those patterns have shaped contemporary western cultures (Brown, 2012). In this construct, a sense of scarcity is attributed to three underlying experiences: feeling shame, making comparisons, and social disengagement. Reporting findings from psychology studies on shame in the United States, Brown (2012, pp.27–28) writes that, ‘Scarcity [emerges] from these conditions, and perpetuates them until a critical mass of people start making different choices and reshaping the smaller cultures’ to which they belong. This resonated with me as I reflected on the narratives men had shared with me and on my own experiences of living as a queer person in London.

Some of the men who spoke to me were students at the time they started selling sex, or had student debt. Some were migrants. Some were working in a trade or doing retail work for minimum wage. Some were out of professional work. (For more detailed summaries of each story, see Appendix L). Whilst there is overlap between these thematic categorisations, here are several tensions in how ‘need’ is constructed here. For one, there is an interpretation that most of these men have a relatively bourgeois experience. Men who defined themselves by their (other) occupations are otherwise seen as students (Henrik, Victor), travellers (Marcos, Matthew), ‘shopkeepers’ (Andrew, George, Marcos), creative artisans or tradespeople (Brian, Paulo, Philip, Stuart) and professionals (Keith, Matthew, Steve, Yannick). Note that even here there are overlaps and movements between experiences and histories that queer identification of static ‘types’. They also make for a queered definition of ‘need’. Students in tertiary education and young men on working holidays abroad are people of relative privilege, surely? Certainly when defined in contrast to young men from other times or places (Aggleton and Parker, 2015; Aggleton (ed.), 1999; Cáceres *et al.*, 2015; Weeks, 1991).

People who are disenfranchised with low wages, long hours, or stressful, stifling working

conditions are all describing very *relative* complaints, certainly compared to the low wages, long hours and working conditions afforded to so many workers around the world. Further, attempting to simplify or categorise the stories can make them seem less significant. In other words, stripping them of their intersectional significations makes it difficult to understand what meanings are constructed and applied and sometimes nearly impossible to trace how rationale has been determined.

In each case, any account of scarcity is made greater by *compounded* scarcities. For example, low paid work or lack of higher paying alternatives, *plus* disconnection from family support. Henrik's account of starting to sell sex was in the context of underpaid work and career opportunities, time commitments for study, and a change in his family structure and the financial support he had received.

I was at the end of a 10 year relationship and I just [inaudible] and we just sold our flat and I had to move and I didn't really have a lot of money and previously my husband was the person who was helping support me through my PhD and that's what was gone. I'm sure you know that PhD students who are [human sciences] lecturers don't exactly earn a lot of cash. [I laugh.] When you think about the fact that you earn more per hour doing this than you do for a whole week's worth of lecturing as a PhD student, it's – anyway. (Henrik, 35)

He is insulted by the lack of value that is paid to his work at his university. The monetary scarcity that he feels is mirrored in the lack of time or energy he can afford to reintegrate to the professional field of his previous career. Henrik illustrates what other said in our interviews about feeling that their other work was undervalued. They believed they received superior financial compensation for the amount of time they devoted to selling sex as sex work. Of course, this short quote illustrates only a portion of Henrik's story. As previously mentioned with other M\$M, he sees an overlap with the shape and texture of his social life and social-media presence within London's gay scene. He told me about an earlier

connection between ‘sex for money’ when he was 19 years old and was from an ‘older’, 30 year old lover who became a friend and benefactor.

I had, well, okay, when I lived in [an American City] I had a sugar daddy, for a while. When I was *actually* really young looking and adorable. Um, but we only ever had sex, I think, four times, and we knew each other for six months. Mostly we just went for dates. He took me for dinner and gave me \$500 a month [...] so I guess I have done this thing before, in a way. It doesn’t really feel like that because he was really, he wasn’t my – I mean, I was what, 19? He was 30, so you know, he was Grandad, I mean, not really, and he was attractive and it didn’t really feel like sex for money. That’s what it was, but it didn’t really feel like that (Henrik, 35).

The intersectionality of the ways that Henrik understands sex comes through in the context of his longer narrative – or the parts of his narrative that he shared with me. For him, sex can have transactional elements and ‘feel’ like it is ‘for money’, but those feelings and associations take shape with temporal contexts and alongside constructs of what counts as sex or ‘expression’ and how power and capital are interpreted.

The other point that Henrik illustrates is that for the M\$M who spoke to me, Scarcity can be constructed through lack of money, time and/or connection. M\$M construct value in complex ways defined by time and embodied connection, itself related to performativity. These men privileged time over normative assumptions of how the body should be used and valued. This disrupts and queers narratives that all commercial sex is exploitation and ‘the *oppression paradigm*’ (Weitzer, 2010b, p.5, italics as original).

The exploitation hypothesis is informed by three strands of ideological thought. The first is the radical separatist lesbian feminism which argues that *all* heterosexual sex is exploitation. The second is Marxist feminism, which argues that all work is exploitation [...]. The final strand is religious evangelism which argues that all non-procreational sex is wrong’ (Brooks-Gordon, 2010, p.155)

The intersectionality of the heteronormative and moralist imperatives are themselves, by definition, experienced as disruptive to the lived behaviours and feelings of men who make positive associations with queer identities. In other words, queer men experience exploitation and oppression *from* some of the ideologies that are used to describe sex work as exploitation

and oppression. This is not to say that queer men who sell sex never experience exploitation, but the men in my sample did not construct it as such.

They also place a value, in this instance literally a price, on forms of ‘expression’ (Weeks, 1991) or ‘connection’ (Brown, 2012). From my data, I have defined these expressions/connections as including sharing verbal intimacy, physical contact, sexual contact, sexual intimacy and/or sexual release. These are expressions that discursively have been expected to be free and not only available, but abundant. Drawing on theories of capital, which ‘has traditionally been an economic term’ (Plummer, 2010, p.32) but collocates the ‘social’, the ‘physical’, and the ‘sexual’ as resources that people can accrue or seek (Gudelunas, 2012; Portes, 1998). What I explore in the rest of this section is the interrelationship between economic, social, physical and sexual scarcities in the accounts of M\$M in London’s queer scene.

### **8.2.2. Priorities and value(s): Privileging time, utilising bodies**

The M\$M in my sample talked about using physical capital (the traits and characteristics of their bodies), sexual capital (performed and performative abilities) and social capital (their networks and social connections) to reduce or remove the scarcity they experience in other (economically-defined economic / socio-economic) areas of their lives, not limited to, but symbolised by, money. In this definition of Addressing Scarcity, I use my data to develop the intersectionalities of different ‘needs’ and/ or ‘wants’ with how most of the M\$M who spoke to me constructed their experiences of selling sex as a form of agency or empowerment (Bernstein, 2007a; Weitzer, 2010b). Perhaps more useful than binaries of oppression or empowerment is Weitzer’s (2010b, p.6, italics as original) perspective of ‘the *polymorphous paradigm*’ [which acknowledges] a constellation of occupational arrangements, power relations and worker experiences [and is] sensitive to complexities and to the structural conditions shaping the uneven distribution of agency, subordination, and workers’ control’.

Within discourse on sex work, there was a trend to use agency and choice interchangeably. There is an interrelationship between the two terms, surely, but they are not synonymous. ‘Actors make reflective choices within concrete constraints’ (Rosenfeld *et al.*, 2012, p.2). For my purposes within Charmaz’s (2006) action-focused constructivist grounded theory, I draw on Weeks’ (2011) definition of agency not only as the ability to make those choices, but as the ability explicitly to take action. ‘Agency is also deeply embodied. Bodies are objects of social practice, in the sense that they are acted upon, and inscribed with meaning; and agents in social practice’ (Weeks, 2011, p.6). Choice is a part of agency, but agency is not limited to choice.

Equally, action may be taken wilfully but without conscious thought for the choices being made or their accumulated effect, perhaps at some point in the future. Past choices may have an impact on current or future agency, as indeed past or current agency may impact future agency (Reavey and Brown, 2007). Rather than build on a limiting framework of agency, using life course theory ought to be employed to explore the interconnections of agency, timing, and interdependence (Rosenfeld *et al.*, 2012). Lastly, choice implies a single path of action, where in practice agency takes more fractal forms of concurrent or consecutive choices enacted as individual and collective priorities (Mai, 2012; Weeks, 2011).

### ***Fractal fluctuations and critical states: Thinking Temporally to Address Scarcity***

Keith’s story illustrates the types of priorities that men explained to me as their rationale for doing sex work: not only the quantity of money he earns, but the quantity of time, how he spends his time, and the environment where he spends that time, including the people with whom he works. Keith is exhausted by an environment of insecurity, constraint and pressure. He sees selling sex as a way to maintain financial security and independence at a more relaxed pace and in a more familiar environment for a limited period of time. Exhaustion and

stress take a toll on physical and mental health (Cregan *et al.*, 2013), which he explicitly acknowledges and wants to escape, albeit reflecting on the possibility of other (future) physical and mental costs.

K: ...It was a horrible office. It was a horrible boss. You know what I mean? It was a really religious atmosphere, erm, and we were working for [name of organisation], so a very oppressive atmosphere and I was constantly stressed every single day and that went on until August and finally they decided, "Yeah, there's not enough work to keep the two contract guys on," and I thought, "You know what? I need a break from this, big time. I'm going mad." Like, I really was like – I kind of went – I was exhausted with it and I needed some time to not be sitting in an office for eight hours a day sitting at a computer clicking a mouse.

A: So why did you choose this?

K: It was...It was...To buy me time. To give me time to kind of relax a little bit, erm, think about where, what my next stage or my next goal is, erm, and to not be stressed and to not be worried about money. Do you know what I mean? Because if I was unemployed I would have no money and that would have become a stress, and I really needed to be not stressed for a while, so this was the simplest way to do it. I'm not saying it's an easy – I was going to say, it was the easiest option, but it – [pause].

A: It's a funny word, easy.

K: Yeah, well. I mean, it's, it's – you know what I mean, some people would say it's an easy option but you'll pay for it later in some other way. Which is..still to be seen. I mean, personally, I think I've got a good head, emotionally, for it. But I can't – I don't know, I don't know what's going to – what will happen. I can't guarantee what – it will or won't affect me. (Keith, 24)

In Keith's actions and reflections, what he describes is a holistic and queer model of the self. He draws a connection between the physical and mental self in a way that challenges assumptions of selling sex as exploitative, but also supports a discourse that it is done in 'desperation'. His construction challenges *and* reinforces the paradigms that sex work is easy or inherently dangerous. In part, he does this by bringing together the interrelationship of application and time. What he illustrates is that the priorities of men who sell sex can challenge the meanings of 'applying oneself' in a context where the subject is performatively positive about sex with men and defines an alternative as a more abject form of labour (Tyler,

2011). He also illustrates the importance of acknowledging prioritisation of the self as a temporal being, and not only as a physical being.

His quote provides detail about how some M\$M, Scarcity is not solely financial, but must also be addressed with these economies of time. Keith emphasised time as breaks in time and hours in a day. 'I need a break from this', 'I needed some time to not be sitting in an office for eight hours a day'. He used metaphors of buying time for himself, however ironically or poetically utilising his body and the ways he defines what is satisfying or easy. 'It was...To buy me time. To give me time to kind of relax a little bit, erm, think about where, what my next stage or my next goal is'.

Keith is conscious of those different temporal constructs: his daily use of time, the application of his time to different occupations and a conscious consideration of how he might benefit in the longer term from earning money in a way that allows him more time to be mindful (Lavender *et al.*, 2012). In contrast, Keith expresses quite explicitly a recognition that there may be future costs as well as immediate benefits. 'It's an easy option but *you'll pay for it later* in some other way. Which is...*still to be seen*', 'I don't know *what's going to – what will happen*. I can't guarantee what – *it will or won't affect me*' (italics my own). The costs, as well as the rationale, seem to be constructed through a fractal organisation of thought and experience, cross-referenced temporally, as well as materially and emotionally.

Whether I use the metaphors of achieving work-life balance or 'the trade-off' between security and insecurity, money and cost and time, it seems that Time is not only a *thing* to protect or buy more of in the present. Time is also a *place* where potential costs may be realised, or a place to which Scarcity can be moved. Again, this is where the mathematics of fractal fluctuations and complexity can offer opportunities for social scientists to understand self-organised criticality as:

a state where systems are in delicate balance between multiple behavioural solutions. Near critical states, systems are metastable, and a small and local perturbation can result in a global change in the system's behaviour. Critical states make new options for behaviour available, and then provide the system with adaptability and flexibility to cope with environmental constraints. Living systems tend to spontaneously remain near critical states. This so-called self-organized criticality is possible when multiple interactions occur between multiple levels and individual components, a condition that directly refers to the system's complexity. Self-organized criticality supposes that the dynamics of the system are dominated by interactions, and not by some dominant components within the system. Finally, these interaction-dominant dynamics are known to produce statically self-similar, fractal fluctuations (Delignières and Marmelat, 2012, p.5; see also Delignières *et al.*, 2004)

### *The 'new petite bourgeoisie' in Britain*

As Keith's reflection illustrates, the rationale seems relativist/ relational (Emirbayer, 1997).

When the decisions, choices and priorities are understood in context, the construction of a rationale can be seen. Keith did not quit his job, but was made redundant. He has trained for a profession where the work has its own pressures, and even less attractive to him in the short term are the processes of *application* (here, literally applying for jobs, but an interesting term to pick up later). His account illustrates his feelings and experiences about emotional and physical elements of labour that some people could express about most type of work. In contrast is the ethic explained in how Bernstein (2007a, p.475) relates the class formations 'Pierre Bourdieu referred to as the 'new petite bourgeoisie'.

'Unlike the "old" petite bourgeoisie (paradigmatically, the declining class of craftsmen [sic] and small shopkeepers) which sought to distinguish itself from the working classes via an ethic of self-sacrifice and "virtue" – the new petite bourgeoisie seeks its occupational and personal salvation (and thus its sense of distinction via an ethic of "fun" (Bernstein, 2007a, p.477)

In Bourdieu's (1986) analysis of social and material influences on 'taste', he mapped two class trajectories: individuals who have not acquired educational qualifications useful or necessary to achieve 'established positions' otherwise available to them through their social

class, and individuals who have not been rewarded by their qualifications to the extent which they feel they were entitled.

Several of my interview participants (Andrew, Brian, George, Henrik, Keith, Marcos, Paulo, Philip and Steve) expressed frustration and even disdain at having to work long hours for less pay than they felt was fair.

Something that doesn't make me go to a office every day. I can't do that. Every fucking day. "Oh, 12 o'clock. Lunch time. Oh, back 1 o'clock. Oh, back to back, I got to go back home." I would die. I don't like that. I don't like one place every day. [...] So, I would like to do a job at least once a month to travel out of the country and stay there for a few days working or not travelling that much and something that – I don't know. Something that is not the same thing all the time. Like, [sighing] "Oh." Because if I have to dislike my job, I wouldn't my batteries fires [sic]. I know this [from] my previous job before. Just dislike and I like, [sighing] "No." And plus I have to make enough money to – I think that's the big, the big thing is too the money that I would be making (Marcos, 24).

And, yeah it was just something that I felt keen to try actually, I mean quite apart from the fact that I really thought I could do with some easy money as in something that an hourly rate works out as being rather lucrative because I worked like a bastard as a [creative professional], I worked really, really hard just to stay alive, well not to stay alive, I worked really hard at what I was doing, I loved doing what I was doing but it wasn't an easy way of earning money. Um. And the prostitution which was just an occasional thing at first, well no, it always remained a very occasional thing actually, um, it was just a really nice, easy little earner, really easy. (Philip, 42)

Reading these two quotes together offers patterns that are recognisable with the two profiles of the 'new petite bourgeoisie' that Bourdieu (1986) developed and which Bernstein (2007a) adopted to analyse the contexts of 'middle class' women doing sex work in San Francisco. In Marcos's quote he has told me he only wants to be an escort for another three or four years but when I asked him about the job he will do next, he told me about the type of routine he would not like to have. In Philip's reply, he compared the 'hourly rate' for working 'like a bastard' in one of his previous careers. He uses the metaphor that he 'worked really, really hard just to stay alive' and then corrects himself from comparing his previous labour and earnings to basic survival. Philip's situation illustrates the comparison between the 'old' petite bourgeoisie ethic and that of the 'new'.

Marcos, Philip, Henrik, Andrew, Quinn, and Steve referred to various ways their time felt stretched or exploited from mainstream applications of work. Quinn described some of his creative work that he felt free to pursue because he was well paid as an escort and told me about some of the organisations where he volunteers, which he attributed to having a higher than average rate of earning. Andrew and Steve compared examples of the hourly wage of working in retail jobs and Steve made comparisons to the requirement for a higher level of his emotional labour for his work in healthcare. For these men, time is a priority and a commodity that selling sex affords them. Time is also a marker of how much they should be earning relative to their age and position.

But it also depends on what kind of lifestyle you've become accustomed to. You know, would a £10 an hour job working in Harrods or Selfridges keep me in my lifestyle. No. Do I want to go live a lifestyle that £10 an hour will offer me? No. I'm too old for that. I'm not going backwards. [A laughs.] Uh-uh (Steve, 33).

Steve's assessment of alternative income streams are made in context with the 'kind of lifestyle you've become accustomed to'. He sees retail as a move 'backwards' for him, having a professional qualification, a history in professional sport, and an address in what might be called a 'nice' neighbourhood in London.

A quote from Andrew provides details of his career narrative and illustrates how his narrative of starting to sell sex fits within the model of the 'new petite bourgeoisie'. He deconstructs the sign of 'work' into multiple signs: time, compensation, environment, vocation, ability, awareness, application, contact/connection, knowledge, and value.

I've had a very patchy work. I used to work for my parents as a [sport] instructor for many, many years. And then I did a degree and moved down here, and I worked for them part-time. Then I worked for [a specialist company with a sex-themed product line] part-time, the shop, but I still worked for my mother doing [sport]. I was actually working for [the shop] when I was escorting. That's why – they used to pay me ridiculous money, it was like 40 quid for the day or something stupid, 45 quid for the day, working in that shop all day. So I started escorting. It worked out I could earn what they were paying me for a day, in 30 minutes, so I started doing that (Andrew, 42).

Andrew describes his career as ‘patchy’ having not dedicated himself to a single vocation, and interpreting being in low paid work as undesirable in the context of the other opportunities he might have been pursuing and ‘ridiculous’ in the context of the structural costs of living in the capital. His queer identity is a part of his rationale for moving away from his family and into London where he had more contact with people who accepted and/or celebrated queer performance and identity. Deconstructing that using the A.D.U.L.T. model offers an opportunity to see the convergence of multiple narrative signs.

<b>Action categories from GT Analysis</b>	<b>Andrew</b>
Addressing Scarcity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ underpaid in retail work</li> <li>▪ underpaid for costs of living in London</li> <li>▪ underemployed, relative to social opportunity</li> <li>▪ underemployed, relative to expectation from qualifications</li> </ul>
Defining Performativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ liking active, dominant role in sex;</li> <li>▪ liking sex with men;</li> <li>▪ feeling confident in his sexuality: gay</li> <li>▪ feeling confident in his sexual expression: fetish</li> <li>▪ knowing about sex work;</li> <li>▪ presenting as culturally masculine;</li> <li>▪ presenting as culturally educated and middle-class</li> </ul>
Utilising Embodiment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ being young, looking young;</li> <li>▪ being slim, athletic, and smooth skinned;</li> <li>▪ confident in looking handsome;</li> <li>▪ wearing his hair cropped;</li> <li>▪ confident about being well-endowed;</li> <li>▪ having the ability to produce an erection (and White?)</li> </ul>
Locating Contact(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ He moved to London.</li> <li>▪ He saw escort ads in magazines;</li> <li>▪ He saw an escort from the ads in a porn film</li> <li>▪ He contacted the man in the film/ad to interview him;</li> <li>▪ He lived locally (London, zone 2, then zone 1);</li> <li>▪ He had personal transportation for outcalls</li> <li>▪ He moved to zone 1 to be closer to friends, personal networks.</li> </ul>
Thinking Temporally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ He maps his immersion in multiple queer scenes prior to sex work</li> <li>▪ his knowledge has developed over time;</li> <li>▪ He predicts his experiences will be bounded to a particular time in his life</li> <li>▪ He compares his use of time (per hour)</li> <li>▪ He evaluates his compensation for time (per hour, day, and</li> </ul>

	week)
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**(Figure 8.1, Example of action categories from analysis: Andrew)**

Exploring Andrew's personal and career narratives through topics such as his family background, his sexual expression, and his environment provide references for living costs and standard of living. His wage in the shop is a referent which he signifies as 'ridiculous money'. In context, I can read £40-£45 per day as 'ridiculous money' for someone renting a room in a flat in London in the early 2000s. As ethnographic context, my own rent in 2000 for a room in a shared flat in London's zone 2 was considered inexpensive at £390 per month, or 17.5% of my nett income at the time. I have estimated the same room to be 45.6% of Andrew's nett monthly income if he only worked full-time in his retail job in the 'sex shop' and was paid sick leave and holidays<sup>56</sup>. A person earning the national minimum wage that year would have paid 65.5% of their nett income for the same room. In other words, Andrew's expenses for all utilities, food, and transport – not to mention savings, pensions, (student) loan payments, entertainment and gifts – would have to have been met with £15.70 per day. A person earning the national minimum wage would have had £6.93 per day. Understanding this context helps give some detail to the meaning of his description of 'ridiculous money'. The collocate 'ridiculous' offers additional context for comparison with what men described as 'easy' money and the rationale of selling sex as a mode of Addressing Scarcity by utilising Embodiment, Performativity, and Contacts in London's queer scenes.

***'Easy' money or regular income?***

Many men described 'easy money' to me. In this section, I discuss the repertoire of 'easy money'. I describe the parameters by which M\$M evaluate their options for income and

<sup>56</sup> Using data on UK tax in 2000 (www.gov.uk, 2015a, 2015b), I calculated Andrew's nett income from retail work to be £10,270, assuming a 40 hour work week with paid holiday and sick leave. See Appendix U.

work, and discuss the ethics of ‘fun’ against the dominant expectation of ‘application’ as a parameter for the social and critical evaluation of selling sex as a form of labour.

M\$M define selling sex as an easy way to make money because of the simplicity to start-up, the flexible, short hours for a high hourly rate, and because they say they liked a lot of the sex they were having. It is simple to get started with a Gaydar profile, it can be done around other regular work or commitments, the requirements can be very similar to what many men report as part of their social behaviours, and there are no qualifications required (although notably this is differentiated by participants from the advantage of skill or knowledge).

In exceptional cases where M\$M had long-term commercial relationships, they reported other arrangements: regular payment by standing order with or without regular contact. Quinn also told me about occasional requests from one of his regular clients to accept payment in arrears. He was very open and seemed quite proud to tell me about the additional services he offered one of his regular clients, including driving him to other assignations, taking him to parties and occasionally providing ‘gear’<sup>57</sup>. What could be problematic in debates about legality are whether these additional services are simple extensions of Quinn’s own ‘escorting’, or whether they are interpreted as working with/for other sex workers, procuring and dealing narcotics, for example.

In some cases, ‘easy’ regular income is established. In an exceptional case, Brian told me that a friend of his – who used to be a client – still deposited \$2000US into his bank account each month, although they no longer have sex. The regular income is perhaps ‘stable’ more than ‘easy’, derived from seeing regular clients for repeat business or without advertising, as in Henrik’s earlier example or the quote from Andrew, below. This is constructed as easy because the annual advertising costs can be reduced as can the time-resources for replying to new enquiries and converting ‘leads’ into ‘sales’ (not their vocabulary, but my own).

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<sup>57</sup> My initial interpretation of ‘gear’ was ‘leather gear’ or ‘fetish gear’. My later interpretation was as a colloquial expression for recreational drugs.

I have a Gaydar profile but I'm not on at the moment. I haven't advertised in QX or Boyz for several months. It's always better if they come to you. There's this credit crunch thing on at the moment. [...] so I just have my guys that I regularly see. (Andrew, 42)

Men told me that repeat customers equate to regular business, and regular business equates to regular income. This seems to be a factor that differentiates higher and lower levels of income from selling sex and longer-term financial stability. There may also be blurring of commercial-relationships into other forms of 'fuzzy' relationships, less recognisably defined as transactional and more similar to 'ordinary' relationships; however, differences in personal capital and financial agency can/may/will remain between partners. Marcos told me he avoided any relationship where he felt too financially dependent on one person. He described the context as one where the relationship and arrangements are agreed, but as the relationship progresses, the demands on his time and space would escalate, until he was uncomfortable.

M: Some people like that. Some people call it "sugar daddies", but um, they get too, [very quickly] as deeper as you go, the worse it gets.

A: Say it again?

M: [He repeats himself more slowly] As deeper as you go, the worse it gets. Because, you're there, they give you money, but then every day is a different story. They'll want more, and more, and more. And when you say, it's enough, "Nah!" And then they go quite mental and they try everything. Some people don't. But some people just go mental. And they like, they like a stalker. 24 hours. So. I'd. Rather. Make my money having sex with different people instead of just having one. And have my freedom (Marcos, 24).

Marcos compares his own feelings with other people's priorities. As I cycled through my analytical stages, I was not clear to what extent the other characters in the narrative were memories or hypothetical. His tone was animated throughout our interview, but his voice sounded anxious when he talked about the daily transactions and the escalation. At the end of his account, his speech is halting, although rather than pursue him for more detail, I acknowledged that I had also faced similar decisions.

For Marcos, performatively defining and prioritising the limits of his emotional, physical,

spatial and temporal boundaries is one of the ways he manages his sense of satisfaction and his avoidance of distress. His excerpt highlights themes of emotional labour as well ways that ongoing consent has to be managed and re-negotiated in all relationships, however transactional, expressive, or permanent they might be constructed.

The men I spoke to were divided about whether selling sex to other men is ‘easy’ compared to the emotional labour and time commitment of other work environments. For some, there is some recognition of potential physical and emotional costs. For some, there are aspects of selling sex that are difficult, as I discussed in the previous chapter, including managing time and having personal relationships, and – for most men sometimes and for some men most times – even the sex itself. Acknowledging that some people have concerns, George explained that he brackets off the potential strains of selling sex, and for him the evaluation and rationale are based on a calculation of money earned for time spent:

Some people think, “Oh, well, being an escort must really screw you up,” but it doesn’t actually. It pays my bills. I don’t think about it. If I don’t think about it, it doesn’t bother me. It’s like any other job. It’s got its pros and cons. It’s no different to [his other business]. It’s no different to working in a shop. You’re all doing the same thing. You’re all providing a service. This just pays a bit better. [Chuckles.] (George, 42)

He made the case that by not *constructing* what he does as a problem, he avoids it *becoming* a problem. This could be possibly be interpreted as avoidance or denial, but certainly as oversimplification. George’s comparison that selling sex is ‘like any other job’ is true in so far as ‘it’s got its pros and cons’ and he is expressing a rejection of the essentialist paradigms of exploitation *or* empowerment, in favour of Weitzer’s (2010a) polymorphous paradigm. However, when he extends his analogy to claim ‘It’s no different to working in a shop’ there is pause to reflect on the material ways that he is ignoring and erasing embodied experiences. Perhaps, however, he has expressed very simply that all workers perform as social actors in different networks. The satisfaction, distress or valour that any worker experiences relates to

their own dissonance or acceptance of compartmentalised ideals of labour and futurity, relative to immediate compensation. Comparing sex work to other work, George gives the priority of money earned for the time spent as the value a *weighted* value in his evaluation matrix.

At the same time, George is discursively erasing those performative and embodied differences between sex work and working in a shop, in his other business, lecturing at university, or other occupations that participants listed. This erasure is one of the reductionist arguments that are problematic when applying theories of sex as work to contexts such as unemployment, benefits, and employment agencies, amongst others, including to whom sex is considered 'easy'.

### **8.3. Negotiated transaction: Business, boundaries and consent**

As well as the symbolism and repertoires of money discussed above, my research reveals the strategies that M\$M use to operationalize their aims, priorities and values. In other words, when we talked about money, they told me about the phenomenology of cash and sex and advertising, and its constructedness and constructiveness. Specifically, they identified issues with determining prices and price strategies, the immediate issue of collecting payments, and the longer term financial management involving managing income and expenditure and matching that up with plans for the future (i.e. medium to long term financial and career goals or the lack thereof).

#### **8.3.1. Equations of earnings**

The data available about price from magazine ads or social-sexual networking sites like Gaydar presents different challenges. Prices are rarely mentioned. In a sample of 363 escort ads taken at 5 year intervals from *Boyz* magazine, only 21 ads referred to prices. On Gaydar.net, the Commercial profile format is the same as for non-charging Members and

Guests, and there is no field where M\$M are asked to identify prices. Some men mention prices within the text of their ads, although far fewer than one would suspect; however, this omission presented its own potential for query. When I asked interview informants about pricing and the exclusion or inclusion of prices from their ads, they revealed that this was usually conscious and that they used it in their marketing strategies.

In contrast to research that focuses on transactional *prices*, my informants indicated that *earnings* need to be understood as more than a function of number of clients and List Asking Price (Logan and Shah, 2009). Data about earnings are mostly limited to transaction price, and specifically advertised asking prices, although they do find a relationship between listed asking prices and prices reported to have been paid (Logan and Shah, 2009). Those findings also omit actual income, measured or reported as a weekly, monthly, annual or career figure. I am cautious about quantifying some of the data about annual or career earnings that can be collected in interviews without longer-term relationships to develop trust and confidence between informants and researchers. Price-setting and income have significance within discursive assessments and constructions of personal value and worth. This is true within capitalist structures generally, within assessment of marketing broadly and advertising specifically. I argue that the signification of cost and price is even more immediate when the person who is creating and performing the product or service is paid directly for its delivery, although an analysis using economics and marketing literature on seller motivation, selling time and selling price for other products and services (e.g. Anglin *et al.*, 2003; Glower *et al.*, 1998) is outside the limits of this thesis. While much of this information would be impossible to verify given the practice of cash payment that was commonly reported to me, participants in my interviews have revealed information about earning expectations, balancing incentives (money, pleasure, free-time) with disincentives (lack of attraction, lack of freedom, social

labour/ application) and strategies for maintaining standards for both (earning expectations and balanced incentives).

### **8.3.2. Setting prices**

Previous research that looks at prices charged by men selling sex on an American escort index site examined how much value is placed on types of information supplied in the advertisements by testing a correlation between content (such as face or body pictures) and listed prices (Logan and Shah, 2009). They also looked at the ratings supplied by clients, and made an attempt to quantify ‘reputation’ and draw a correlation with price. My research supports a theory that there is a correlation between reputation and *earnings in the medium to long term*, but that price is much more reliant on a number of factors, and that M\$M have a variety of approaches in determining the prices they charge. I have categorised these approaches to pricing by using terminology from marketing literature: Penetration Pricing, Dynamic Pricing, Price Discrimination, and Negotiated Pricing (Tellis, 1986). A fifth category emerged from print, online, and interview data that queered my definition of selling sex and sex work yet again: Fee Free.

#### ***Penetration Pricing***

As well as talking about serendipitous offers of cash for sex as central to M\$M’s narratives of starting to sell sex discussed in Chapter 6, some of the men I talked to reported struggling to know how much they should charge for what they were doing when they first began to sell sex. For the men who did not already know someone who worked as an escort, they were without formal business advice, industry training or mentoring. Some men report experimenting with prices, often under-charging at first, then increasing their rates with experience. Quinn told me this caused him some problems when his customers called on him for repeat visits and he had increased his rates dramatically, realising that he could charge

more than the £60 he had requested. However inadvertently, what is being deployed in marketing terms can actually be understood as a strategy known as ‘penetration pricing’, where a new service is launched at a low price and prices are raised after gaining the desired share of the market (Ghose and Han, 2011).

To resolve the question of what to charge, men thinking about selling sex sometimes make comparisons with current advertisements, for example commercial profiles on Gaydar or in magazines like *Boyz* and *QX* where the information may be available; however, this is partly based on a mythologised perception because analysis of the sample demonstrates overwhelmingly that ads in some media do not reveal prices. Others seek advice by paying to see an escort for his advice. Quinn told me stories about men asking him for advice, whilst Andrew told me about how he found someone to ask for advice himself.

Well, you have to judge who’s right and who’s wrong. You have to know when to ask for the money. I asked a few people. Actually, before I did any, tried any escorting, I went and saw an escort myself who was living on [Familiar Street], just opposite [Well Known] bar. [He] wasn’t the sexiest bloke, I have to say [A: Mm-hm.] so I thought, “Well, I’ll talk to him about it.” And when I walked in there, I was kind of like, a little gay boy working in a shop and I guess I wasn’t the typical client that he was used to so I said, “Well, I have an ulterior motive,” no sex, I still paid for it and he told me all about, you know, what to expect, he told me about the Czech Republic or something like that, this kind of escort in his little kind of bedsit thing. Do you know what I mean (Andrew, 42).

Andrew told me that he ‘didn’t know anybody directly who was escorting, I don’t think. No. It was quite a learning curve.. when I first started’. So he had sought advice from a man that he had recognised in from the advertisements who had come into the shop where he worked. The man was in a porn video that was sold in the shop. Andrew said that since this man ‘wasn’t the sexiest bloke’ which I have interpreted as something that might have made him more approachable, along with being a ‘familiar’ face. Andrew’s assessment of his the performer/escort’s looks as moderate might have framed him as being useful for giving advice to someone who was not experienced at marketing himself. From the escort’s

assessment of Andrew's appearance as 'a little gay boy working in a shop' they had a conversation about why Andrew was paying to see him.

There are handbooks and manuals available from specialist publishers that offer guidance on the business of selling sex (Roberts 2004), but none of my participants reported using them. Men may also receive informal advice from people or organisations that provide services – sexual health, community support, photography or advertising – for men who sell sex (Field Notes), although again, none of my participants reported seeking advice through these channels. My participants report a range of prices, but also a number of pricing strategies.

### ***Dynamic Pricing: Basics and Extras***

One strategy is to advertise a base price and add on extras as specific services are requested by buyers. For example: *from* £50 for performing oral sex (without a condom and without taking ejaculation in the mouth). In marketing terms, this is known as a 'Dynamic Pricing' approach and is familiar, for example, in modern airline travel. Using what I have categorised as a dynamic pricing approach, Henrik attracts a larger number of customers – ten per week – mostly for oral sex around his other work. I compared this to *less than* one per day for some others who advertise full-time and gave me personal accounts in interviews or reported experiences of other advertisers with whom they had discussed work or worked together. Henrik sees ten 'blowjobs' per week as reasonable, and emphasises that he likes oral sex and he is 'good at it'. Henrik told me he was relatively new to selling sex and had been doing it for less than three months. According to the experiences of other men, he may have been experiencing an initial spike in the numbers of offers he received related to his novelty, rather than his pricing.

He also emphasised that he will not accept any less than £50 and that it is not negotiable. In addition, he offers extra services. He charges an extra £25 to swallow the ejaculate and more if he agrees to a request for anal sex.

I think that I would never get fucked without a condom, but that I do swallow, but that I charge more when I do. I know the science around that [as a risk for infection with HIV] is inconclusive and whatever but. I mean, I suppose there are two reasons: 1) because I can make more money, it makes people happy and 2) I like it, and so I do. But not often (Henrik, 35).

When I ask him how he negotiates the price with the client, he makes it clear that he does not 'negotiate'. In other words, his prices are fixed. On further discussion, we determine that men agree to his prices and terms in advance online, but that 'nothing is a done deal' until he sees the client face-to-face. On the face of it, Henrik's stance is assertive. On the other hand, he is relatively new to selling sex compared to some of my informants, including Marcos who had four years' experience and is a decade younger. Henrik may have looked back later, like Quinn and others with a different perspective on his approach.

Men who offer a wider range of services, including different types of massage (as discussed in Chapter 5) also employ a pricing model where different services are offered at different prices. These are described in ways which can both distinguish them as more *bounded* than 'sex' and blur the distinctions with what I interpreted as sex or at least 'sexualised'. Steve, 33, offered what I read as different prices (although they were listed on his profile without a '£' sign). For example, he offered 'sensual relief' for '[£]80', 'erotic' for '100', a 'prostate massage' for '115' and 'tantric' for '130' (Gaydar, accessed September 2010).

Steve's pricing indicates a dynamic system of pricing based on the 'extras' that are included and perhaps the 'boundedness' that is dropped (Bernstein, 2007b). These examples certainly suggest to me that the constructed exchange might include different embodied sensations and

performances. In our interview in 2009, Steve had asserted that he was not offering 'sex' to clients because he did not let them touch him, he did not remove his trousers and a singlet, and he did not have his own erection, although he did bring them to orgasm if that had been negotiated and was what they wanted.

But there are different ways of touching somebody in order to get... give them pleasure without involving myself. If I start rubbing my crotch up against them and I get an erection then I'm saying it's okay, then I'm going and I'm crossing a line. If a guy sits on my table and he's got a hard on, that is irrelevant to me, I don't care, most guys will get hard ons, if they don't I'm insulted. [Both laugh.] But, that's funny, but if I was to get a hard on, too, that's crossing a line. I mean, that, that's giving a service I'm not there for because if that is the service they want then I'm adding an extra 50 quid on because I'm not getting paid enough. I'm not going to do this for the amount of money I charge. It's rubbish. I'm not making enough money to do that (Steve, 33).

Steve is candid about touching men in different places on their bodies in order to stimulate them sexually. I laughed when he said he would be 'insulted' if they did not display their arousal. However, he distinguishes his own erection as being worth 'an extra 50 quid'. His account echoed what I discussed in the previous chapter on boundaries of sex that George and Keith negotiated. It is unclear whether Steve changed what his boundaries were between our interview and the updated profile, or whether he maintained the same boundedness to his advertised services. I was 'shy' about contacting him again to probe the issue. In our interview he had suggested he could demonstrate the kind of service he offered. For ethical reasons, I had declined his offer, his subsequent offers and the forthcoming offers made by Yannick and Joe. My data, therefore, is limited to our 2009 interview and comparing how he changed his profile in 2010.

Steve had experienced problems with clients who were confused by his advertising and his pricing, which they interpreted as including a more reciprocal interpretation of 'massage'. He described clients who had become violent with him when they expected sex after he charged them £100 for his massage. In the example below, the advertiser specifies that he is not offering 'an escort service'; however, my interpretation is of a 'fuzzy set' of signs.

Professional and Discreet Massage Therapist

I am an attractive, friendly & experienced gay massage therapist in London.

Not always at comp - please call or text mobile [...]

Sports Massage and Manipulation

Rehabilitation and energy healing massage - therapy based on heat transfer and isolation of muscular problems. Healing problem areas using the bodies energy and muscle manipulation.

**SENSUAL MASSAGE SERVICE AVAILABLE.**

**RELAXATION MASSAGE**

**ENERGY FLOW MASSAGE**

**TANTRIC FULL body**

A combination of massages can be made to clients' needs,

Please call [...] to talk about what may suit your needs

Other options and services available. Text 079 211 73076 for info and rates.

This is not an escort service. Do not ask for complimentary sessions.

Serious enquiries only

(Gaydar profile, accessed March 2009, emphasis as original)

The descriptions of different types of massage include what I interpret as 'body work' (Twigg *et al.*, 2011). These included a non-sexual sports massage, rehabilitation and energy healing massages. Yet in my interview with Joe, 43 he described tantric massage as 'charging up [the] sexual energy' of his clients and that it is 'more than just *sex*'. The ad above goes on to describe 'sensual massage' and 'tantric full body' massage. Other examples included 'cock, prostate and anal mapping'. My interpretation was that this is explicitly sexual (Koken *et al.*, 2010).

I compared Steve's definitions of sex and massage to ads like the one above and to Joe and Yannick's interviews. Joe's interpretation was that tantric massage is 'more than' sex, not other than sex. The distinction might be assessed through advertised omissions or boundaries of reciprocal contact (if not 'expression'). What I have described as 'fuzzy' seemed like explicit sex work to me and was only through the testimonies of men who advertised as masseurs that I have categorised them as blurred.

What I class as sensual, okay, is it includes massaging the glutes [buttocks], inner thighs. You can massage the cock, and if they want to have a happy ending at that point you would have to stay strictly professional. There is none of this them sucking my cock while they or while I'm doing this or them groping me or me giving them oral sex. That is not included in a typical sensual touch massage. It is not about an intimacy. As soon as you cross that hugging, holding, them touching, then that is actually *between* the two people then that is not what I'm for (Steve, 33).

Again, my data is limited by my own ethics and the ethics of my application. Perhaps taking a queer side step from pricing strategies of sex and massage, I had a job of explaining to my three participants who advertised as masseurs that a physical demonstration was outside what I could participate in as part of my interview (c.f. West and de Villiers, 1992). Having explained this as safeguarding against any breach of trust or abuse of power dynamics in situations with people who might have been vulnerable, one potential participant's reply was that he felt that my definition of 'exploitation' was too narrowly defined.

To be contentious, I would argue that I would feel more exploited by my time being occupied by being interviewed with no payment than by doing what I would be doing anyway, getting my standard fee, and then occupying some of my recovery time by answering a few questions.

In a similar vein of discussion I could assert that I am the exploiter and my customers are the exploited. We are both doing something we enjoy, they pay, and I receive, money! (J, 49)

### ***Price Discrimination***

In magazines and commercial profiles on social network sites, prices may be advertised as listed explicitly, as available on request, or the charge may only be implied (see examples in Figure 8.2 below). The presence and absence of prices in print advertisements (e.g. *Boyz* and *QX*) and on commercial profiles in social network sites (Gaydar) makes analysis of price more difficult. Researchers like Logan and Shah (2009) have used other sites specifically designed with fields for listing prices. From the perspective of the men placing the advertisements, the absence of price is intentional. Not signalling a set price or even a list of

set prices allows M\$M more flexibility and control over how much they charge at different times, for different requests and for different clients.

Price Excerpts from Commercial Profiles on Gaydar	Dates accessed
INCALLS £100/h    £180/2hours OUTCALLS £120/h    £220/2h CALL ME!!!!!! [...] ONLY CASH ACCEPTED!!!!	(accessed July 2009)
My rates (cash only): **£110 in-call **£130+cab fare out-call (before midnight)	(accessed October 2009)
**£600 overnights Ask me about my rates. Available for overnights.	(accessed October 2009)
Genuine clients who are willing to pay for a good service. Clean and generous	(accessed October 2009)

**(Figure 8.2, Examples of listed prices from Commercial profiles on Gaydar)**

For M\$M who do not display advertised prices, the price can be dependent on how much he wants to see the client. M\$M will not advertise a rate in their advertisement, but will convey their basic rates to potential clients in telephone or online instant message (IM) communication. As described in Chapter 5, M\$M may screen clients for attractiveness, as well as personality and safety, (Parsons *et al.*, 2004) and may make discriminatory price adjustments, based on the client's age or how attractive he seems.

I don't have a fixed price. It's like I'll.. just decide. [...] If it was somebody who I really.. wasn't.. into.. really would struggle.. to find.. anything.. still worth getting it up for than I would fu— then I would ask

for more, you know what I mean, if I was really not bothered about doing a job I might just chance it and see.. how much they were willing to pay, just on the off chance that they were willing to pay a bit more. But yeah. (Keith, 24)

Price discrimination is evident in the media data as well. Ads may include discounts for ‘students’, ‘younger Boyz’ (*Boyz* 2001, 118) or ‘under 25s’ (*Boyz* 2006, 62). In this way, price/ money is used agenticly by M\$M to exercise control for variations in performative desire, based on prioritising physical and personal attraction and their own sexual mood.

### *Negotiating*

Throughout my interviews, I asked participants about how they ‘*negotiated*’ prices. My intention was to understand how they agreed upon prices with clients, and how that was formulated, including a calculation of time or services. In several of my interviews, the word ‘negotiated’ was dismissed as inaccurate because it was understood to imply discounting rather than price setting. For example, George interpreted my question about how he ‘negotiates with customers’ to mean lowering prices. When I explained my definition of negotiating, he described the process to me.

I don’t drop my price for anything. [...] I ask them what they’re looking for. And they usually ask me what I do and don’t do. Then we take it from there, and we meet somewhere in the middle. (George, 42)

This ad from Gaydar in 2009 includes a number of details from Dynamic Pricing, but includes a disclaimer that he does not negotiate some services and he does not lower his prices.

I do a sensual nude oil massage, oral and/or sex. 100% genuine 9 inches. I'm versatile. I'm a native English speaker. I'm completely independent ie. not working for a brothel, agency or pimp. We'll both be naked for the massage and you can touch and suck me too if you like. No extra charges. No rush, stay the whole hour if you want. I'll always offer you a drink. You're welcome to take a shower. I don't kiss, rim, bareback or do chems.

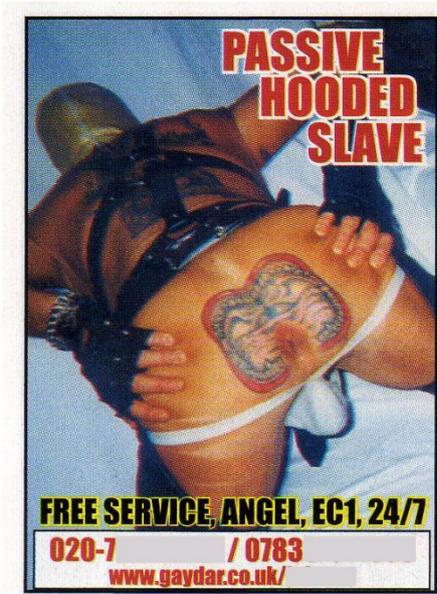
£100/hour incalls or £150/hour outcalls. £500 overnight. [...] PS. There are other escorts on here offering their services for as little as £40. Sorry, I do not compete with their prices. No discounts. But you will get what you pay for. That's why I have so many regular customers.

(Gaydar profile, accessed October 2009)

The men I spoke to all had a basic rate which was the minimum they charged and which usually allowed for a maximum time of one hour. My data from interviews and media texts provided evidence that some M\$M emphasise not 'watching the clock' as a method of adding value, being competitive with other advertisers, and promoting themselves for better customer service. All data suggests that most M\$M employ some form of price discrimination (as discussed) based on in-calls (clients visiting them) or outcalls (visiting clients at home or in hotels). In other words, M\$M charge extra to travel to a client. However, for some of the participants in my interviews, they still talk about the prices they charge as *fixed* and the *negotiation* refers to what services the potential client would like and to what the M\$M will agree.

### ***Fee-Free***

I have noted the dynamic quality of researching individuals or groups of people who can be identified as selling sex (The EMIS Network, 2010), particularly when they use spaces or profiles that are not flagged as explicitly 'Commercial' and when men who are not soliciting for paid work are offered money for sex (see Chapter 7). Following the rigours of a grounded theory approach, data is not excluded to fit the theory (Charmaz, 2006; Mills *et al.*, 2006). In this case, data from this corpus of 'Escort' and 'Commercial' advertisements demands further reflection on the queering of distinctions that can be made between definitions of commercial and private. To not exclude data means a recognition of more relationships which can be found between the categories. For example, ads and profiles for 'Free Service' are included in the texts (see Figure 8.3).



(Figure 8.3, 'Free Service', *Boyz* 11 January 2007)

Accepting that 'no fees' ads appear in 'escorting' and 'Commercial' spaces reinforces the application of 'fuzzy sets' with queer theory to analyse 'queer' data. As I state earlier in this chapter, this seems a remarkable finding and one that warrants further investigation. What is going on for men who advertise as professional escorts or masseurs but do not charge a fee?

Perhaps because personal contact ads for unpaid encounters seemed so ordinary and so common in mainstream and queer populations and publications (Baker, 2003; Child *et al.*, 1996; Cocks, 2009; Davis, 1990; Deaux and Hanna, 1984; Goode, 1996), I was surprised at first to find the ad for a 'free service' shown in Figure 8.3. Men who placed advertisements offering a free service in magazines are exceptional cases to note in researching M\$M in advertising. However, I found they were more usual in online profiles. For example, Yannick contacted me online from a profile that offered a free massage service with a 'menu' of options that he had created. These ads problematize the categories that are constructed by the advertising structures: Commercial profiles for Escorts and Masseurs and Personal profiles or small ads. There are even examples of advertisements that appear with the same photograph and phone number in both the personal and escort sections.

Yannick, in his 'forties', advertised providing 'massage' from a studio apartment close to his home but he did not charge a fee. As such, he did not fit the original profile of my participant sample but came to the study through the stages of data familiarisation (with other 'free service' ads, as Figure 8.3 above) and theoretical sampling. Yannick told me he had the idea of offering a massage service himself while he was paying men for sensual massage. He told me that this was a way for him to 'express my male energy' and have physical contact with other men instead of paying for a similar service himself.

Yannick explained that the negotiation of the transaction plays an important part in the performativity of sexual identity for many of the men who contact him.

I get a lot of gay men coming in here, so I mean they're open, they know what they want and it's easy, but there's also a lot of gay men on Gaydar who are early exploring or who are curious or who are all of those things and they don't want to – they don't want to commit to a sexual act so therefore they won't contact a *proper masseur* who will make it quite clear that *for the right fee he'll do anything*. They don't want to do that, so they don't want to take that step, but they also don't just want a massage, so they're sort of in that vacuum phase [laughs] – (Yannick, 'forties', emphasis my own).

I found it useful to hear Yannick's ideas about advertising bodywork on Gaydar and his assessments of the rationale men have, construct, provide and then maintain or dismiss.

Yannick constructed them as 'gay' men who are 'curious', rather than 'bisexual', 'men who have sex with men', 'queer', or 'questioning'. These labels are used to recognise sexually defined subjectivities as intersections of identities, experiences and representations. Likewise, labels of 'sex work', 'body work', 'escorting', 'prostitution', 'sex', and 'massage' all carry variations of meaning that are performatively co-constructed even in the contact that is made through advertising communication.

Yannick explained that by not charging a *fee*, he and the men who approached him co-constructed his identity as 'not a proper masseur', in the context of this queer, metropolitan sub-culture where a masseur 'will make it quite clear that *for the right fee he'll do anything*'. For these men, the prior negotiation of a sexual act seems to be interpreted as a commitment

or perhaps a shift in their own identity which they would feel compelled to ‘complete’.

Having ‘come out’ gradually myself two decades ago, I understand the feeling of ‘commitment’ that a single action can have for a man within larger heteronormative and/or homophobic culture/structure who has never expressed intimacy with another man Adding a fee to the transaction, even as body work, might further anchor that commitment as a ‘contract’.

Yannick’s quote illustrates how the addition or omission of fees can create *or expel* a feeling of boundedness to the experiences of both men. However that boundedness is constructed, it can allow men disavowal of both the experience of paying for sex and the experience of having sex (or a sexual experience) with a man. Yannick describes the dissonance of the client who exists in a ‘vacuum phase’, neither committed to paying a man for sex nor denying himself the potential for a (homo-)sexual experience.

Yannick elaborated on how men use Gaydar for Locating Contact with the queer scene and Locating Contact(s) who are queer. Using a queer social networking site or app like Gaydar allows men to feel a sense of control for how, where, and to/with whom their actions and their representations can be ‘known’. Hearing from Yannick also illustrated points about negotiation and consent as on-going.

So when a guy goes on Gaydar it’s – I think it’s primarily some sexual need, and then there are all these secondary needs around it, then he justifies it with all these other things that he goes on Gaydar to do. But it’s essentially sexual. Yes. And how do I test that? Because you’ll get the guy who’s very clear. Man, he makes contact and he just wants to make absolutely clear that it’s not a sexual thing and the fact that he plays all these games with me and I play along and I say, “Absolutely, mate, that’s exactly what it is.” And then it’s amazing and they come here and they lie down on the bed and it’s all professionally done and it’s all, you know, really professional and they lie down and away we go and you know you do the massage and you build into it a touch here and a touch there and a this here and a this there and you know, when you look again, um, you’ve sort of got to remind them of their restrictions, [laughs] of their boundaries. You’ve got say, “Hang on, you had boundaries. Remember? [laughs] And I’d hate for me to break them now. In the heat of the moment.” So, yeah. I think, um, I think that’s what Gaydar is. I think that’s the niche that Gaydar fills (Yannick, ‘forties’).

Yannick illustrates a tension that I felt about some of Steve's interpretations. Steve constructed a 'fuzzy set' of signs about what he does and how he defines it as something that is not sex work. Yannick's said that audiences read any type of profile on Gaydar in a way that is framed with fulfilling a role which is 'essentially sexual' between men. I would argue that can be defined as 'queer'. Commercial profiles on Gaydar are 'framed' within this queer 'mortise' which guides the audience's interpretations to piece together the multiple sign-systems of paying, unpaid, contact, boundedness, sex and intimacy.

The Mortise constitutes a formal device – a framework – used to steer and structure the assembly of meaning within an advertisement. Recognition of this framework is not accomplished by reading single ads in isolation, but draws on exposure to a system of advertisements. The mortise routes the connection and transfer of meanings within an ad (Goldman, 1992, p.63).

The performative co-construction of the assignation and the ways that each actor guides and follows the other through their contact in Yannick's description echoed some of the dynamics that Quinn conveyed when he told me about his dominating role and men who were curious, tentative or inexperienced with passive roles, penetrative sex or being sexually dominated. Exploring that point here takes me on a fractally-shifting narrative to discuss power and consent in more depth, although again, I find myself limited by space and pointing to future presentations of my analysis.

While I have limited my research to magazines and social media, further research can be done exploring emerging trends in websites that market mutual and paid body work (marketed as types of massage) between men. Other research can look at the trends in online commercial matchmaking that include sites and practices like SeekingArrangement.com, SeekingMillionaire.com and 'online dating auction' sites like [whatsyourprice.com](http://whatsyourprice.com) that offer 'generous members' the opportunity to make first dates with 'attractive members' that include an agreed price.

WhatsYourPrice.com is the only online dating website where money can buy you love or at least a first date.[...] As for the attractive singles who are tired of wasting their time dating losers, we have thousands of generous gentlemen (and women), waiting to take you out on a real date. Even if your date turns out to be a dud, you will be compensated for your time.[...] So, what's your price? (Anon, n.d.)

On WhatsYourPrice, it's easy to set up dates. You don't have to spend hours on personal ads trying to be creative and funny with each new email you send out. You don't have to wade through dull or boorish replies on personals. Just make an offer. If the price is right, you're going on a date! [...] Isn't it time you experienced the joy of dating someone who [sic] you would have never had the chance to date? This is the kind of joy that comes from finding someone special on whats your price [sic] (Anon, n.d.)

#### **8.4. Managing the bottom line: Spending, (re)investing and saving**

Men see, use and spend their income as paid wages (to be spent or saved) and as business capital, that they reinvest for future returns in their business. Reinvestment is made in advertising, infrastructure and body-as-product. In this section, I discuss the reported practices of (re-) investment by M\$M in 'infrastructures' that add value to their earning strategies. I examine how saving is practiced or not and how those practices match financial and economic goals, hopes and plans or become additional obstacles to address. In the following section, I conclude by looking at how gaps between expectation and practice are financially produced and productive.

##### **8.4.1. Reinvestment in Infrastructure**

As discussed in Chapter 5 – Ad Men, M\$M make conscious and often well-informed decisions about how to invest in media for their sex work goals. Without necessarily framing their expenditure in the economic terms of 'cost-benefit', M\$M actively use media investment to maximise human resources by avoiding 'timewasters' or redirecting them to websites for information. M\$M use media to attract the 'right' kind of business: the quantities

and qualities of clients they prefer to see, services they prefer to offer, and offers they wish to reject. For M\$M who self-advertise, there is a significant investment of time and money spent creating a certain image.

‘Investments made in advertisements, cellular phones, paging systems, switchboards, offices, etcetera provide a lustre of legitimacy to an otherwise “illegitimate” transaction’ (Harriman *et al.*, 2007, p.314). This kind of spending can be interpreted as being pro-active, professional and economical about selling sex. M\$M can construct sex work as entrepreneurial, and not as desperate or reactive to financial scarcity and social vulnerability.

Stuart, 37, told me that during the time he sold sex as his main form of income, he had become ‘the highest profile gay male escort in the UK’. He achieved this through a considered advertising plan, ‘attaching to escort sites and to sites with women’. In 2002 he invested in developing a website to promote himself. He designed it to be a ‘corporate looking site, sexy without sounding dirty’. He paid for photos to be taken by different photographers. He explained that the extra cost was an investment that gave him ‘as broad of appeal as possible’ (Stuart, 37).

My participants reported making valuations and evaluations from the perspective that liquidity signifies both success and necessity. My analysis of advertisements and profiles show repertoires that promote M\$M as ‘high class’ and ‘clean’, distinct from images of drug-addicted ‘whores’ and ‘hustlers’. Narratives of (high) class and cleanliness create a discourse of social hygiene (Desyllas, 2013).

This investment in image extends beyond advertising and technology, and includes the spaces and objects used with clients. Details from interviews included clothing for different ‘roles’ or fetishes, sex toys, condoms, lubricants, and sometimes other stimulants (for example, Matthew’s ‘poppers’ and Quinn’s ‘gear’). Quinn referred to the ambiguous ‘gear’ which can

be used as slang for 'leather gear' or drugs. Men made few direct references to drugs except to distance themselves from the topic. Matt's preparation to meet a regular client included 'poppers'<sup>58</sup>, condoms, and lube'.

Quinn and Marcos also talked about expenses such as different types of outfits for role-play or for meeting clients in 'smart-casual' environments. This was supported by data from ads where men provided photos of themselves in multiple outfits and character roles (e.g. leatherman, business suit, rugby kit, military). Other supporting data came from ads where men described themselves as 'smart' or 'well-dressed'. Reflecting now, there are ways to extend the 'participant-observation' and 'interview' methods of data collection by perhaps inviting participants to talk about the items, objects and clothing that they use as part of their sex work, as well as talking in more detail about the spaces where their meetings take place.

In some interviews, participants told me they extended their 're-investment' strategies to include their own bodies. Quinn described his recent tax claims to me in some detail, explaining that he had one of the few occupations which allowed him to claim his gym membership and protein shakes. Marcos did not tell me about tax, but did explicitly describe how he thought of his body as his product. As such, he listed procedures including regular haircuts, dermabrasion, cosmetic dentistry and rhinoplasty as necessary for his work. Marcos was, even to the most cynical observer, a very attractive 24 year old man by traditional Western standards, yet he described his own appearance to me in terms that were unflattering. My concern here, in avoiding terms of pathology, is that he genuinely struggles with his body cathexis and possibly body dysmorphia. His interpretation of commercial re-investment might also appear to be a rationalisation of non-essential, cosmetic procedures and modifications that are less about his ability to embody a performativity that will enhance his

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<sup>58</sup> 'Poppers' in this context refers to liquid alkyl nitrites which are used as an inhalant to relax the anal sphincter and give users a head-rush from oxygen deprivation.

income and more about his own feelings of scarcity, in being excluded from some richer, more beautiful population of men.

In contrast to other self-employed people who sell sex working from spaces separate from their residences (Field Notes) only Yannick used a separate location from his home, and William's worked with a friend in *his* council flat. Otherwise men referred to working from their own homes. Quinn referred to having a playroom that was separate from his bedroom and Steve used a therapy room that was separate from his bedroom; however, several advertisers that offer specialist BDSM services also advertise specially equipped playrooms, often fitted at great expense. While many M\$M use their own bedrooms for commercial encounters, the extent to which BDSM specialists consider their playrooms as commercial space or personal property, or both, is an idea that can be developed and explored further with a sample group who specialise in offering BDSM services.

Other spaces and objects that M\$M value and invest in are cars, scooters, and even bicycles. Mobility is noted as a premium service in advertisements where higher prices are displayed for 'outcalls' (the M\$M goes to the client's location) than for 'incalls' (the client visits the M\$M; see the earlier Figure 8.2 for examples). This information is supported by data from interviews and other research (Logan and Shah, 2009).

Most participants reported operationalizing their mobility in very cost-effective ways, usually using an existing vehicle. Marcos was the exception to this, spending his earnings and taking out a £15,000 loan to pay for a luxury automobile and a new scooter, along with the maintenance, tax and parking required near his central London flat. I mention Marcos's spending here as something that is not a 'necessity' for his livelihood, regardless of one's political, ethical or moral standpoint on selling sex. By his own admission, his transportation expenses are not justifiable because they created the majority of his massive debt, and he still

uses taxis when he needs to visit clients. His original objective of Addressing Scarcity was focused on providing for himself and then saving to own his own property. At the time of our interview, he had established serious debt from spending on luxury items. I interpret a tension in how he has prioritised working to address forms of social, 'class' Scarcity and how he has signified the solution to be as investment in depreciating material objects.

Theoretically, the work of the *petite bourgeoisie* does not traditionally allow people to accumulate substantial capital, and their goal is not to reinvest revenue (Bourdieu, 1986). In this sense, some M\$M challenged that model and others reinforced it. If capital is understood not simply as material capital but future capital – for example, reputation (in business terms, as 'good will') and work experience – the theory that accumulation of capital is not a priority is unchanged; however, the exception is noted when extreme chances are taken in order to accumulate capital. Certainly, for a person to do sex work, escorting, 'happy endings' or porn part-time whilst attempting to maintain boundaries of their identities can, in and of itself, be constructed as taking an extreme financial risk with future capital. For example, reputation is at risk from a stigma associated with selling sex and advertising in semi-public spaces.

I follow this section on spending with a final discussion of medium and long term plans, goals and strategies (or their absences) and the how the work/ life trajectory is both financially produced and productive.

#### **8.4.2. Promotion strategies: Reach, Impact, Selectivity and Cost**

M\$M are aware of return on investment and make marketing decisions about how to spend their marketing budget. Keith discusses some of his options for making contact with clients, as well as informal ways he uses his network of contacts for information about marketing and ways to decrease his costs, increase his revenue and increase his bottom line.

‘Gaydar is just the most accessible and the most – like the costs – pounds to get the amount of clients that you can get, the best – I spoke to another guy who’s an escort and he says he gets the most work from Gaydar, and it’s the cheapest. So as long as I’m getting enough work through Gaydar, I’ll just stay with that – no need to go for something else. Because the *QX* ads are quite expensive and this guy was saying that he doesn’t get that much work from the *QX* ads (Keith, 24).

Keith’s quote illustrates the way M\$M collect and analyse their own data about advertising and as a part of their marketing strategies. He and Andrew talked about what they had learned from talking to other M\$M and using that information to make their own decisions. Keith demonstrates an understanding of a cost-benefit ratio, comparing the costs of the magazine ads with the amount of work they attract and saying that using Gaydar provides him with ‘enough work’ and rejecting the ‘need to go for something else’. Keith acknowledges a temporality to his experience, although to me there is an implicit tension in the lack of acknowledgement for material preparation of contingency for the time when this mode of contact is not ‘enough’.

Men may use multiple media to penetrate a market which in addition to the repetition of ads in a single publication or site makes an audit of individuals selling sex methodologically very difficult. Marcos, George, and Quinn all listed specific sites for multimodal marketing strategies.

A: Okay, so where do you advertise?

M: Ooh. *Gay Times*, *QX*, Rentboy, um, Gaydar. Manjam, *Attitude*.... GayRomeo, uh, and then other websites that, they also like “Oh we have a new agency,” You send your pictures to them click on the link, so many pumped boys, so many websites they just, where you can see them. Because they just like, “Oh, you have to be with us!” and just put them up, but I don’t, actually. (Marcos, 24).

Marcos’s quote illustrates other patterns that were common when men talked about their advertising. Like George, Quinn, Andrew and others, he lists both websites and magazines. Different to Keith, Quinn and Andrew, he has an awareness of how much he is

spending each month but not how much revenue is gained from each site. According to his breakdown, he spends £442 per month on promotion.

Gaydar is 45 [pounds per] month. Manjam: no. GayRomeo: no. *Attitude* – *Attitude* and Manjam I just created. Um, I put my pictures and I put my details in the bottom so people when open they see, but it doesn't say "Commercial" or something like that. It's like with *Attitude*. *Attitude* is just, you know, I created one where people can see my details but it's not proper for escorts. And *Gay Times* £200 a month and *QX* is 160 a month for *QX Men* and *QX*. They've got two magazines, *QX* and *QX Men*. So it's 160 a month for both. And Rentboy is 37 [per month] if I'm not wrong. Something like that. So, at the end of the month it's kind of a lot for advertising. *Gay Times* is really good because it go all around [the world]. So it's really good.

Marcos also lists *Attitude* as one of his advertisers but points out that 'it doesn't say "Commercial" or something like that' to indicate that it is a site for personal advertising. This comes up again from Craig and Yannick when I present findings about how social media is used to sell sex. My analysis of print editions of *Attitude* and observational field notes revealed that M\$M ads are not as prominent in that title. I found no Escort ads in print editions of *Attitude* from 2009 or 2010 so did not carry out a methodical analysis of previous editions as I was struggling to manage the corpus collected from *Boyz*. There are examples of single advertisements for body work such as massage. A researcher could examine this in more depth for an analysis of multiple titles within a shorter time period but I determined that further investigation to those particular ads did not extend the category of body work advertising.

The men I spoke to had varying advertising strategies, where some used a scattergun approach and placed advertisements in several publications and sites simultaneously, without a structured media plan or a real awareness of how much business they were attracting through particular media. Others were more selective and chose to advertise only in certain publications where they realized a higher return on their investment (R.O.I.). Participants revealed managing decisions about advertising frequency, audience reach (the number of people who will see the ad), impact on selective or broad audiences, and cost. These are

decisions managed by advertisers in mainstream media planning. Selectivity focused on the degree to which the ad would be bounded to specific communities, such as limiting the audience to only gay and bi men on the 'gay scene' and excluding straight family or community members, as Keith's earlier comment illustrates. Similarly, advertising placing advertisements in particular titles with the aim attracting wealthier, travelling, international clients, is consistent with practices in mainstream media planning. Cost was calculated by informants per client, prospective client, or just per month.

Frequency was not considered by M\$M in classic marketing terms as the number of times a potential client needs to see their promotion before an approach is made (Naik *et al.*, 1998; Surmanek, 1996), although this data would be a fascinating study. Instead, informants talked about advertising frequency in terms of when, how often and how many ads they ran at one time or across the year. Frequency, which equates to patterns of advertising *investment*, varied with some respondents choosing to focus on repeat business and only advertising when they actively wanted to attract new clients.

D: I have a stable of guys. [Laughs.]

A: Do you?

D: Well, yeah. I – I – mean I have a Gaydar profile but I'm not on at the moment. I haven't advertised in QX or Boyz for several months. It's always better if they come to you. There's this credit crunch thing on at the moment [...] so I just have my guys that I regularly see. That wouldn't be enough to support me as a full-time escort (Andrew, 42).

Others used an intermittent but considered pattern of advertising, placing ads in different publications at different times, also allowing for when they would be taking time off, and placing ads in publications in other cities if they planned to work whilst travelling abroad. Some of the men also indicated an awareness that advertisements in different publications attracted different types of clients.

'I've advertised in Gay Times. I've advertised here [Gaydar.] I've advertised on men4rent.com and Rentboy[.com], and all the adverts are

much of a muchness [...] I get a lot of business from Gaydar. And I get, certainly Americans and, um, that side of the world, North America, I get from Rentboy' (George, 42).

This triangulates the interview I discussed in Chapter 5 that illustrated how the publishers' own marketing and editorial decisions have an impact on the types of advertising (sex work, body work) that appears in the magazines, the content of the individual advertisements (levels of sexual explicitness), and that both of these factors have an impact on the perceived 'effectiveness' of the advertisements to attract clients. This co-construction is structural, highlighting debates and tensions that posit structure and agency variously as binary and interrelated (Shannon et al 2008). As such, workers' decisions about where and how to advertise, and how to construct their media representation of themselves are affected. *These* decisions are, in turn, then related to a *matrix* of choices a M\$M makes about increasing his income, maximising his 'efficiency' (in other words making a larger amount of money per client or potential client) and/ or increasing his level of work satisfaction.

This research is limited insofar as I can only report the perceptions and observations of the men who described their advertising strategies to me. Future research could be done to help men quantify the impact their advertising has and the cost-to-value ratio for different advertising places and content. Depending on the goals and funding restrictions on and within organisations that work with M\$M, this might be framed less in terms of Reach, Impact and Frequency, and more in terms of reducing Cost (e.g. cost per thousand; CPM) and increasing Selectivity. The type of data and understanding to develop a media plan and objectives is a challenge for all small and independent advertisers, even in mainstream commerce.

#### **8.4.3. Future Capital?**

Key to understanding how experiences and representations of selling sex are constructed and changing is to explore how money and finances are handled in the medium to long term and

how M\$M plan for future capital, if at all. Having looked at money at the beginning of the selling-sex narrative, the constructs and discourses of price and worth, and the phenomena of negotiating payment, I want to close the chapter by looking at what M\$M do with their money and how they plan and manage their finances and future income.

Research that has looked at M\$M and finance has discursively focused on prior or on-going deficit. Yet, in the narratives of M\$M, gaps between expectation and practice are financially produced and productive. This section looks at the continued relationship with money and how evaluation and (dis-) satisfaction may shift over time in relation to plans, goals and hopes, or a lack thereof.

Some men spoke of long term plans and goals, like Marcos in the story above. For these men, they were selling sex until a future event, such as having enough money to buy a flat (Marcos), or when a more ideal job became available (Keith, Henrik). The future event was sometimes mythologised to a greater or lesser extent – the conditions for stopping being unmatched to their own actions or any real opportunities.

Keith describes selling sex as allowing him to relax and not worry about money or the ‘soul-destroying’ process of looking for work in the currently scarce job market. Yet, some future job in the profession for which he is trained and qualified will likely remain elusive if he is not actively networking, creating new leads, acquiring experience and updating his skills to compete with peers who are doing so.

In Marcos’s interview, he tells me about saving to buy a new house, but when we discuss his finances, in fact he has no savings at all, and has the debts including monthly payments on his luxury car. Marcos is not unlike many other 24 year olds in having little or no savings (Collinson, 2010) or a firm understanding of personal finance management (Beal and Delpachitra, 2003) but his ‘plan’ to leave escorting is more of a fantasy than an achievable

goal. His other future event is an ideal job where he will not have to work in an office everyday, he will have flexible time, travel once a month, and be well paid; however, he is unable to offer an example of any suitable opportunities that would meet all of these criteria, and I agree with him that the job he describes sounds very rare indeed. For these young men, their economic plans may cause them difficulty or distress in the future, if/ as their opportunities for other employment recede instead of improve.

In some cases, realisable future plans are a form of future capital that M\$M consciously maintain during the time they sell sex. Matthew had a 'weekends only' arrangement with his agency. He did this so he could work as an escort and maintain his full-time job in the week. Like Henrik, he and others did not use photographs for advertisement. Craig avoided using a Commercial profile and the attendant labels of escort or sex worker publicly. These strategies have allowed men to maintain their 'regular' jobs separate from selling sex or sexual body work, and so minimise any negative impact on their long term careers. This will become more difficult as media networks become more pervasive to the point of insidiousness in more aspects of our lives, particularly where men use commercial profiles which are integrated in social networking sites, like Gaydar.

Where I, along with many researchers and activists, would advocate for self-employment or flat, co-operative management structures over hierarchical management, the escort agency played a useful role in maintaining the boundaries between Matthew's mainstream-work and sex-work identities and environments, albeit in similar ways to how other participants described using features on social network profiles like Gaydar. The short term financial costs allowed them to use the escort agency or commercial sites to maintain both temporal and spatial boundedness. They have avoided longer term costs lost from the income which they saw as a gain from selling sex. This builds on Bernstein's (2007b) work that people pursue a new work ethic that is motivated by fun, pleasure and freedom. At the same time,

the way future costs (to reputation) are managed and avoided seems to challenge her work with women who pursue erotic labour *instead of* mainstream work because of the gendered wage gap or ‘cleavage’ (Bernstein 2007b).

This is not to say that sex work cannot be successfully integrated into other careers, even as new streams of revenue are explored and developed by entrepreneurs. Since our interview, one participant has expanded his escort profile to include massage services and has used that to bridge his career in personal fitness. Another now runs his own photography business and offers a specialist service by using his knowledge about online escort marketing to create portfolios for people selling massage, sex and specialist erotic services. Others are artists and writers, capitalising on their lived experiences and transforming them into works of art, products for consumption, and additions to the queering of literature and theory.

Resilience, as well as risk, can be read in the stories of M\$M. Whether men were more or less private, and to what extent they identified with sex work and sex worker identities, M\$M maintained a greater level of financial independence and agency, whether from the state or family (including partnership). Whilst dominant social hierarchies in Britain, as in many countries, situate the monogamous couple above other forms of relationships (Barker 2012; Rubin 1984), there is an argument to be made for individuals who feel financially agentic. Imbalances of resources, power and expectation exist in even the most conventional relationships. Young men like Marcos refuse a ‘sugar daddy’ so as not to be forced to make medium or long-term commitments to a person to whom they would feel socially culpable. The focus on money in this chapter – and more broadly the focus throughout this thesis on the relationships that exist and are co-constructed between M\$M and men who pay men for sex – has built on research that is critical of the rules of relationships and invites conversation about the queering potentials that emerge when practices are evaluated critically and when

fringe or liminally visible actions become prominent (Halberstam, 2011; Muñoz, 2009; Smith, 2015, 2012).

## **8.5. Summary**

In this chapter, I started by looking at M\$M's experiences of money and the role that it plays in their narratives, their identities, and their day-to-day lives. I extended that look into an exploration of their possible futures, and how their future subjectivities (identities and experiences) are bound up by their financial goals, or lack thereof.

In the first section, I looked at how M\$M use money in their narratives of starting to sell sex and their rationale for continuing to sell sex. I explored how they see scarcity in their lives, formed by constructs of relative need and relative exclusion. I looked at how they prioritise feelings of agency over exclusion, and how they may prioritise ethics of 'fun' and 'easy' over traditional ethics of 'application'.

In the second section, I describe some of the strategies that M\$M describe as having needed to learn and understand, often without mentoring and based only on their own analysis and assessment of price, cost and value drawn from discourses created from gay magazine ads and online profiles. I further explore the paradigm that money creates by the absence of fees in escort advertising. I go on to describe the actual handing over of cash, how M\$M manage that and what the action discursively creates.

Finally, I look at how M\$M manage their money, and whether they use it as business capital or wages to spend and save. I evaluate their strategies, or lack thereof, for developing and maintaining a realisable plan for the future. I offer suggestions for possible interventions for agencies that aim to assist M\$M and point out gaps for future research.

In the final chapter, I bring together the five parts of the A.D.U.L.T. model that I have constructed from my interpretations of my data. I propose that models that aim to identify ‘types’ of sex workers discursively fix those identities, construct people as objects and erase subjectivity. I propose the A.D.U.L.T. model as useful for understanding factors of risk and resilience for people selling sex.

## **CHAPTER 9: DISCUSSION: NEW MODEL IN TOWN - INVITING MORE RELATIONAL MODELS FOR MEN WHO SELL SEX TO MEN**

### **9.1. Introduction**

Men who sell sex are written about as prostitutes, escorts, hustlers, or sex workers (Scott, 2003). These repertoires can have negative, stigmatising effects or more positive intentions for solidarity and workers' rights, just as selling sex and sexualised services 'can be both subversive of and support the dominant order' (Altman, 2015a, p.271). The stories of men who sell (or have sold) sex or sexualised services to men (M\$M) are often (over)simplified, perhaps to fit within accepted social or personal narratives. Even when recounted outside of pathologising or rescue motivated discourses, the experiences, identities, and representations of M\$M are oversimplified. These stories are repeated and performed in cultural media, social policy, medical practice, and personal histories, performatively reconstructing a vast array of subjectivities into mythologised categories.

In this chapter, I argue that the narratives of Men who Sell Sex to Men (M\$M) are oversimplified. This argument builds on previous empirical and theoretical research that documents dominant discourses of prostitution and sex work (Scott, 2003) and calls for more work to be carried out exploring the subjectivities of sex workers, particularly male sex workers. My argument is not only that dominant discourses oversimplify the subjective experiences and identities of M\$M, but that M\$M themselves oversimplify their own narratives and, with researchers in the telling-and-recording process, re-/ create and re-/ construct a bounded identity (Bernstein, 2007b). I argue that by exploring how M\$M represent themselves in advertisements and in interviews, my research illustrates a wider, fuzzier set of influences and a deeper, longer process of development than models which aim to identify knowable types or categories.

Here, I refer to experiences, identities, and representations as ‘subjectivities’. The subjectivities of M\$M move through or back-and-forth between categories. The priorities of men who sell sex, and the contexts of their priorities, are dynamic. Constructed, typological models which discursively fix M\$M as one *type* or another contribute to an objectification that fails to acknowledge the shifts, tensions and different interpretations within and between men’s storied experiences. In this chapter, I bring together the five interconnected themes which I introduced in the previous chapters: Addressing Scarcity, Defining Performativity, Utilising Embodiment, Locating Contact(s), and Thinking Temporally. I use these themes to develop the argument that men’s narratives of selling sex are better understood through a relational model than with typologies.

Sociologists today are faced with a fundamental dilemma: whether to conceive of the social world as consisting primarily in substances or in processes, in static “things” or in dynamic, unfolding relations. Large segments of the sociological community continue implicitly or explicitly to prefer the former point of view. Rational-actor and norm-based models, diverse holisms and structuralisms, and statistical “variable” analyses – all of them beholden to the idea that it is entities that come first and relations among them only subsequently – hold sway throughout much of the discipline. But increasingly, researchers are searching for viable analytic alternatives, approaches that reverse these basic assumptions and depict social reality instead in dynamic, continuous, and processual terms (Emirbayer, 1997, p.281)

My focus is on models of male sex work that objectify men through attempts to create typologies of men who sell sex. I have used Emirbayer’s (1997) definition of a relational model to contrast ‘norm-based’ and ‘static’ models so as to develop a multi-dimensional model. I emphasise relationality over processes to emphasise the way temporality is positioned as a fifth, ongoing, incomplete dimension in my data and the model grounded in that data. My aim is to avoid several problems with processual models: one, the slippage of signifying subjects nominally by their location within a process (e.g. people who do work become ‘workers’) and two, any inference that processes lead to or away from fixed (objectified) identities or locations. Third, processes are often described linearly and the processual infers that model of linearity. Yet, people occupy multiple dimensions and engage

multiple processes and iterations within those processes simultaneously (Matthews *et al.*, 2014). Linear ordering can infer causality / cause-effect relationship between categories which the model aims to disrupt. Fourth, space must not be erased or ignored. ‘History is not only temporal or chronological, but also spatial and relational’ (Morley, 1996, p.332).

Then, whether constructed as dimensions or processes, there needs to be an emphasis on the composite as a whole. The relational actions are ‘intimately interconnected, intricately correlated, and entangled with each other [and] intended actions can interfere with each other’ (Yukalov and Sornette, 2009, p.3) and each one in turn is made up of ‘bundles of communications, relations and transactions’ (Emirbayer, 1997, p.300). The ‘interference’ between these ‘bundles’ is a feature, not a limitation, of the model. The dynamics of actions, emotions, transactions, and communications is a matter ‘to be resolved relationally, using the idea of “unstable balance” or “the continuous process of formation and superseding of unstable equilibria” (Hall, 1996, p.423). Finally, by signifying the model as ‘actions’ rather than processes, the semantic focus reinforces the mobile subject’s centrality to readers and researchers.

To construct my argument, I will first outline and critique Michel Dorais’ (2005) quadrant model of ‘Rent Boys’. I will then use the data that I have collected with and about men who have sold sex to men in London to illustrate an understanding that M\$M inhabit more than one typology and move through Dorais’ categories. Finally, I describe a new, relational model (Emirbayer, 1997) that identifies five factors that are present and characteristic of the narratives of men who sell or have sold sex (or sexualised services).

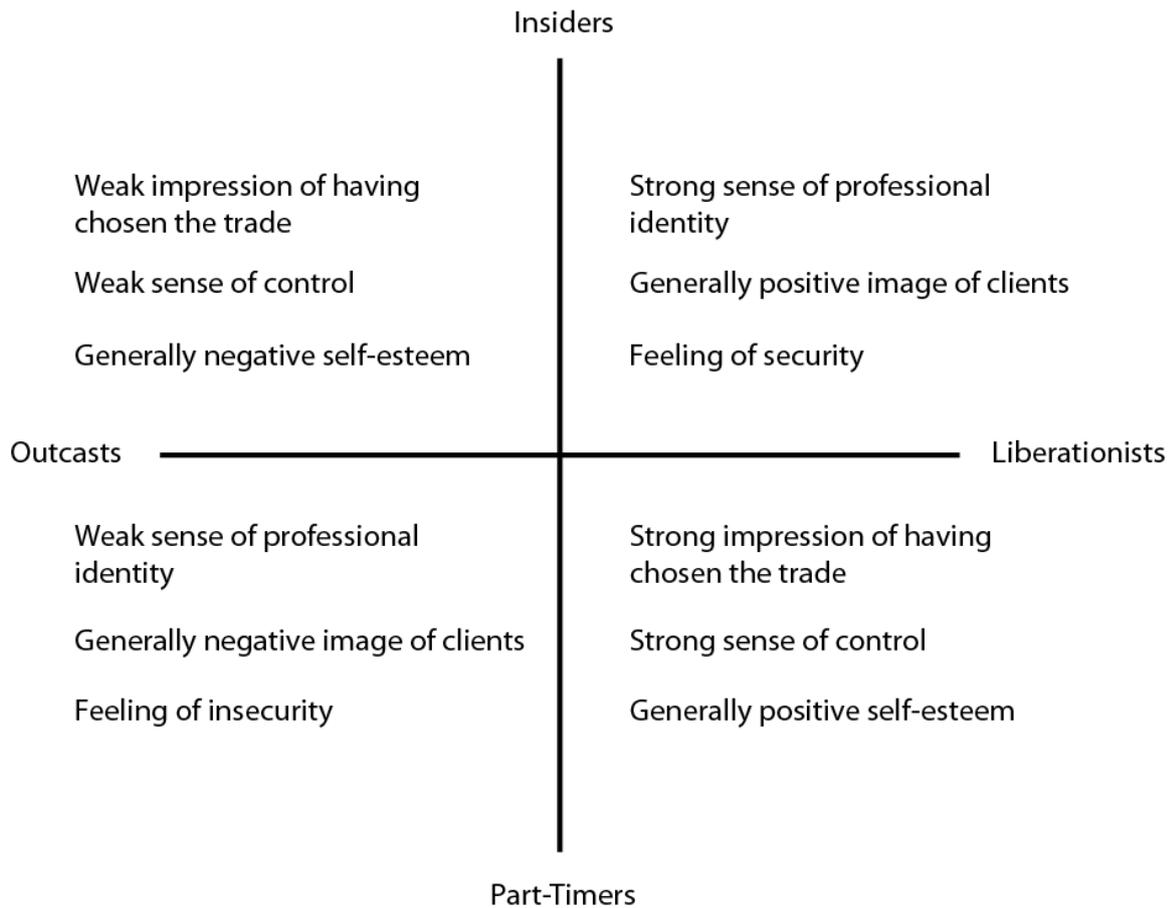
## **9.2. Models of men selling sex**

As outlined in Chapter 2, a number of researchers have used typological models to organise and understand their findings about men who sell sex (Allen, 1980; Caukins and Coombs,

1976; McLean, 2013). Examples of ‘types’ or categories of men who sell sex have included geographic references to where or how contact is located, including ‘call-boys, street prostitutes, bar hustlers, and kept boys’ (Caukins and Coombs, 1976, p.441). Combining geographic references, Allen (1980, p.399) added differentiation of temporal engagement by referring to ‘full-time street and bar hustlers, [...] full-time call boys or kept boys [...] part-time hustlers, usually students or employed [and] peer-delinquents, who use prostitution and homosexuality as an extension of other delinquent acts’. A more recent use of typographic categories appears as the four ‘Life Patterns’ constructed by Dorais (2005) from interviews with 40 men in Québec who represented a range of backgrounds and sex work practices and locations, including soliciting on streets and in bars, stripping and erotic dance with ‘extras’ offered to clients, and men working ‘indoors’ in brothels, saunas, massage parlours or independently.

Dorais (2005) constructs four Life Patterns for male sex workers and so four ways of classifying men who sell sex: the Outcast, the Insider, the Part-Timer and the Liberationist. Each Life Pattern describes a characteristic background and common circumstances, understood as true at the time of interviewing and subject to change, organised around emotional, psychological, social, socio-economic and sexual histories, relationship with alcohol and substance abuse or misuse, and HIV status. (For fuller descriptions of the four Life Patterns, see Chapter 2.)

To illustrate the ‘Contrasts and Resemblances’ of each Life Pattern category, Dorais then constructs oppositional categories where each characteristic is typical of and shared between two Life Patterns with a contrasting characteristic typical of the two opposing Life Patterns. For example, Liberationists and Part-Timers show a strong sense of having chosen the profession, whereas Outcasts and Insiders have a weak sense of having chosen sex work as a profession (see Figure 9.1).



(Figure 9.1, Summary of Life Patterns, Dorais, 2005)

### 9.2.1. Developing a relational model

In a post-structuralist framework, it is recognised and accepted that the categories Dorais developed were, by definition, constructs – both constructed and constructive (Mills *et al.*, 2006). What I believe must be understood is not the meaning given to each discrete category, but crucially the relationships between them, as well as between the subjects (the MSM) and the categories (Hawkes, 1997). Distinctions between Life Patterns, or similar typologies (Caukins and Coombs, 1976; Allen, 1980) are not fixed. These typologies can obfuscate rather than illuminate understandings of men who sell sex to men (McLean, 2013). The lived experiences and identities of men who sell sex to men are much more fluid and are often better reflected as explicitly *sharing* characteristics of several Life Pattern categories, or

moving between or through the Life Pattern categories, a point which Dorais goes on to address by discussing 'Resemblances and Contrasts' between his categorical groups.

In my analysis of my own data, I explored some of the tensions of the four 'Life Patterns' and the 'Resemblances and Contrasts'. I went on to deconstruct those models as part of my development of a relational model. I reconstructed five actions which came out of my interviews and analysis of advertising data which was used by M\$M in London at points between the early 1990s to the present. The five actions are Addressing Scarcity, Defining Performativity, Utilising Embodiment, Locating Contact(s) and Thinking Temporally (A.D.U.L.T.). Developing a model which builds on mutually informing and intersectional categories acknowledges the 'fuzziness' of constructed sets (Bezdek, 1993) and uses their dynamic and relational qualities, rather than ignoring, erasing, or attempting to control for them. In the next part of this chapter, I define the five action categories that I have identified through constant comparisons between my interviews, my advertising data, and the literature. Framing these five categories as a relational model for understanding M\$M, I compare and contrast the functions and constructs of typological models used for researching sex work. I illustrate the five category relational model with a case from my data. Finally, I go on to propose ways to utilise and develop an A.D.U.L.T. model further to assess possibilities and potentials for risk and resilience in various sites of selling sex and for different populations.

### ***A.D.U.L.T.***

I developed five categories from my data for this project. My first category, Addressing Scarcity started with a focus on financial need, but I expanded this category when it was problematic to impose distinctions between interpretations of needs and wants, and between financial priorities and their interrelationship with other social structures. Financial drivers often signified other types of belonging. As such, stories about addressing scarcity also

explored exclusion, and various ways it is constructed institutionally, including permissions and rights to work, language abilities and resilience to homophobic work environments.

My second category of action, Defining Performativity, grew out of conversations with my participants about liking and disliking *aspects* of selling sex. Men talked about enjoying sex, getting ‘a kick’ from selling sex, enjoying sex with particular clients and in some cases wanting more time with clients. In an earlier model, I had constructed this as desire or pleasure. Later, I included discussions and advertising data about how performances are used, interpreted, and talked about, whether they were performances of sex, masculinity, or ‘professionalism’. I expanded the category beyond performance to performativity with the inclusion of data about how those performances, interpretations and repetitions have (re-) created individual and collective ‘knowledge’ in London’s queer men’s scenes,

The third category, Utilising Embodiment, started as a part of what became Defining Performativity, but through continuously returning to my data, it seemed necessary to explicitly address the physical and treat this as a separate theme. I continue to struggle with the tension of separating the body from the social, but it has been valuable for me to denote the centrality of ‘the body’ in my data, particularly as men discussed how they felt both emotionally and physically. They attributed different meanings to their own bodies and to physical acts, as well as deconstructing their own bodies and actions into distinctly signified parts. My participants’ relationships with their own bodies and their interpretations of sex, desirability, performance, sensation, and representation provided much more data than I have been able to illustrate. Interviews and advertisements have provided me with insight to the ways queer men can display and talk about how their bodies (and parts of their bodies) look, feel and perform.

Locating Contact(s) developed as my fourth category. It includes the advertising spaces, individual relationships, and other spaces which shape – and then are shaped by – how men locate and develop contact with other men who make up London's queer commercial scene. This category developed alongside the other themes when I grouped together different ways that men who have sold sex have become familiar with ideas about selling sex. This included their formal and informal networks, advertisements they had seen, familiar people who were involved in selling sex and strangers who offered to pay for sex. It seemed obvious that without contact with someone willing to pay for sex, there would be no (formal) selling.

My fifth category, Thinking Temporally was, in fact, the starting point for this model. The way that time was both used and ignored in previous models is what first seemed most problematic. Initially, I worked on using temporality to rebuild models that were built on positioning experiences and contexts paradigmatically, so as to reformat dichotomous, Cartesian quadrants into something more three-dimensional; it was from this point that I began to view the signs as shifting and overlapping. For my interview participants, and for some of the men who declined to take part in interviews, their activities are a bounded part of their identity, and those activities are a bounded part of their experience (Bernstein, 2007b). They talked about sex work being temporally bounded in different ways: it may be situationally sited within a day, a part of a week, or a period of their lives. That temporality can be culturally sited, inter-related with contact and immersion with London's queer, metropolitan sub-cultures and bounded to the time spent within that sub-culture or shifting as social attitudes and social networks blur the distinctions. Interviews highlighted how time was used to frame or ignore future events (such as earning enough money or being in a relationship) or particular moments (e.g. until a client leaves).

These five actions, Addressing Scarcity, Defining Performativity, Utilising Embodiment, and Thinking Temporally, might also be applied to the cohorts of people that Dorais (2005) and

others described (Caukins and Coombs, 1976; Allen, 1980; Morse *et al.*, 1992; Simon *et al.*, 1993; Morse *et al.*, 1991; Smith, 2012). As a model, my aim for future research would be to look at how it might be potentially useful for understanding the experiences of diverse groups of people who sell sex and sexualised services.

### ***Distinctions and Developments***

Dorais' (2005) model signalled some progress in recognising and exploring a breadth of experiences and identities from earlier typologies based on men working from streets or bars (Allen, 1980; Caukins and Coombs, 1976) or men who sell sex as 'vectors of HIV transmission into the heterosexual population' (Morse *et al.*, 1991, p.535); however, there is a recognition that more research must still be done to reflect the experiences of gay-identified men who sell sex to men in spaces other than street work (Smith and Laing, 2012).

Since Dorais' (2005) work was published, two major epistemological changes have occurred. First, it has come to be widely recognised that there are distinct differences between the experiences of people who find work in outdoor (street) and indoor environments, even allowing for difference within groups and movement between categories (Sanders, 2005b). Second, the visibility and prevalence of men who sell sex to men on the street in London has diminished significantly with the introduction and development of gay and queer-friendly spaces, such as queer-scene magazines, Computer-Moderated Communication (CMC) and social networking applications which I have discussed in detail. Taking these epistemological shifts into consideration, my sample was specifically and intentionally limited to M\$M who advertise and does not address M\$M who do Street Work. However, it is my assertion that these five actions (A.D.U.L.T.) can be applied to understand and assess *various* contexts and experiences of selling sex. This model can be useful to guide assessment of risk *and* resilience, agency *and* structures, choice, empowerment, *and* exploitations.

Another distinction in my findings is that stories of abuse were absent from my interview data, whereas ‘more than half’ of Dorais’ (2005) respondents reported childhood sexual abuse. Whilst it was my aim not to pathologise the phenomenon and the narrative of selling sex with my participants, none of the men who interviewed with me raised the topic of childhood sexual experiences themselves; however, whilst we did discuss experiences of sex and relationships in their personal lives, it is perhaps a shortfall on my part not to have addressed with my participants their early sexual experiences or to have theoretically sampled to include this cohort. From my ethnographic data, I met one potential informant who expressed great dismay to me upon hearing some of my early findings were so vastly different from his own experience which he described in terms of being exploited, ‘groomed’ and ‘used’ (Field Notes, 2012). In consciously attempting to avoid a pathologising framework and actively working to not be coercive recruiting participants, I may have inadvertently overlooked a pattern of experience.

*However*, all of my participants were recruited as queer-identified men, whilst only 42.5% (n=17) of Dorais’ (2005, p.10) participants identified as gay, 32.5% (n=13) identified as heterosexual and 25% (n=10) identified themselves as ‘more or less bisexual’. All of my participants reported actively seeking sex with men. Sex with other men, per se, was not interpreted as coerced. The inclusion or exclusion of men who identify as heterosexual in a study of men who sell sex to *men* undoubtedly yields different findings, particularly related to how sexual identity has been defined and the extent to which men have experienced sex as coercive and/or violent. (See further discussion about M\$M who declined invitations to participate and the resulting limits of this sample and in Chapter 4).

*Insider, Outcast, Liberationist and Part-Timer: A case (study) for adopting a relational model*

It may be helpful for me to illustrate the five action model from my interviews with a single case. Marcos's narrative of coming to London from Brazil demonstrates the slippage between Dorais' (2005) Life Pattern categories. However, in a relational model which can 'depict social reality instead in dynamic, continuous, and processual terms' (Emirbayer, 1997, p.281) the movement across categories is not problematic; rather, it is what defines the model. Here, Marcos describes escaping an over-possessive boyfriend and a hostile social landscape where social mobility is sabotaged and same-sex intimacy is violently discouraged. He contacted a friend in London and arrived with a plan to live in London, but without the necessary legal documents or working English.

Well, I got here and after – well, I didn't speak English and I was on a tourist visa. And, um, because, I had a family I had a passport but then a lot been happening and I couldn't use my Portuguese passport basically. And I came here on tourist visa and I didn't speak English so I had to kind of, you know, live with my friend so – then after a while I felt I needed to pay for my accommodation because it was kind of expensive to pay to get my Portuguese passport, um, how do I say, um, valid, basically. So, it took a lot of money to pay a lawyer and documents, so I had to find some work to pay for that. So I thought, "Why not an escort?" because my friend used to be an escort, and I said, "Fuck it."

A: Is that the friend you were staying with?

U: Ya. He was also an escort.

A: So, was he taking care of you, like, financially when you first arrived? Or were you paying –

U: Yeah. No. Basically, yeah. Well, food and I was living in his flat then. So, yeah, he was supporting me for a while.

A: And so how – like, what was the – what did you think about before you –

U: I never thought that I was going to be an escort when I came here. I thought, "I'm going to get in and wash some plates in a restaurant or you know work in a kitchen or whatever," that kind of thing or whatever. Then I tried to work here but when you're on a tourist visa and you don't speak English, it is impossible. And even after, when I managed to speak a little bit, it is just impossible. I tried to work in a shop in Covent Garden, um, it was like I was working Thursdays, Fridays – Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays, for £400 a month (Marcos, 24).

Marcos casts himself in the roles of Outcast, Insider, Liberationist *and* Part-Timer. As the Outcast, he is escaping violence, living without income and dependent on charity, and living outside of the law and without the resources (e.g. speaking English, having contacts or skilled training). As the Insider, 19 year old Marcos has a social network where sex work is normalised, and the social network expands as he comes into closer proximity with it – as he interacts with his friend who was an escort, with the services that surround the sex industry (i.e. as he sets up his advertisements with magazines and websites and becomes a part of the Escort advertising), and the presence of M\$M in the queer scene. As the Liberationist, he eschews the bourgeois values of mainstream work (Bernstein, 2007a; 2007b) and the commitment and power-dynamics of a financially dependent, long-term relationship. He uses and develops his body to maintain himself as self-employed and independent. Finally, Marcos casts himself as a Part-Timer. He sees this as a temporary occupation, as a way to pay for legal documents and to pay his own way until he has the papers and the language skills he needs to enter into mainstream work. That narrative, however, is problematized by the gap between ideology and execution that Marcos reveals later in his narrative. Alternatively, Marcos’s story can be framed as Addressing Scarcity, Defining Performativity, Utilising Embodiment, Locating Contact(s), and Thinking Temporally (see Table 9.2, below).

Action categories from GT Analysis	Marcos
Addressing Scarcity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ his other options for earning money included to return to Brazil;</li> <li>▪ he felt threatened by homophobia in Brazil;</li> <li>▪ he did not speak English when he arrived;</li> <li>▪ his language skills in English may not be well matched to the type of income he would like to have in the UK;</li> <li>▪ he yearned for ‘nice things’;</li> <li>▪ he has spent his money on luxury items (including a luxury car), plastic surgeries, and holidays;</li> </ul>
Defining Performativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ dislikes sex with men older than 50;</li> <li>▪ dislikes cuddling for a long time;</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ prefers clients who finish and leave in less time than older men;</li> <li>▪ knowing about sex work;</li> <li>▪ has developed knowledge about how to avoid taking drugs if he is coerced;</li> <li>▪ offers both 'active' and 'passive' sex;</li> <li>▪ tells people in social occasions that he is a student</li> <li>▪ emphasises the European side of heritage but has strong ties to Brazil</li> <li>▪ manages safer sex</li> <li>▪ manages 'shit' if it happens but dislikes poor hygiene</li> </ul>
Utilising Embodiment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ being young (24);</li> <li>▪ looking handsome;</li> <li>▪ have a lean, athletic build;</li> <li>▪ investing in 'body work' including cosmetic surgeries, dentistry, and body-shaping exercises;</li> <li>▪ using professionally produced photographs in advertisements</li> <li>▪ uses 'passive' sex as a way to avoid needing to maintain an erection</li> </ul>
Locating Contact(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ knowing a friend who had sold sex</li> <li>▪ Seeing escort ads in magazines</li> <li>▪ having other friends who sell sex</li> <li>▪ advertising in multiple magazines</li> <li>▪ advertising in multiple online spaces</li> </ul>
Thinking Temporally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ his knowledge has developed over time;</li> <li>▪ he planned for his experiences to be bounded to a particular time in his life;</li> <li>▪ he prioritises short, paid exchanges and multiple clients over feeling financially dependent on one partner or benefactor for a longer period of time</li> </ul>

**(Figure 9.2, A.D.U.L.T. table for Marcos)**

There is much more to be said about dominant discourses of sex workers as Outcasts and the tensions that exist when talking about (illegal) immigrants hoping to work, debates that are made more complex at the intersection of gender, migration, labour and economics

(Augustin, 2007; Mai, 2008; 2012). In a globalised economy, many of the characteristics that define the Outcast in Dorais' Life Patterns can be applied to migrants seeking work. 'Dire poverty' is redefined with the logical conclusion potentially extended to ever more desperate benchmarks. In real terms, this is not the case for Marcos (his family owns a small business) but he describes his financial situation as far outside the material wealth of the people he sees

around him in London and in certain communities in Brazil. I explored the terms of Addressing Scarcity in Chapter 8.

The second theme that is made clear from Marcos's story and other examples in my interviews, is that the queer scenes in London provide an Insider's perspective to sex work through social networks for many gay men, as I explored in Chapters 5 and 7 as the action of Locating Contact(s). The 'gay scene' is a social network, it constructs social networks, and it is constructed by social networks. In Chapter 7, I expanded on the idea that queer scene social networks are commercialised and/or sexualised to a greater or lesser extent.

The third point that Marcos's narrative illustrates is how performative constructs of what is sexually and socially acceptable shift and are redefined within a queer environment. Further, what was *possible* for Marcos was linked to how he and others read and interpreted his body. Marcos's attractiveness was redefined each time he was paid to use his body sexually. With that, he redefined his expectations of what he could earn as a (sexual) citizen.

Thinking Temporally interrelates with all of the other actions. Temporality is not a fixed, distinct category. Marcos enters sex work through a number of influences *and* he assumes it will be something he does for a fixed period of time. He still talks about being an escort as a bounded experience (Bernstein, 2007b). He tells me it is something he will do only until he has saved enough money to buy his own property. That is a different end point to his narrative than when he entered, and not a short-term goal, given the amount of debt he has accrued (he is paying for a new car, a moped, several long-haul holidays and cosmetic surgeries). His narrative of a temporally bounded identity is also complicated because he very publicly represents himself as an escort, in magazine articles as well as his heavily saturated presence in Escort advertising. Whilst he may once have been identified as a Part-Timer, Marcos now earns an income selling sex full-time, and plans to do so for the medium-term.

### **9.2.2. Fixing or fixed? Constructing objects from subjectivities is self-defeating**

In typological models, categories construct men as objects. Models like Dorais' (2005) *Life Patterns*, in describing patterns of characteristics, created categories named for the men they tried to describe and capture. Men become the sum of their experiences of – and leading up to – selling sex to other men. Men who sell sex *become* Male Sex Workers, or even 'rentboys' (Dorais, 2005) and 'hustlers' (Allen, 1980; Caukins and Coombs, 1976). Subjects become objects.

Where this modelling of these patterns/types remains limited is first, in how my participants do not fit into a single category, type, or pattern, where they all exhibited characteristics of three or even all four of Dorais' types, for example. The second limitation is revealed in how my participants' narratives demonstrated a shift between which type or pattern seemed *dominant* in their narrative at different times in their stories *and* relating to different questions that I asked. Not only were they unruly subjects to order and objectify, they upset the ontological assumption of having a single, knowable, definable experience (however positive or negative) for one person within a sex work history.

### **9.3. Fuzzy Priorities, Queer Resources and Fractal Temporalities**

The stories of my informants offer a breadth and depth of subjective experience, representations and identities which disrupt previous typological models but still build on the patterns that have been traced. Throughout this thesis, I have identified how typological models have created mythologised, fixed identities, and in turn have served to oversimplify narratives and construct men who sell sex as objects. I have critiqued the construction of modelling binary elements (for example, receipt of money as oppositional to experiences of embodied pleasure), disputing the imagining of characteristics as oppositional paradigms, arguing instead that categories of actions are complementary, interrelated, overlapping and

often temporal. I pay particular attention to the paradoxical use of temporality as a defining characteristic of fixed identities (c.f. Allen, 1980; Dorais, 2005). In my critique, I identify how previous models of 'sex work' or 'prostitution' have ignored that the creation of a sex work identity can contribute to the creation of different networks. In other words, there is a recognised interrelationship between individual identity and social group identity.

The characteristics within typological models are not well modelled by conferring actions or identities as oppositional, whether as binaries or along a continuum. I recognise the objective of simplification for the purposes of observation and replication in human sciences; however, the value of simplification or the value of its application are both limited and limiting, particularly in attempting to record, examine and represent stories of men who use print or online advertising to sell sex to other men. The oversimplification obfuscates the similarities between the patterns and constructs groups as distinct and fixed by emphasising their differences. The limitations this imposes outweigh the benefits for understanding the changing and changeable circumstances, spaces, identities and experiences of men who sell sex to men in London's gay scene, and arguably other sites. A new, more relational model can offer more flexibility for the subjectivities of selling sex.

### **9.3.1. Queer i (where i equals the imaginary)**

Throughout my thesis, I have made multiple references to mathematical models, fuzzy sets, and possible applications of quantum theory. At this stage in my career, my (inter-disciplinary) training and scholarship, and my thesis, I have focused on deploying fractals as analogy or metaphor, a point of the social and applied sciences which theoretical physicists have critiqued (Barad, 2007); however, queer theory and applications of logic in psycho-social studies have outgrown the restrictive and limiting calculations and models of binary or bounded mathematical models based only on what is 'real'. To model relationships instead of

boundaries and to model complex relationships that are intersectional and/or temporal requires applications of mathematics that extend to the 'imaginary'.

This is not (only) the imaginary of stories of queens and faeries (puns intended), but the imaginary of mathematics, for example, where the square root of -1 is an 'imaginary number'  $\sqrt{-1} = i$  (Crilly, 2014). Imaginary numbers have application in modelling 'fuzzy sets', where data such as language is imprecise and falls between binaries, acknowledging 'the excluded middle' (Scott, 2011) to allow for 'fuzzy estimation, prediction and control' 'approximate reasoning' and 'pattern recognition' (Bezdek, 1993, p.6) in a range of fields from industrial engineering (Bezdek, 1993), artificial intelligence (Zadeh, 1975) and comparative literature (Scott, 2011). For whatever reason, debates about sex work specifically and agency/structure more generally ignore that 'fuzziness' which is accepted by mathematicians. Typological binarism as a paradigm is antithetical to Fuzzy Logic, and Queer Theory naturally (if that is not too ironic) lends itself to a theory of possibilities rather than probabilities. For example, within Fuzzy Set Theory, composite linguistic variables have applications in 'multiple-attribute decision-making' (Dubois and Prade, 1999, p.84), applied previously in economic and financial concerns and, I am arguing here, constructs of agency and structure related to selling sex. Likewise, Fuzzy Sets offer the application of formulised 'minimum specificity' as a way of addressing the subjective identity politics of people who do not identify with/as 'sex workers' for reasons such as temporal (part-time, occasional, or previous) work, stigma, or lack of access to organisation(s). The [grey census taking] that is problematic in populations can be addressed with this mathematics of possibility.

Moreover, Fuzzy Logic precedes more complex quantum calculations – which account for uncertainty more explicitly – being adapted for economic markets and decision-making (Yukalov and Sornette, 2009). The possibilities of Queer Theory and Theories of Possibility complement each other and the post-modern, post-structuralist, increasingly visual,

increasingly technological, increasingly globalised social landscape where diversity and homogeneity continue to converge. Decisions, whether discussed in the context of agency and structures of men selling sex to men or in decisions related to academic funding and demonstrations of impact, increasingly call to be both quantified and qualified in how they are addressed and rationalised.

#### **9.4. Discussion summary**

In summary, I make an argument from my research that typological models further objectify men who sell or have sold sex or sexualised services to men. They serve a function of constructing groups of diverse people and contexts as more homogenous and fixed than is true in their own accounts of their lived experiences. Relational models can be used to better effect, although linguistic patterns of abbreviation (including collocates and action-nouns such as 'sex worker' and acronyms such as M\$M) continue to shape objectifying ideologies. The relational model that I have developed from my data studying men who have sold sex to other men in London through advertising organises experiences into five interrelated, fuzzy, action categories: Addressing Scarcity, Defining Performativity, Utilising Embodiment, Locating Contact(s), and Thinking Temporally. The complexity of queer theory is sometimes considered a stumbling block in (more realist) empirical methodologies within social and human sciences. It should continue to be developed and recognised as a useful theoretical framework for the *real* complexity of lived human relationships. More familiar calculations of correlation or cause and effect might fall short of the needs of queer theory and our understandings of complex sexual citizenship. It may not be that queer theory can not be easily applied to empirical research but that human and social sciences need to adopt more complex models of calculation to account for what is otherwise fuzzy, queer subjectivity.

## CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSION

### 10.1. Conclusion

In my thesis, I have documented my exploration of the subjectivities (representations, identities, and experiences) of men who sell sex and sexual services to men through advertising in London's gay scene from 1991 to 2012. My research findings and analysis have aimed to address the following questions:

- 1) How can classified advertising be used as a source of data to learn about men's lives in queer scenes in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century?
- 2) How did men use different types of magazine advertising and internet promotion to sell sex to men in London?
- 3) How do men in London's queer scenes define sex work? What boundaries and distinctions do they make between sex work, massage and sex that is not-for-pay?
- 4) How do men who sell sex construct the role that money plays in their narratives of selling sex? How do they deal with money and what can be learned from talking about money?
- 5) How do research models that seek to understand and explain men's experiences of selling sex objectify them? How can research models be constructed better to represent changes in experience, motivation and embodiment?

My analysis of queer-scene media and interviews with men who advertise sex and sexual services in London has provided opportunities for exploring how advertising plays an iterative role in the representation of sexual subjectivities in London's queer scenes. The queer scene media represents and is informed by the people in the queer scene, whilst it also constructs and informs men's ideas about sexual bodies, queer and 'gay-scene' identity, and performances of masculinity, homosexuality, and queerness. My analysis has highlighted some of the variety of ways that men engage with selling sex and explores some of the rationale that drives what they do with subjective understandings of scarcity, performativity, embodiment, contact, and temporality.

In this final chapter, I remind readers of the gaps that I wanted to address in the literature. I signpost some of the key theoretical concepts from which I have drawn. I review the methodology I implemented to collect my data and conduct my analysis, and then I

summarise my key findings. I have organised the findings in four sections. First, I presented a queer ethnography of queer scene advertising in London from 1991 to the present. In the second findings chapter, I deconstruct some of the advertising content in more depth to explore how textual and material bodies are displayed, represented and interpreted in some of the queer scene advertising. Third, I explored the ways that men attach meanings to ‘sex’ and ‘sex work’ and how they understand and define these terms and practices in a queer scene context. Fourth, I detailed some of the ways that money is talked about by men who have sold sex. I explored tensions of prioritising competing needs and desires and documented some of the strategies that MSM in London have incorporated into their entrepreneurial endeavours, as well as some of the obstacles that emerged in their narratives. Finally, I have brought these findings together to propose using a relational model, rather than typological models, to understand the experiences, contexts, feelings and rationale of some of the queer men who have sold sex to other men in London.

#### **10.1.1. Classified Ads as a queer source of data**

To address the questions about how magazine advertising has been used by MSM and how it could be useful for understanding part of London’s queer sex work scene, I immersed myself in the archives of *Boyz* magazine in their London office. Twenty years of print advertisements immediately presented a new set of questions around how to organise and code a polytextual data set which has evolved from short, abbreviated classifieds to quarter page colour ads in separate, glossy pull-outs. I used constructivist grounded theory as a methodology to develop a coding schedule. Various media and applications were trialled during the development of the coding schedule and a visual method of analysis was developed using software programs also used for designing the advertisements themselves.

The sharp increase in the number of advertisements in the early 1990s, the peak in numbers in the 2000s and the gradual decrease until 2012 were all mapped. My findings showed that

some men placed multiple advertisements in a single edition and some advertisements that appeared to be for independent sellers shared contact telephone numbers found in several other similar advertisements, possibly escort agencies. Interview data supported the findings that men used multiple and varied promotion strategies. Some men reported working with other men or promoting themselves as agencies. Participants reported making strategic decisions about advertising costs, including where, when and how often to run advertisements in different media. Comparisons between print and online social network media were made. Advantages of using online social network profiles were explained, including the ability to manage time as a resource and to screen clients based on appearance, personality, time-management (e.g. screening out timewasters). This section of my thesis informed more focused analysis on how M\$M describe what they do relative to other types of sex and work, and introduced the various meanings that were ascribed to sex and money.

### **10.1.2. Constructs of sex, sex work, and money**

To address questions about how queer men in London define sex work and explore boundaries and blurring of commercial sex and sex that is not for pay, I drew on interviews with participants. I explored themes of how men in London's queer scenes have constructed thoughts and feelings about casualised, anonymised sex with other men. I examined some of the ways that casualised, anonymised sex with other men is compared whether it includes financial compensation or not. I focused attention on individual and collective constructs that were specific to an era of dramatically changing queer identities, 'gay' rights, and social networking technologies.

In this context, some men did not define the services they offered as 'sex', even when sexual activities took place during their services, were allowed or supplied when demanded or were offered as part of their services. These sexual activities were described in interviews and in commercial profiles listed by men offering 'escorting' and 'massage', so I discussed the

distinctions made by the advertisers and the blurring of boundaries and ‘fuzzy’ definitions of what is and is not ‘sex’ and what is and is not on offer to the audience.

After deconstructing varying constructs of sexual intimacy presented in our interviews, I explored the roles given to money in the broader narratives and rationale for selling sex. I went on to unpack some of the insights that M\$M shared about general strategies in their commercial endeavours before I returned to their longer-term narratives with a focus on present spending and (mis)matching future plans.

In my Discussion, I brought these themes together with previous literature to illustrate some of the limitations of typological models. I pointed to ways that sociological and psychological profiles can – however inadvertently – objectify men who sell sex by ignoring the fractal temporalities and repeated patterns of moving in and out of sex work identities, as well as avoiding them altogether. In place of creating or attempting to identify mythologised, fixed typologies, I have suggested that future models can be based on more relational criteria or actions, to allow for shifts in modes of scarcity, performativity, embodiment, contact(s) and temporality.

## **10.2. Wider implications for these findings and recommendations**

Men who sell sex need services that offer access to sexual health and other support without stigma or recrimination. Most of the men I spoke to had little or no knowledge of specialist services that were bespoke for sex workers, apart from advertising and agencies.

Additionally, many of the men who have sold sex do not identify as sex workers, nor wish to identify with sex workers. The funding available for sexual health and support is directed to organisations, charities and clinics, where institutions and staff are expected to deal with a broad spectrum of people with various identities, experiences and needs, including, for example, younger and older people, people from different cultural backgrounds, and people

who sell sex. Five percent of European MSM reporting selling sex in the last 12 months and 52% of those men report selling sex only once or twice in that period (The EMIS Network, 2010). The effectiveness of training needs for staff and management of health services should be further investigated. Training and awareness that addresses the breadth of commercial phenomena, stigmas of selling sex, and the needs of men who sell sex should be ongoing, particularly in services aimed at men who sell sex to men. It may be that specialist services who have experience and knowledge about M\$M be commissioned to provide mobilised, scheduled onsite services within broader sexual health or community health organisations who reach MSM.

Awareness of the support networks and services that are available to men who have sold sex can also be improved. Messages can be made available to men who sell sex using online social networks and applications (apps) like GPScore, Grindr, Scruff, Gaydar, Manhunt, and Twitter. Companies like these often already have structures in place to support the wider community of GBT men as well as community based organisations, such as Gaydar Community Profiles (Anon, n.d.) and Manhunt Cares (Anon, n.d.). Ways to communicate with M\$M is an area which warrants further research. The needs of men who have sold sex but do not identify as sex workers could also be addressed further. How communication impacts on different ethnic communities of men – who are over- or under-represented in M\$M advertising also warrants further exploration. For example, increasing visibility of men from Eastern Europe may have particular needs, as will Asian (Indian, Pakistani and Persian) men who seem almost completely absent from advertising but are visible to sexual health service providers.

Experiments have been made to include offering services where support, education and training – for specific technical skills and general soft skills – can be obtained, so that a person can be a more effective worker (Laing and Gaffney, 2014). Whether they choose to

apply those skills to the work they are doing, or to use them to find other occupations, agency (as options and sense of empowerment) for the individual should increase and their sense of scarcity (as vulnerability, inability and reliance on others) should decrease. Whilst not tested, this hypothesis is supported from the findings of this thesis, where men who had other opportunities for rewarding work reported a greater sense of agency, whether they had already stopped selling sex or were continuing. Likewise, men expressed distress if they foresaw a future where they were not selling sex but did not have an actionable plan towards actualising that idea(1).

The intersectionality of groups identified as at-risk of depression, drug misuse, HIV infection and/or illness from AIDS remains important. Whilst not wishing to promote any kind of misconceptions or further stigmatise individuals, there are potential opportunities for funding, cooperation, training and access across organisations that specifically target “different” groups, or rather different needs of subjects. This thesis supports research that identifies the needs of people with high numbers of sex partners and familiarity with recreational and/or prescription drug use as being prevalent for men who sell sex. Accessing a participant sample for research who are heavily engaged with drug use or struggling with addiction may continue to be problematic for ethical qualitative researchers. Findings here show a range of experiences, not dissimilar to gay and bisexual men familiar with the queer scene(s) in London. The shifting and overlapping of sex work narratives (Laing *et al.* (eds.), 2015), drug-use and addiction narratives (Cregan *et al.*, 2013; Kafka, 2010), HIV risk and infection narratives (Aggleton (ed.), 1999), and changing perspectives on mental health narratives (Cromby *et al.* (eds.), 2013) must be kept in each other’s sight, even if only peripheral vision.

Informal networks and information sharing are one of the main conduits of correcting misinformation and providing advice. Men who sell sex to men in London report being contacted by other MSM who are not looking to pay for sex but who are thinking about

selling sex. The callers might request information about what it is like to sell sex and how to approach the business. Some men who sell sex report seeking out information in the same way – through peers. If men already know someone who sells sex, they use the advice of their contacts or friends. Otherwise, they seek expertise from men who advertise in the media with which they are familiar. Men who sell sex will advise potential sex workers about their own experiences selling sex. They acknowledge that it can be a quick way to make money and that physical attractiveness and sexual motivation can be capitalised. They also correct misperceptions. Men who sell sex in London advise other men that the business is now very competitive, that there will be demands on them to have sex with men who are generally unattractive or even repulsive to them, and that there will be demands to do things they would otherwise not choose to do or choose not to do. Peer networks can be both a way into sex work – with the potential to be constructed as importuning– but can also be an important way to correct misinformation as an informal ‘prevention initiative’ (Jack, health services director). Apart from this thesis, there is no research that has explored the experiences of men on the gay scene who have entertained the idea or tried selling sex and been dissuaded from pursuing the occupation. More research can be done to explore ideas of resilience, as it were, or ways that agency is exercised away from selling sex.

Informal networks also offer a form of business and emotional support. Laws that prohibit living off of the earnings of another person’s sexual labour have been used as an important tool in preventing coercion or curbing abuses of power imbalances; however contentious it may seem, these structures also serve as obstacles to sex work being structured like other work. Practices such as mentoring, progress to managing others, sub-contracting labour, investing capital in assets and growing a business are prohibited, and could be explored as to how they serve to hinder the success of people who sell sex by keeping them in roles as customer-facing, sole-traders. This is *not* to advocate for a particular legislative or

administrative model, but to point to a tension in the politics of legislating sex work like non-sex work and treating sex workers like non-sex workers. Sex workers have legal protection from hierarchical labour structures that some workers in contemporary British labour markets do not, such as casual agricultural workers or employees on 'zero hour contracts'. Equally, people who sell sex are prohibited from moving through hierarchical structures, benefiting from the types of career progressions that are structurally encouraged in other types of commerce. The potential dangers and disadvantages are necessary reminders when considering how these structures operate; however, what this highlights is not only the institutional binding of sex workers who attempt to exercise and operate within a capitalist structure. Selling sex also operates as a queer critique of current practices of (real) mixed economy capitalism and (hypothetical) free market labour, reflecting the dangers and disadvantages that are often critiqued but sometimes ignored. For example, the transactions of hierarchical organisation for bottom-line profits are often in the interest of shareholders over stakeholders and consumers over workers. The self-employed person who sells sex may be seeking a new kind of queer utopia, where the queer disrupts (patriarchal) capitalist labour hierarchies as well as heteronormative hierarchies that include mythologised practices of monogamy and expressions of 'enduring love'.

### **10.3. Limitations**

The participants in my interview sample offer perspectives on selling sex through advertising in London over a 20 year period; however, the mean age of my sample is 32.5 years and only two men who spoke to me were in their twenties. This certainly seems older than the ages of the advertised cohort in London. The difference in the ages of participants relative to ages listed in advertisements relates, in part, to the 'profile' of participants who agreed to participate and followed through, as well as the contacts I made; however, I recognise

limitations in not recruiting more younger men who are currently selling sex, where some accounts are more historical and remembered rather than relating to immediate experiences. The relative dearth of these historical stories in the literature makes this a strength of this research and leaves room for future research to continue to investigate the contemporary experiences of younger men.

Race is also relatively homogenous in my sample and for brevity, acknowledged as a limitation of a small interview sample. Homogeneity, whilst neither representative nor advancing a queer agenda, acknowledges that race and ethnicity are correlated to differences in men's health (Crawshaw, 2009) and subjectivities (experiences, identities and representations) of masculinities (Kong, 2002; Phua and Kaufman, 2003). Future research can be expanded to look specifically at the experiences of men with particular ethnic, national or racial backgrounds, building on current international and migration perspectives (Aggleton and Parker, 2015; Mai, 2012; Phua and Caras, 2008).

My findings pointed to categorising ways that men addressed feelings of scarcity by selling sex to other men. As a relativist term by definition, scarcity is a broad category. Yet, none of the stories I collected included examples of local or global poverty. The men in my sample are all able bodied. None of them were supporting children or dependents. There were examples of recreational drug use, but drug dependence was the exception, rather than the rule. The homogeneity of my interview sample was maintained as an ontological boundary, as it is impossible to learn details of the experiences from such a varied population as men who have sold sex, but I note that this is also a limitation of my sample. I have also noted that I have avoided quantifying 'drug use' and any definitions of 'addiction', 'abuse', or 'regular use' as being outside the remit of this thesis.

I have had to make decisions about what data to explore in more depth, such as the categories of bodily representation discussed in Chapter 6. There is a tension between the epistemological ideals of grounded theory and the material limitations of applying grounded theory for a PhD thesis. On one hand, guidelines for grounded theory have dictated that all of the findings must be included. On the other hand, the fractal quality of exploring self-similar iterations (patterns within patterns) which has been a theme throughout my analysis points to data on a much more detailed scale than can be expressed within a single document. The guidance from my own supervisors and other colleagues: it is not meant to be your defining piece of work, it is meant to be your first piece of work. Learning that has been one of my most difficult lessons.

I have used a triangulation of data from multiple sources as a means of addressing concerns about the validity and reliability of my findings. In my position to maintain the subject-positions of my subject group, I did not incorporate interpretations (of advertisements, for example) from a wider audience of queer men in London. I did aim to ground my interpretations of findings in the data provided by participants, and so have shaped some interpretation to be critical in perhaps different ways than if I had included audience interpretations from men who have never sold sex themselves.

Finally, I have to emphasise my own standpoint(s) and the evolution of my own thoughts and feelings throughout this project. As I review this, it is now eight years since I embarked on what has been (chronologically) a longer journey than most and I have experienced a number of changes in how and what I feel and experience (physically and emotionally) and what and how I think. From my late thirties to my mid forties and through different experiences of family, relationships, financial resources, and health, there has been a parallel narrative of scarcity, performativity, embodiment, contact and temporal thinking. Like Doris Lessing's *Golden Notebook*, those experiences and actions are kept in separate journals and diaries.

The extent to which this work has shaped me is perhaps as significant as the ways in which I have shaped this work.

#### **10.4. Final remarks**

I argue in this thesis that the phenomenon of ‘sex work’ is better represented as varied phenomena and better understood by exploring the diversity of contexts, experiences and rationales of the subjects who participate. People who sell sex, including queer men who sell sex to other men through commercial and social advertising, must be understood as varied and changing subjects in varied and changing structural contexts. Their experiences of sex work must be heard and recorded from their own perspectives. Queer theory and semiotics can be usefully applied to queer, multimodal, canonical texts such as small ads and online profiles to elaborate and illustrate diverse experiences, representations, and rationales. Queer and shifting definitions and constructs of ‘sex’, ‘sex work’, and ‘agency’ must be analysed and interpreted within the sub-cultural context(s) of the place and era studied, such as I have done here with London at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Utilising a relational, action-based model to deconstruct or assess complex, intersecting relationships and drivers improves the sensitivity of shifting life patterns and can be usefully employed in empirical research whilst avoiding or minimising inadvertent objectification. Continued research about the lives of people who sell sex is necessary as social, political and technological contexts evolve and change.

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## APPENDICES

- A. Recruitment notice 1
- B. Recruitment notice 2
- C. Pre-Interview information sheet and Consent Form for men who do not identify as sex workers
- D. Pre-Interview information sheet and Consent Form for men who do identify as sex workers
- E. Consent forms for Diary Study (no data received)
- F. Interview Schedule – Media editors, publishers (including Internet services and Social Networking sites)
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- H. Questions approved for men who do not identify as sex workers
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- J. Post interview exit information sheet
- K. Transcribers' information sheet and confidentiality agreement
- L. Participant Interview Summaries
- M. Semiotic coding schedule
- N. Coding schedule for personal ads
- O. Snapshot of initial coding in of print advertisements
- P. Sample of line-by-line coding in of print advertisements
- Q. Detail of line-by-line coding in of print advertisements
- R. Greimas' Semiotic Square, cited in Chandler (2007)
- S. Appendix: Simplified Gaydar.net user experience (UX) flowchart (returning UX, search detail, 2014)
- T. Appendix: Sample table of A.D.U.L.T. model developed from grounded theory analysis of M\$M data in London queer scenes
- U. Calculation of living costs in London on low income.

**A. Appendix: Recruitment notice 1****Recruitment notice seeking participants who advertise as escorts in London**

To be posted on a separate commercial profile on the following sites: [www.gaydar.com](http://www.gaydar.com); [www.gay.com](http://www.gay.com) ; [www.manhunt.co.uk](http://www.manhunt.co.uk).

Do you have stories about working as an escort in London?  
Are you interested in telling your own story?

I'm doing interviews with men who have worked as escorts in London. The interviews will be used as part of my doctorate degree. I am a gay man myself, and am interested in what men who work as escorts think about the business, the advertising, their customers, their relationships, and the gay community.

All interviews will be strictly confidential.

If you think you'd be interested in being interviewed, let me know and I'll send you more information. You can leave me a message here or send me an email on [tylera3@lsbu.ac.uk](mailto:tylera3@lsbu.ac.uk) .

About me: I am a PhD student at London South Bank University. I am 37 years old and I am a gay man. I have been living in London for 14 years. I used to work in fashion. I wrote my Masters dissertation about gay men's body image. In my free time I go to the gym, play sports, and go out with friends.

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**B. Appendix: Recruitment notice 2**







( Member )  
35 years old  
Online

Area : England - London - Central  
City : London SE1, United Kingdom  
Viewed 19101 Times  
Last Visit : 14 May 2009



[Send Message](#)

[Add to my Friends](#)

[Mail a Friend](#)

[Add to Favourites](#)

[Message History](#)



**Images** No videos uploaded

Images









**General Information**

I am a Single Gay Man

Interested in Single Man, Gay Male Couple

For Between

**Personal Information**

Profession 

Height

Body Type

Ethnic Origins

Hair

Eyes

General Attire

Out

Dick Size

Cut / Uncut

Body Hair

Orientation

Role

Safer Sex

Smoke

Drink

**Gaydar Sex Factor**

**About**

I am doing a PhD about men who have sold sex from advertising, or been offered money, whether or not they are escorts. I'm writing about advertising, identity, image, and experiences of men who have had sex for pay. Get in touch if you have something to say or if you'd like to be interviewed confidentially.

**Looking For**

I am looking for men who have had sex for money or who have been offered money for sex who want to give an anonymous interview.

**Keywords**

**Sports & Fitness**    Baseball, Cycling, Gym, Martial Arts, Rock Climbing, Skiing, Weight Training, Yoga

**Hobbies & Favourite Things**

Normally, I like going to the gym, the theatre, the movies, playing softball/baseball, yoga, galleries, museums, ice skating, reading, camping

Food

Music

Author

Film

Actor

Actress

TV Show

Holiday

Destination

City

Country

Club

Bar/Pub

**Communicate**

[Send Message](#)

[Add to my Friends](#)

[Mail a Friend](#)

[Add to Favourites](#)



### **C. Appendix: Pre-Interview information sheet and Consent Form for men who do not identify as sex workers**

#### **PhD Research on Male Escort Advertising in London – Study 2**

If you regularly pick up magazines like *Boyz* and *QX*, you will be familiar with the advertisements for escorts that appear in them. I am doing a research project for my doctorate degree about how gay and bisexual men see male escorts and escort advertising.

There is relatively little research about male escorts who advertise, even less about men who hire escorts, and none about the ads themselves or the people who see them. This study will focus on how gay and bi men see the ads and what, if any, thoughts they have about escorts and escort advertising.

Participants are asked to take part in an interview that lasts approximately one (1) hour. Instead of using tools that may have inbuilt bias, this study uses an “open-ended” question format. The interview is recorded, then later typed out and studied for indications of how men think about the male escorts, in what terms, and in what contexts.

All information provided in the interview will only be used for the purposes of this study and any publications that may arise from this study. All participants’ names, and the names of any other individuals identified during the interview will be changed to allow anonymity. Any other identifying details will also be changed or omitted as requested by participants.

Participants may refuse to answer any questions asked of them. Participants may ask to stop the interview at any time during recording. Participants may withdraw any comments that they have made or they may withdraw from the study completely at any time until up to six months after their interview.

The study will open up discussion about different parts of London’s gay and bisexual population, gay culture, escorting, sex work, and body image.

This project will be used as part of my doctorate at London South Bank University.

If you have any questions or would like more information on the final dissertation, please contact me on 0776 894 7144 or [tylera3@lsbu.ac.uk](mailto:tylera3@lsbu.ac.uk).

This project is being supervised by Professor Jeffrey Weeks, who may be contacted at [weeksj@lsbu.ac.uk](mailto:weeksj@lsbu.ac.uk).

Thank you for your time.

Allan Tyler

**Consent Form – Male Escort Advertising in London – Study 2**

I have read the above information and have had details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. I understand my right to decline to answer any questions that I do not wish to answer.

I agree to provide the researcher with information with the understanding that my name and any other names I mention will be changed and that any details that I wish to be omitted or changed will not be used. *The information will only be used for this research and for publications that might arise from this research project.*

I agree to the interview being recorded for the researcher's use in transcription and study.

I confirm I am over 18 years old.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out above.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please sign this form and bring it with you to your interview.

Thank you for your participation in this study.

Allan Tyler

#### **D. Appendix: Pre-Interview information sheet and Consent Form for men who do identify as sex workers**

##### **PhD Research – men who advertise as escorts in London – Study 3a**

I am doing a research project for my doctorate degree about men who advertise as escorts in London.

There is relatively little research about male escorts who advertise, even less about men who hire escorts, and none about the ads themselves or the people who see them. This study will focus on the lives of men who advertise as escorts in London.

Participants are asked to take part in an interview that lasts approximately one (1) hour. Instead of starting with an inbuilt bias, this study uses an “open-ended” question format. You’ll be able to discuss your experience as an escort and how your professional image is different or the same as your personal image. The interview is recorded, then later typed out and studied for themes about lifestyle, sexuality, escorting, paid sex, and advertising.

All information provided in the interview will only be used for the purposes of this study and any publications that may arise from this study. All names, and the names of any other people identified during the interview will be changed to allow privacy and anonymity. Any other identifying details will also be changed or omitted as requested by participants.

If you participate, you may refuse to answer any questions that I ask. You can ask to stop the interview at any time, or ask that any comments you make be “off the record”. You may withdraw any comments that you have made or you can withdraw from the study completely at any time.

The study will open up discussion about sex work, relationships, intimacy between men, bisexuality and gay culture, escorting, and body image.

This project will be used as part of my doctorate at London South Bank University.

If you have any questions or would like more information on the final dissertation, please contact me on 0776 894 7144 or [tylera3@lsbu.ac.uk](mailto:tylera3@lsbu.ac.uk).

This project is being supervised by Professor Jeffrey Weeks, who is may be contacted at [weeksj@lsbu.ac.uk](mailto:weeksj@lsbu.ac.uk).

Thank you for your time.

Allan Tyler

**Consent Form – Men who advertise as escorts in London – Study 3a**

I have read the above information and have had details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time until six months after my interview. I understand my right to decline to answer any questions that I do not wish to answer.

I agree to provide the researcher with information with the understanding that my name and any other names I mention will be changed and that any details that I wish to be omitted or changed will not be used. *The information will only be used for this research and for publications that might arise from this research project.*

I agree to the interview being recorded for the researcher's use in transcription and study.

I confirm I am over 18 years old.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out above.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please sign this form and bring it with you to your interview.

Thank you for your participation in this study.

Allan Tyler

## **E. Appendix: Consent forms for Diary Study (no data received)**

### **PhD Research – men who advertise as escorts in London – Study 3b**

Thank you for taking part in an interview discussion for my doctorate degree about men who advertise as escorts in London. The whole project has 3 parts:

1. looking at how the ads have changed over time
2. finding out how gay and bi men see the ads
3. learning about the men who advertise

Our discussion today has been a key part of stage 3 in this project. I want to offer you an opportunity to tell another part of your story in your own way.

Like Belle de Jour's *The Intimate Adventures of a London Call Girl* or Aiden Shaw's memoir, *My Undoing*, you will have the chance to relate more of your day-to-day happenings and feelings in a private diary. This will be a chance for you to share some of your experiences of your own story.

The diary can be online or in a book. Either way, it will only be seen by you and me. It can be simply a list of things you did in a day or you can discuss what is happening in your life and what you're feeling or thinking about. If you prefer, you can keep a visual diary and just use pictures (your own or from magazines) or a combination of lists, writing, and pictures.

The diary can last a day, a week, a month, a few months, or a year. You can add to it regularly or off-and-on. The diary and its contents will remain your property. Anything you put in it will be your own "intellectual property" and the copyright will belong to you, although I will ask your permission to include parts of it in my research. Later, I will ask to make a copy of your diary so we can discuss it and "analyse" it together.

All information from the diary will only be used for the purposes of this study and any publications that may arise from this study. All names, and the names of any other people identified in the diary will be changed to allow privacy and anonymity. Any photos will be disguised with pixellation or other computer graphic manipulation.

You can stop keeping the diary at any time. You can request that any part of the diary not be used in the project. You can withdraw your diary in whole or in part at any time until the project is being written up.

The diary will be an opportunity to look more at the real experiences of people who work as escorts and what their lives are like on a day to day basis, instead of just what people imagine or read about in newspapers.

This project will also be used as part of my doctorate at London South Bank University. If you have any questions or would like more information on the final dissertation, please contact me on 0776 894 7144 or [tylera3@lsbu.ac.uk](mailto:tylera3@lsbu.ac.uk). This project is being supervised by Professor Jeffrey Weeks, who is may be contacted at [weeksj@lsbu.ac.uk](mailto:weeksj@lsbu.ac.uk).

Thank you again for your interest and your participation.

Allan Tyler

**Consent Form – Men who advertise as escorts in London – Study 3b**

I have read the above information and have had details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree to allow the researcher to make a copy of my diary for analysis and discussion with me. I understand any work I create in the form of a diary will be my own property and that the copyright will belong to me. I understand I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time until the work is being written up.

I agree to provide the researcher with information with the understanding that my name and any other names I mention will be changed and that any details that I wish to be omitted or changed will not be used. *The information will only be used for this research and for publications that might arise from this research project.*

I understand that images that portray illegal activity (such as child abuse) do not have the privilege of confidentiality and the researcher has an obligation to cooperate with police investigations in matters of criminal activity.

I confirm I am over 18 years old.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out above.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your participation in this study.

Allan Tyler

## **F. Appendix: Interview Schedule – Media editors, publishers (including Internet services and Social Networking sites)**

### Interview Schedule – Magazine editors or publishers

This schedule will be used as a guide for interviews with editors or publishers of magazines aimed at a gay audience, where male escort advertisements appear.

1. Tell me about your role in the magazine/ company.
2. Tell me about the role of the escort advertisements to the magazine.
3. How did the ads start?
4. What are your policies about the ads?
  - a. Content
  - b. Who can advertise? Is there anyone who can not?
  - c. What is allowed? What is not allowed?
5. Boyz has had recent (December 2007) changes with showing explicit content, (ie 'cock shots'). Can you tell me about your policy on explicit content?
6. What do you know about the recent changes to advertising guidelines, regulations, and policies?
7. How will these changes affect your business?
8. What do you see as the future of your business?
9. How have the advertisements changed since you've been here?
10. Do you see trends in the ads? For example, in the types of men who advertise, their physical characteristics, their nationalities?
11. Do some men place more than one ad? Why?
12. How do you think the gay scene has changed in the last 10 years, if at all?
13. What do you think has been the role of the internet in those changes, if any?
14. What role do you think your business has played in those changes, if any?
15. How have the guys in the ads changed? How are they the same?
16. Describe your typical week.
17. What's your role with the magazine overall?
18. What's your involvement with the (escort) advertisements?
19. What is the response to the ads?
  - a. From your readers?
  - b. From the public who might see your magazine?
  - c. From the police or local council?
  - d. From your advertisers?
20. Do you receive feedback from your advertisers about their ads?
21. Do you know what their 'response rates' are?
22. Do you receive criticism for the ads? Praise?
23. Are you aware about some of the current debates about prostitution? What are your own thoughts?

**G. Appendix: Interview Schedule – Service providers for male escorts with male clients****Interview Schedule – Service providers for male escorts with male clients**

This schedule will be used as a guide for interviews with directors and managers of organisations that provide services to male escorts with male clients; for example, sexual health clinics.

1. What is the genesis of this organisation? When and why was it started?
2. Who are your clients?
3. Is there a typical client?
4. Is there a typical age range?
5. What are the nationalities of your clients?
6. Describe the types of services you provide.
7. What is the response of the clients to your service? Is it positive, negative, or indifferent?
8. What is the uptake of the services you provide?
9. How many clients have presented?
10. Do you have regular service users? Infrequent? Frequent?
11. Which services are popular? Most? Least?
12. How open are your clients to talking about what they do?
13. I have designed a section of my project where my participants keep a journal or an electronic profile-blog-journal. It may have visual and/or written elements, and it may be on the computer or in a book. What obstacles do you think I'll encounter?
14. What recommendations can you make for contacting or approaching subjects?
15. What do you think we can see about male prostitution from the advertisements?
16. What can't we see?
17. In my interviews, what are some of the issues that participants may be sensitive about?
18. What are some of the key issues that the men might want to convey themselves?

**H. Appendix: Questions approved for men who do not identify as sex workers****Interview Schedule – Male consumers of gay magazines**

I want to ask you some specific questions about yourself, and then move onto some more general questions.

1. How old were you at your last birthday?
2. Do you live in London?
3. How long have you lived in London?
4. Do you sleep with men or women or both?
5. Have you ever slept with men or women or both?
6. Are you single or in a relationship?
7. Tell me about your current relationship or your last relationship.
8. How would you describe your sex life at the moment?
9. Do you have a regular sex partner (or “fuck buddy”)?
10. How often do you have sex (with another person) on average?
11. Do you go to gay bars in London? If yes, which ones?
12. If no, why not? Have you gone to gay bars in the past? Where? Why?
13. Have you ever seen the free gay magazines, like QX and Boyz?
14. Have you ever read or looked through the magazines?
15. Have you ever taken the magazines home?
16. If no, why not?
17. What sections of the magazines do you read or look at?
18. What sections do you find useful?
19. What sections do you enjoy?
20. Is there anything in the magazines that you think should not be there?
21. Is there anything in the magazines that you would like to see, or see more?
22. Do you look at the magazines more than you used to, the same as before, or less than before?
23. Do you think the content or the advertising in the magazines influences your decisions to buy things?
24. Do you think the content or the advertising in the magazines influences your decisions to attend clubs or pubs?
25. Do you read the content or mainly look at the pictures?
26. Do you read or look at the escort section?
27. Do you look at the escort section always, often, sometimes, seldom, or never?
28. What do you think of the photos?
29. What do you think of the men in the ads?
30. What do you think about men selling sex?
31. To men?
32. In the back of a magazine?
33. Have you ever called one of the men in the ads?
34. If no, do you know anyone who has?
35. Can you tell me about it?
36. Have you ever sold sex?
37. Have you ever felt like you were given something because a person wanted to have sex with you? Describe the situation.
38. Have you ever given someone something because you wanted to have sex with them? Describe the situation.

39. Do you think there is a difference between casual sex when no one pays and casual sex when one person pays? If yes, how? Why/why not?
40. Do you think there is a difference between regular sex with a person when no one pays and regular sex with a person when one person pays? If yes, how? Why/why not?
41. Do you think there is a difference between casual sex (like a one night stand) and regular sex (like a boyfriend or a fuck buddy)? If yes, how? Why/why not?
42. Do you use any of the following sites:
  - a. gaydar (.co.uk, .com, .co.eu, .co.ie, .co.au)
  - b. gay.com
  - c. manhunt
  - d. dudesnude
  - e. rentboy.com
  - f. gay-parship
  - g. mutual-benefit [?]
  - h. or another gay networking/dating site?
43. Do you use any of the following sites:
  - a. Myspace
  - b. Bebo
  - c. Facebook
  - d. Yahoo 360
  - e. Or another social networking site?
44. Do you ever use them for meeting men to date?
45. Do you ever use them for meeting men to meet for sex?
46. Do you ever use them for meeting men for paid sex?
47. Have you ever used them to advertise to be paid for sex?
48. Has anyone ever approached you about paying you for sex?
49. What did you do?
50. Have you ever thought about selling sex?
51. Why would you do it? Why would you not do it?
52. Why do you think some men sell sex?
53. Why do you think some people object to paying for sex?
54. Do you think being paid for sex should be:
  - a. Made illegal
  - b. Legalised
  - c. Decriminalised?
55. Do you think paying for sex should be:
  - a. Made illegal
  - b. Legalised
  - c. Decriminalised?
56. Do you think it is different for men than it is for women to sell sex?

**I. Appendix: Questions approved for men who do identify as sex workers**

## Interview Schedule – Men who advertise as escorts in gay magazines

I want to ask you some specific questions about yourself, and then move onto some more general questions.

1. How old were you at your last birthday?
2. What is the age you use to advertise yourself?
3. Do you live in London?
4. How long have you lived in London?
5. Where are you from originally?
6. Tell me a little bit about yourself.
7. Tell me a little bit about your work.
8. How do you think you are different in private than you are when you are working?
9. How are you the same?
10. Let's talk about your advertisement in \_\_\_\_ magazine.
11. Do you use the same ads in both magazines? Why (not)?
12. Do you have more than one ad in the same magazine? Why (not)?
13. Do you sleep with men or women or both?
14. Have you ever slept with men or women or both?
15. Tell me about your regular clients? (How often do you see them? How are they different or the same as casual clients? How are they different or the same to other people you see regularly?)
16. Tell me about some of your casual clients?
17. How many clients do you think you see in a normal week? Does this change? If yes, what makes some weeks different?
18. Are you single or in a relationship?
19. Tell me about your current relationship or your last relationship.
20. How would you describe your sex life at the moment?
21. Do you have a regular sex partner (or "fuck buddy") (ie someone who is not a client)?
22. How often do you have sex (with another person) on average?
23. How is your private sex life different from what you do professionally?
24. Do you go to gay bars or clubs in London? If yes, which ones?
25. If no, why not? Have you gone to gay bars or clubss in the past? Where? Why?
26. Do you ever read or look through the magazines?
27. What sections of the magazines do you read or look at?
28. Is there anything in the magazines that you think should not be there?
29. Is there anything in the magazines that you would like to see, or see more?
30. Do you look at the magazines more than you used to, the same as before, or less than before you started to advertise?
31. Do you read or look at the other escort ads?
32. Do you look at the escort section always, often, sometimes, seldom, or never?
33. What do you think of the photos?
34. What do you think of the other men in the ads?
35. What do you think about men selling sex?
36. To men?
37. Have you ever hired an escort yourself? Why or why not?
38. What was the first time you were paid to have sex?
39. Do you use any of the following sites:

- a. gaydar (.co.uk, .com, .co.eu, .co.ie, .co.au)
  - b. gay.com
  - c. manhunt
  - d. dudesnude
  - e. rentboy.com
  - f. gay-parship
  - g. mutual-benefit [?]
  - h. or another gay networking/dating site?
40. Do you use any of the following sites:
- a. Myspace
  - b. Bebo
  - c. Facebook
  - d. Yahoo 360
  - e. Or another social networking site?
41. Do you ever use them for meeting men to date?
42. Do you ever use them for meeting men to meet for sex?
43. Do you ever use them for meeting men for paid sex?
44. Have you ever used them to advertise to be paid for sex?
45. Has anyone ever approached you about paying you for sex?
46. What did you do?
47. Have you ever thought about quitting selling sex?
48. Why would you do it? Why would you not do it?
49. Why do you think other men sell sex?
50. Do you think being paid for sex should be:
- a. Made illegal
  - b. Legalised
  - c. Decriminalised?
51. Do you think paying for sex should be:
- a. Made illegal
  - b. Legalised
  - c. Decriminalised?
52. Do you think it is different for men than it is for women to sell sex?

**J. Appendix: Post interview exit information sheet**

## Exit Interview Information

Thank you for participating in this interview.

I hope you have found it interesting to talk about your experiences and that you feel like you have gained something from the interview yourself.

Because some of the questions are quite personal, you may have started thinking about something that came up in the interview. This is very common, and often people want to talk about things further.

Attached is a short list of places that you can contact if you have questions or you want to talk more about anything that has come up in your interview.

If you have questions about the interview itself or the next steps of my research, you can contact me on [tylera3@lsbu.ac.uk](mailto:tylera3@lsbu.ac.uk).

Thank you again for your time and your interest.

Best regards,

Allan Tyler

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**Information and Services**

Sohoboyz  
Unit FF15, Base Station  
The Saga Centre  
326 Kensal Road  
London W10 5BZ  
020 7362 2309  
[info@sohoboyz.org.uk](mailto:info@sohoboyz.org.uk)  
[www.sohoboyz.org.uk](http://www.sohoboyz.org.uk)

[] provides help and information about all aspects of sex work for male and transgender sex workers

GMFA  
Unit 43, The Eurolink Business Centre  
49 Effra Road  
Brixton  
London  
SW2 1BZ  
[www.gmfa.org.uk/londonservices/](http://www.gmfa.org.uk/londonservices/)

[] provides information and workshops about all aspects of gay men's healthy living, including sex, sexual health, sports and social groups.

**K. Appendix: Transcribers' information sheet and confidentiality agreement****PhD Research – men who advertise as escorts in Britain**

This research is done towards a doctorate degree about men who advertise as escorts in London.

There is relatively little research about male escorts who advertise, even less about men who hire escorts, and none about the ads themselves or the people who see them. This study will focus on the lives of men who advertise as escorts in London.

Participants take part in an interview that lasts approximately one (1) hour, but may be longer. Questions are open-ended and the interviews often take a very informal discussion format. The interview is recorded, then later typed out and studied for themes about lifestyle, sexuality, escorting, paid sex, and advertising.

Participants will often discuss their experiences as escorts, as well as personal details about their lives and the lives of their families and friends.

All information provided in the interview must only be used for the purposes of this study and any publications that may arise from this study, as authored by the researcher. All names, and the names of any other people identified during the interview will be changed to allow privacy and anonymity. Any other identifying details will also be changed or omitted as requested by participants.

The study will open up discussion about sex work, relationships, intimacy between men, bisexuality and gay culture, escorting, and body image.

This project will be used as part of my doctorate at London South Bank University.

If you have any questions or would like more information on the final dissertation, please contact me on 0776 894 7144 or [tylera3@lsbu.ac.uk](mailto:tylera3@lsbu.ac.uk).

This project is being supervised by Professor Jeffrey Weeks, who may be contacted at [weeksj@lsbu.ac.uk](mailto:weeksj@lsbu.ac.uk).

Thank you for your time.

Allan Tyler

## Confidentiality Agreement for working with interview material

I have read the above information and have had details of the study explained to me.

I understand that the material involved may be of a sexual or personal nature.

I agree to treat any information that is given to me as strictly confidential, and to maintain the absolute privacy of the participants and the researcher.

I agree to not share or discuss any names or information, or to use the information in anyway.

I agree to take due care that this information will not be seen or heard by anyone other than myself and the researcher, Allan Tyler.

I agree to destroy any recordings, transcripts, or copies I receive or create related to this information after they have been returned to the researcher, Allan Tyler.

*I understand that the copyright of the spoken word belongs to the speaker in these recordings, and that the copyright of the written word belongs to the researcher, Allan Tyler. The information will only be used for this research and for publications that might arise from this research project, as authored by the researcher, Allan Tyler.*

I confirm I am over 18 years old.

I agree to transcribe interviews for the researcher, Allan Tyler, under the conditions set out above.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please sign this form and return it to me.

Thank you for your participation in this project.

Allan Tyler

## **L. Appendix: Participant Interview Summaries**

### ***Andrew***

Andrew is English and moved to London after university. I met Andrew when he was dating a friend of mine nine years ago and we used to see each other at the gym regularly. I discovered he was an escort when I saw his Commercial profile on Gaydar. It featured scenes from a gay porn film that he had been in. Andrew is involved in the fetish scene in London. When he was younger, he worked for a company that sold fetish clothing and accessories. It was during this time that he started to work as an escort. He tells me men used to ask him if he was an escort, so he decided to try it. He said there was a thrill and a lot of affirmation and he needed the money. He recognised some of the men who came into the shop where he worked as escorts and decided he should try it as it would be more lucrative than his occupation in retail. He hired a man who advertised in a magazine so that he could talk to him and find out more about how to be an escort. Andrew used to only do 'outcalls' when he shared accommodation in South-East London and would travel in his car to meet clients. He now lives alone in central London and does both in-calls and out-calls. He is judicious about when and where he advertises and how much he spends on advertising, since he has a number of regular customers who provide him with regular business and income. Andrew also does occasional work for his parents in a specialist business outside of London. He has a plan to stop escorting and is currently training for a trade. Andrew has only been in one porn film, but is considering doing it again as he enjoyed doing it.

### ***Brian***

Brian is 42 at the time of our interview. He is first generation English, although he identifies heavily with his European nationality. We were introduced by a work colleague who is a friend of his. Brian trained in the arts and has worked as an artist in several different media in

his career. Brian started selling sex with a friend when they were both at college because, as he says, they were broke and both liked sex. He and his friend posted calling cards in gay pubs. American clients suggested he would be able to get work in gay 'porn' films easily, which he did. For several years he sold sex, made porn, and worked as an artist. He tells me he used the publicity and his persona from making porn to his advantage as a 'gimmick' when he sold sex; however, he makes clear distinctions between prostitution and pornography and between sex work and other work. Brian has two friends and benefactors who used to be a client, one of whom still sends him \$2000USD although they no longer have sex. Brian has seen a therapist since he was 'young'. He has had periods of struggling with very heavy drug and alcohol use. He was diagnosed with HIV in the late nineties. He tells me he struggles with relationships and feels, 'in real-time retrospect' like prostitution has 'fucked him up' and that he cannot have 'proper relationships'. He tells me about his current relationship and that his reputation has often become an obstacle in forming romantic relationships. This was my first interview and it was my assumption that Brian no longer sold sex since he emphasised that he was no longer working in erotic films; however, since our interview a 'porn' film has been released with his (stage) name. His role with clients is 'versatile'.

### *Craig*

Craig is a gay man from Australia but has lived in London for 14 years and now has both UK and Australian citizenship. Craig is 38 but lists himself as 35 on his profile. I have known Craig for over nine years and did not know he had sold sex. He told me about his experiences after I told him about my research and he agreed to be interviewed. Craig was in a long-term relationship when we met and is in a long-term relationship now, but in between, he was sexually active with casual partners. He had a number of sexual relationships and dated

several men, several of whom were escorts. He has never paid for sex. He was a regular, almost daily user of Gaydar and frequently went to gay bars and clubs. Craig has a successful career in media. He tried escorting because he wanted to see what it would be like to be an escort. He says he wanted to see if he could do it. He did not need the money. He did not have a commercial profile, but used his personal profile on Gaydar to meet men in chatrooms for escorts and clients. He met customers in London and once in Amsterdam, but stopped after seeing only four customers in a few months because he did not enjoy having sex with the last two men who hired him. Craig's role with clients was always 'Active'.

### *Darren*

Darren is English. He is a gay man, now in his early forties. We know each other from going to the same gym and from having lengthy online discussions about relationships on Gaydar (see Chapter 3: Methodology for a discussion of the ethnographic nature of my study).

Darren revealed to me that he had been an escort for several years when we were talking at the gym one day. As we had developed a rapport previously, he was very eager to share some of his stories. He emphasises the point that he was 'the first person to use a picture in *Boyz*'. (My analysis of the ads reveals he was not the first, although I was able to find pictures of him where I recognised some of his tattoos.) Darren tells me he used to work non-stop on weekends and earned in excess of £3000 some weekends. He tells me there was less competition than there is now. Darren's (now ex-) boyfriend still works as an escort, although Darren himself now owns his own retail business and he has stopped selling sex. Darren has a regular boyfriend.

### *George*

George is 42, although he advertises as 39. He moved away from home for university and lived for several years in other cities in England before moving to London. George works as a

freelance personal trainer and currently works part-time in retail because of the downturn in the economy. I recognise George from seeing him in clubs and working at my gym, although we had never met. George advertises as an escort through a Commercial profile on Gaydar and agrees to an interview when I contact him there. He also advertises in magazines and other websites and has a personal profile that he uses for personal communication. George is out as 'gay' to friends and colleagues but promotes himself as 'bisexual' on his website. He says this is more accurate because he has started to experiment with 'girls' when he goes out, and says he would see mixed-sex-couples as clients, although he is not confident enough to see a female client alone. George started escorting when someone he had rejected on Gaydar then offered him money. He says he started because his friends were having casual and anonymous sex for free. He relies on the income more now because his personal training business is slower than it used to be, but he is still very selective about who he will and will not see, maintaining that he has to be attracted to them 'or it just won't work'. George's role with clients is 'Active' and he refuses passive-anal sex or anal sex without condoms. At the time of our interview, George maintained that he kept his personal training and escorting work separate; however, since then he has started to use his Gaydar Commercial profile to promote personal training, escorting and a qualified massage service. George lives alone in his own flat.

### ***Henrik***

Henrik is 35 and advertises as a 30 year old student on a Commercial profile on Gaydar. Paul only started selling sex three weeks before our interview. He recently started renting a flat on his own after he broke up with his long-time partner. He is a PhD student and does some teaching and lecturing at his university but needs extra income. He uses his student identity as part of his advertising. He advertises giving oral sex for £50. In our interview he tells me that

this is the basic price and he charges extra if men want to ejaculate in his mouth or have other forms of contact. He describes his role with clients as ‘Versatile’ and has had both active and passive anal sex, although not regularly. Henrik is from Europe, but has lived in the UK for several years, having also lived in Asia and the United States. Henrik had a financial arrangement with a man in his thirties when he was nineteen, although he did not think of it as prostitution. Henrik’s clients represent a broad range of ages and backgrounds, including young, ‘attractive’ men – some gay, some with girlfriends – who want quick, easily negotiated sex. Henrik is unique in that he advertises on Gaydar but he does not include a photograph of himself on his profile. He does send photos of his face to potential clients when he contacts them or they contact him. He also has a ‘handle’ that is explicit about both his sexual and commercial intentions. Since our interview, Henrik has changed his handle (see note on participant observation and tracking changes to online profiles in Chapter 3: Methodology) and later closed his Commercial profile.

### *Joe*

Joe, 43, advertises as a bisexual masseur on Gaydar, using a profile and chatrooms, and through other websites, offering ‘conventional’ and ‘tantric’ massage for men. He explains to me in an online interview that he does not consider himself a ‘sex worker’. He offers services that include ‘combined genital and anal massage’ and ‘multiple orgasmic massage’ and performs massages nude; however, the websites to which he directs me emphasise only limited and agreed reciprocal touch and that masseurs do not ‘become sexual/ cum’. Joe has a detailed fee list that varies depending on the type of contact and the length of the session. He offers discounts to servicemen, students and athletes, as well as a massage exchange service. Joe invites me to book a session in order to understand what he does, or to interview a client after I had witnessed a massage. Although similar methods have been incorporated by

researchers in the past (West and de Villiers, 1992), I explain the ethics and boundaries of my approach. Joe is sceptical that I can fully appreciate that what he does is ‘much more than “sex”’. He emphasises the spiritual and healing aspects of his work. Joe makes interesting points that ‘exploitation’ can be read into the role of the researcher (for not paying for interview time), the client, or the masseur (for taking money for doing something he enjoys). Joe invites me to talk to his tantric massage mentors, as well.

### *Keith*

Keith is 24, and one of the only men in my study who advertises his real age. Keith is softly spoken and has a Scottish accent. He has a university degree and a professional qualification, but is taking time out from working full-time or actively looking for work in his trained profession. He was made redundant from his last job where he found the working environment to be high pressured and hostile, both as an employee and a gay man. He tells me that escorting gives him the space to take a break from work. He would like to continue to pursue his qualified career and he continues to apply for jobs when they come up, but the job market is difficult and he does not feel under pressure to return to that kind of work right now. He sees four or five clients a week – enough for him to get by. He uses Gaydar for advertising but uses Manhunt for personal sex, and he tells me he will often hook up with someone for personal sex after seeing a client if he has not ‘cum’ and is still horny. Keith has done some modelling, including work for another escort who is training to be a photographer. He has used some of these photographs on his personal and Commercial profiles. His Commercial profile also features promotional stills from (gay) porn films he has done. He tells me he would do porn as a full-time career if it were not for his parents finding out. Keith had worked as an escort a few years ago when he split up with his boyfriend. He makes comparisons between selling sex and the subjectivity of attraction and the subjective role that

attraction plays in both commercial and non-commercial sex. Since our interview, Keith has moved to a city in Europe.

### *Marcos*

Marcos is 24, but like most men, advertises as younger. He has been working as an escort for four years. Marcos is from Brazil but has a European passport. He stayed with a friend who did escorting when he first arrived. With limited English and only a tourist visa, he struggled to find work. After working in retail, Marcos now works as a full time escort. He advertises in many different print and online spaces, but is unaware of how much he spends on advertising. He wants to save enough money to buy a house, after which he plans to stop escorting and go into another field of work, although he is unclear as to what that might be. He is quite specific that he does not want to work in an office, he would like to travel once or twice a month with time allowed for tourism, and any job he takes will have to be well paid. Despite his plans, Marcos spends all of his earnings on luxury car payments, scooter payments, insurance, rent, cosmetic surgeries and holidays. Marcos does not know what his total outgoing costs are, but he has debt and no savings, so is not successfully achieving his financial goal. Marcos prefers the boundaries of limited interaction with clients to a financially dependent long-term relationship. He tells me he has set an age limit on the clients he will see as men above their mid-fifties often seem to be seeking affection and not just sex. Marcos says he advertises as 'Versatile' because he does not want the pressure of having to maintain an erection if he is seeing several clients in one day.

### *Matthew*

Matthew, 41, worked for an escort agency and later, independently. Originally from Australia, Matthew came to London and worked in finance for several years before he started escorting. In our interview, Matthew tells me that he worked for the escort agency for less

than a year, but reveals that he has continued to see one out-of-town client a few times a year. He is in a new relationship, and has decided to not see the client anymore, as it would distract from his current relationship and be disrespectful to his boyfriend. Matthew is successful in his career and does not need an income from escorting, but he describes very generous earnings relative to short amounts of time. His former boyfriend had a friend who was an escort when they lived in Australia and Matthew was familiar with the independent ads in the magazines in London, as well as the ads for escort agencies. Matthew did not advertise independently, but took his bookings through the agency advertisements which he says allowed him to keep his time free in the week for work and his personal life, and as such keep his work as a 'hooker' contained within weekends, when he would meet clients in hotels and restaurants, usually for dinner and an overnight stay. Matthew tells me about some of the all-expense-paid trips he was paid to take for one client. He describes the sex as being very 'vanilla' and almost not like 'sex' at all, but often limited to masturbation, kissing and sleeping together. Matthew did not allow passive-anal penetration and prefers the 'Active' role in sex. Matthew and I have mutual friends. Many of Matthew's long-term, gay friends in London know about his experience selling sex and he is open to sharing his experiences in circles where he is comfortable. He has not told his family in Australia.

### ***Paulo***

Paulo is 36 and from Brazil. He describes himself as gay, Brazilian and 'Latin' on his profile. He works as a hairdresser. When he moved to London 10 years ago, his friends told him he was 'crazy for working long hours in a regular job' when he could earn much more money as an escort. Pablo says he was much more naïve and prudish about escorting at the time and found the idea repellent. He tells me he eventually did take up the idea because he needed the extra money to do the things he wanted to do in London 'because London is so expensive'.

He tells me studying is one of the things he wanted to do. Pablo says the first time he tried escorting he hated it because it made him feel dirty. He did not do it again for some time and then he tried it again. He still didn't like it. In his telling, he started and stopped several times. He does not speak of it as a positive experience. It was something he did, part-time, to earn extra money. He emphasises that he did not like it and he says he does not do it anymore. He tells me he has a boyfriend now, although at different times his story changes as to whether his boyfriend lives with him and pays the rent or whether his boyfriend has his own apartment and *helps him* with the rent. Paulo talks about how prevalent drug use is on the gay scene and tells me about some of his own experiences in both positive and negative terms. He has stopped using 'G' [aka GHB/GBL] because it is too dangerous, but he has started using 'Tina' [aka crystal methamphetamine]. When I unexpectedly run into Paulo a year and a half later, he is dramatically thinner and his features look characteristic of heavy 'meth' addicts (Field notes). When I next bump into Paulo after another two and a half years, his features are restored and he looks healthy again.

### ***Philip***

Philip is a 42 year old, Scottish, gay man. His career has spanned several roles as a designer, writer and activist. He started selling sex when he was living in Scotland in 1996. He tells me he was fed up with the low pay and hard work. He started by picking up men in gay bars and negotiating a fee before sex, before he began to advertise in *Gay Times*. When one of his friends heard about the money Philip was earning, he suggested they advertise as an agency. The two men, and sometimes the friend's boyfriend, saw clients in Edinburgh and Glasgow. Philip was sometimes asked to hire other escorts for group sex with clients, which he says he enjoyed because he was paid extra to have sex with someone he fancied, and he was paid an extra finder's fee, although he does not describe it as pimping. Philip talks about his

experiences as a sex worker as happening in the past until he starts talking about men offering him – or him and his partner – money for sex through his personal profile on Gaydar. Philip, and sometimes his partner, will take money from men who contact him, whether it is for sex or to watch him have sex with his partner. Philip's partner did not know he was a sex worker when they met and was shocked when he found out. Philip suggests I talk to a mutual colleague who was also a sex worker.

### *Quinn*

Quinn, 42, is English. Quinn is gay but advertises as bisexual. Quinn works as a full time escort, but his schedule allows him to devote his extra time to other occupations and hobbies in music, film and volunteering. Quinn views his work as a business and manages his time as a resource, along with his other resources, such as his website. He also manages his resources to allow him to manage his time, so he can maintain a professional relationship with potential clients but avoid 'time wasters'. When Quinn is with clients, they are his priority, and he is dismissive of other sex workers who do not make clients their priority whilst on call. Quinn also makes time to take care of himself physically by going to the gym and travelling. Quinn sees himself as a sex worker, and has been involved in activism directed at influencing government policy on the regulation of sex. Quinn is vocal in our interview about how unprofessional many other escorts are. He emphasises how much he loves the business and how much he loves sex. He tells me that he may be addicted to sex. In our interview, Quinn emphasised that he only practiced safer sex. At the time of our interview, Quinn's Commercial profile also states that he practices Safer Sex but his website offers services for 'simulated bareback' and 'breeding programs'. Two and a half years after our interview, Quinn's personal profile shows the 'Safer Sex' field as unanswered. Quinn would like a boyfriend, but tells me that relationships are one of the hardest things about being an escort.

Quinn presents a hyper-masculine persona in his advertisements and in person, and comes across as quite manic in our interview, although he seems very vulnerable when we talk about boyfriends and relationships.

### *Steve*

Steve, 33, is South African gay man. He advertises as a Latin, bisexual massage therapist on Gaydar. He has professional qualifications and works as a physiotherapist in a private clinic part-time, as well as working from home in the flat he shares with his partner. Steve tells me he found physiotherapy too emotionally draining because he often worked with people recovering from physical trauma and massage gives him a way to work where there is less demand on him emotionally. Steve uses images in his advertising that show off his body in a similar way to some escort advertisers and personal profiles. He says this is necessary to attract business in a market where he is competing with unqualified escorts who also offer massage. Steve lists a number of types of massage including 'Sensual', 'Tantric Full Body', and 'Prostate' which often include sexual arousal and release for clients. Steve insists he is not offering an escort service in his profile and repeats this in our interview. He defines clear boundaries about maintaining his state of dress, insisting touch not be reciprocated, not taking sexual pleasure from the activities, nor being sexually stimulated himself, regardless of what the client might expect, request or demand. The blurring of sex work and body work is a strategy for Steve to stay competitive in an increasingly (over-)saturated market, particularly where he also sees competition from advertisers who lack professional qualifications but include massage as an added value product to their escort services; however, clients are often angry and have sometimes been violent towards him when they do not receive the 'service' they expect. Steve's profile changes several times after our interview, including photos of his semi-erect penis through an open jeans fly and lowered jeans to reveal his bare bottom.

***Stuart***

Stuart is English and 43 and an out gay man. Stuart runs his own media and arts company, and many of his current clients are escorts. He used to be an escort himself from 2002 to 2005. He tells me he was the most high profile gay male escort in the UK at the time because he had a formal business education and used his experience from working in The City. He says he managed his escorting business as a well-run business and ‘totally cleaned up’. Stuart saved and invested the money he made from escorting and started his own business. He now uses his experience from marketing and promoting himself ‘as a product’ as part of his service for clients who are (both male and female) sex workers themselves. Stuart contacted me through my profile on Gaydar. I had assumed he was contacting me to talk about sex work but he later told me he had originally contacted me because he thought I ‘looked rather sexy’. He still uses a pseudonym in his personal Gaydar handle.

***Victor***

Victor is a 41 year old gay man. He is from Argentina, but his mother is from Europe. He works in media, but was a full-time escort in his mid-twenties and again for six months when he was 37. He first started escorting when he was a student and needed the money. It was at the suggestion of a friend who was also an escort who knew he was ‘well hung’ and ‘loved sex [so] would probably find it easy’. He tells me has a very high sex drive. He says the qualities that a man needs to do escorting are to be good looking, well-hung, and love sex. Victor tells me he likes to use drugs for ‘chem sessions’ [extended sexual encounters using drugs]. He offered a ‘Versatile’ service and he tells me the experiences ranged from ‘fucking great’ to ‘fine’ to ‘something you had to get through’. He accounts details of a particularly memorable client whom he partied with all night, as well as the clients who were over 60 to whom he was not attracted, although they usually only wanted kissing and ‘wanking’. He

stopped selling sex when he met someone and started a relationship, as he did not think selling sex and being in a relationship were compatible. He is single now and recently hired an escort himself because he wanted the convenience of paying someone to come to him for sex. Victor's close friends know he has done escorting because he needed the money.

### ***Will***

Will is an English gay man in his 40s. He has a shaved head, tattoos and piercings and dresses in a 'skinhead' style. He tells me he and a (black, British, gay male) friend advertised as an 'escort agency' out of his friend's council flat in South-East London. As this was before mobile phones, they took calls on the landline. He says he would have one punter waiting in the front room while he was doing another punter in the bedroom. He tells me several stories about heavy drug use. Will is currently unemployed and lives on disability benefits. He has HIV and hepatitis-C. He tells me about his personal journey with HIV and how it lead him to spirituality. He is very keen to talk about very personal topics but he spends very little time talking about sex work.

### ***Yannick***

Yannick contacted me to take part in my research. An Australian man in his 40s, Yannick has a career in sales and offers a no fee massage service from a studio apartment close to his home. He used to identify as gay and was in a long-term gay relationship; however, he currently identifies as bisexual and is married to a woman. He offers the service as a way of *releasing his male energy* and having physical contact with other men, a service that he was previously paying for. He tells me he had the idea for the no fee service when he used to pay other men for 'sensual massage'. He talks about his experience as both a paying customer and a service provider and discusses what motivates some men to seek massage, and what kinds of services they are expecting when they seek out a massage in a space like Gaydar.

**M. Appendix: Semiotic coding schedule**

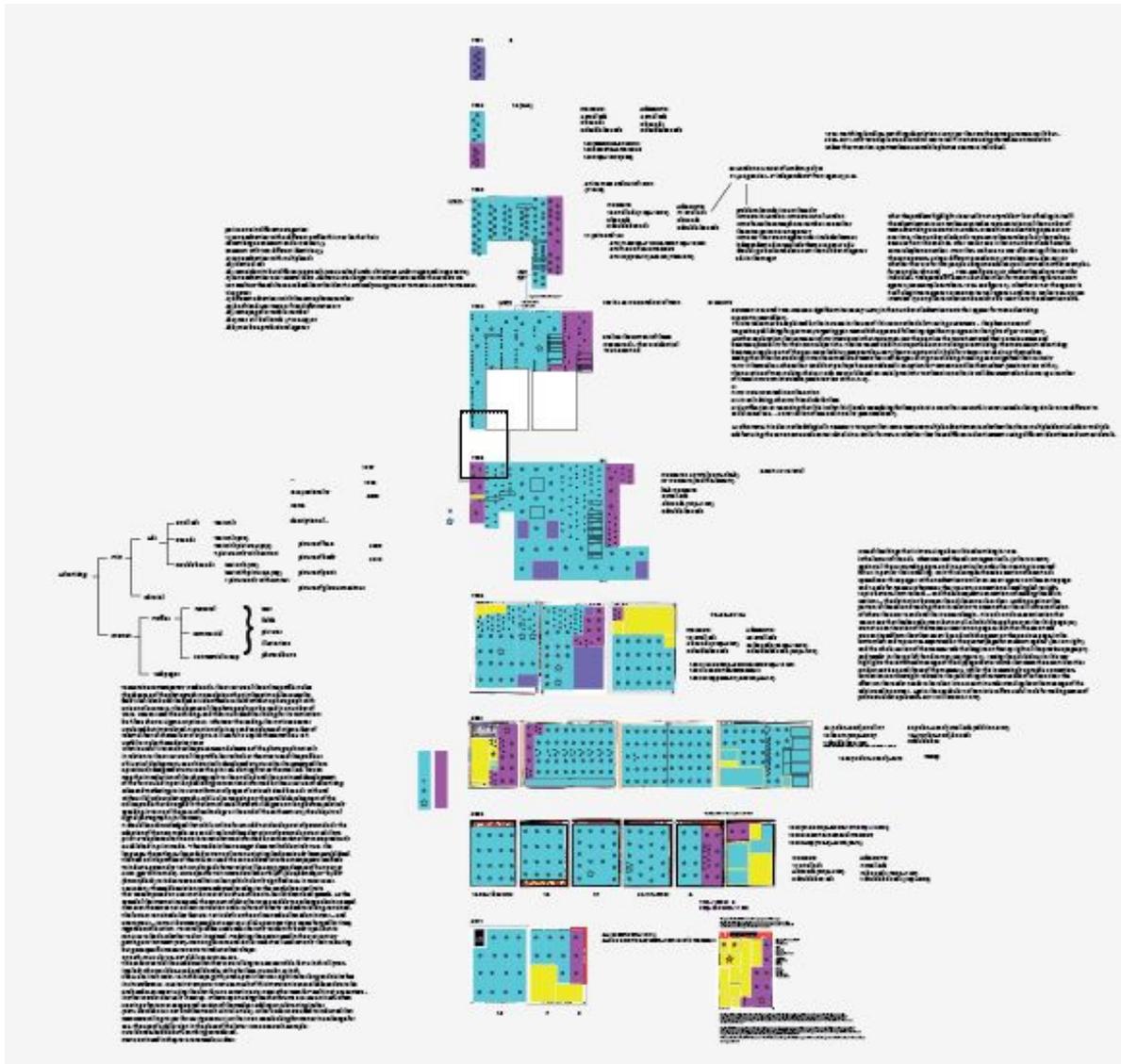
Analytical Challenges for Semiotic Coding	Decision Paths for Theoretical Sampling of Categories
<p>1) What are the signs?</p> <p>a) What is a meaningful canon of texts?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) What do I want to learn? (What is my research question? What are my objectives?)</li> <li>ii) What can I observe?</li> <li>iii) How could I 'collect' it as data?</li> <li>iv) What are the obvious ethical challenges?</li> </ol> <p>b) What is a meaningful unit of text?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) What can I learn within that unit?</li> <li>ii) What can I observe?</li> <li>iii) What is repetitive?</li> <li>iv) What is useful?</li> <li>v) What constitutes 'saturation'? What is the extent of my focus? What are the limits of my focus? Where should I make comparisons? What is extraneous?</li> <li>vi) How (quickly) do I achieve saturation? i.e. What do I include? What do I exclude? Where do I stop?</li> <li>vii) How can it be organised? How should I organise it?</li> </ol> <p>2) What do the signs signify in themselves?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Changes in content</li> <li>b) Changes in social attitudes; politics; laws</li> <li>c) Changes in technologies <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Availability of</li> <li>ii) Use of</li> </ol> </li> <li>d) Changes to magazine's goals</li> <li>e) Changes to readership</li> <li>f) See also Appendix N for additional "Small ads" schedule (Baker, 2003; Goldman, 1992)</li> </ol>	<p>1. What are the signs?</p> <p>a. What is a meaningful canon of texts?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. <u>Magazines</u></li> <li>ii. Interviews</li> <li>iii. Diaries</li> <li>iv. Internet Profiles</li> </ol> <p>b. What is a meaningful unit of text?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Yearly Volumes? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. All?</li> <li>2. If no, which ones</li> </ol> </li> <li>ii. Weekly Issue/ Edition? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Which ones?</li> <li>2. How many?</li> <li>3. What intervals?</li> <li>4. What duration?</li> </ol> </li> <li>iii. Sections? (e.g. Trade, Personals)</li> <li>iv. Pages? (i.e. numbered) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. One section may spread across multiple pages;</li> <li>2. Multiple sections may appear on one page</li> </ol> </li> <li>v. Columns of ads?</li> <li>vi. Individual ads?</li> </ol> <p>2. What do the signs signify in themselves?</p> <p>a. Defining actions: How do M\$M give meaning to actions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. 'Personal'/ unpaid and commercial</li> <li>ii. Sex work and other types of work</li> <li>iii. Sex work and other types of body work</li> </ol>

<p>3) How do they relate to other signs in themselves?</p> <p>4) What are the connections? What are the connections of the connections?</p> <p>5) How are narratives, ideologies and mythologies articulated?</p>	<p>3. &amp; 4. What are the actions doing? (Modelled findings)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Addressing scarcity,</li> <li>ii. Defining performativity (redefining, rationalising/defending),</li> <li>iii. Utilising embodiment,</li> <li>iv. Locating contact(s),</li> <li>v. Thinking temporally</li> </ul>
	<p>1. What are the signs?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What is a meaningful canon of texts? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Magazines</li> <li>ii. <u>Interviews</u></li> <li>iii. Diaries</li> <li>iv. Internet Profiles</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<p>1. What are the signs?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What is a meaningful canon of texts? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Magazines</li> <li>ii. Interviews</li> <li>iii. <del>Diaries</del>: I modified my research design following early feedback from participants and potential participants.</li> <li>iv. Internet Profiles</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<p>1. What are the signs?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What is a meaningful canon of texts? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Magazines</li> <li>ii. Interviews</li> <li>iii. Diaries</li> <li>iv. <u>Internet Profiles</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Standardised fields (i.e. single choice pop down menus; as many as apply tick boxes)</li> <li>b. Open data fields (short, x characters; long x characters; images, inc photos, graphics, animations, videos; audio, inc sound on videos, music)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>

(Semiotic coding schedule, continued from previous page)



### O. Appendix: Snapshot of initial coding in of print advertisements





Q. Appendix: Detail of line-by-line coding in of print advertisements

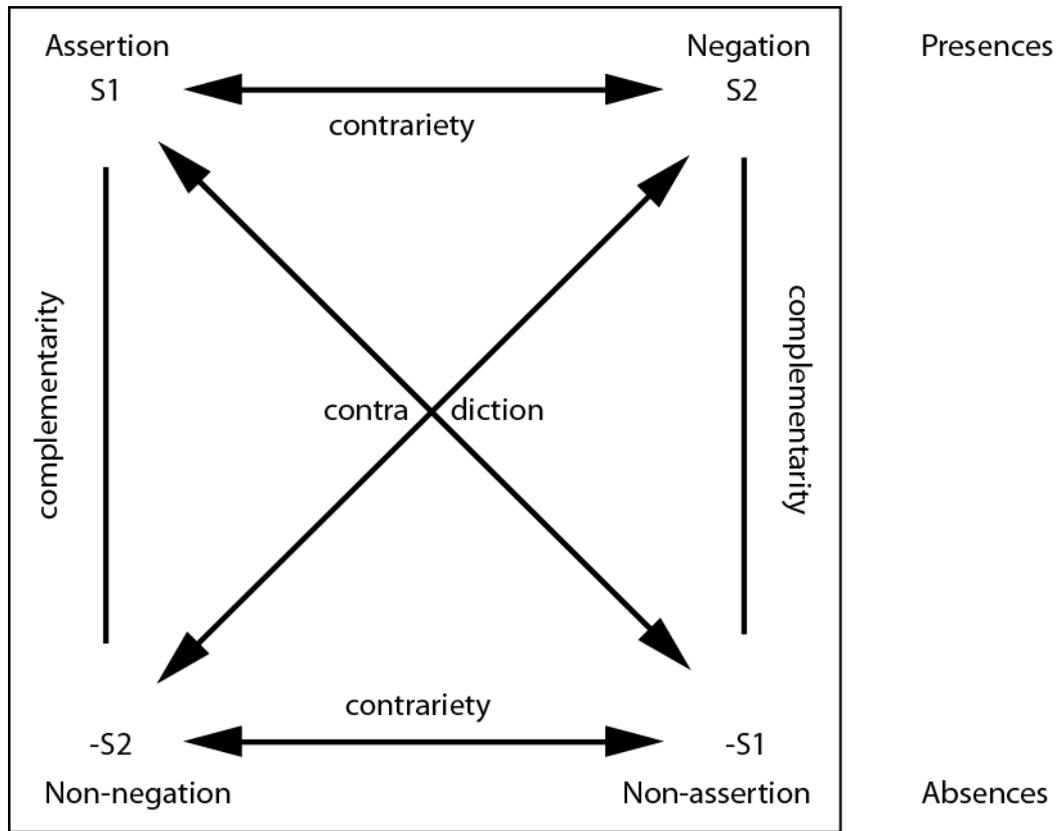
'New Gary... in daytimes, out evenings' also indicates that person may have flatmates (or a family) or share premises, whether personally or professionally, likely personally (Boyz, 2001:118).

Facilities are sometimes part of the service. London Dungeon Chambers Dungeon hire. Central playroom. Also, where advertiser has invested in playroom does this indicate personal use and interest?

In Availability, I'm looking for the weak, for or evenings only, who work and combining responsibilities, when

The image shows a large board filled with small advertisements for men's services. Each ad typically includes a photo of a man's torso or face, a name, and a phone number. The board is annotated with various markings: red circles highlight specific phone numbers and text on several ads; blue circles highlight other elements; and blue lines connect these highlights to handwritten notes. The notes provide context for the coding, such as explaining that 'New Gary...' might indicate shared living arrangements, or that 'Facilities are sometimes part of the service' refers to specific amenities like 'London Dungeon Chambers' and a 'Central playroom'. Another note asks if investing in a playroom indicates personal use. On the right side, a note discusses 'Availability' and preferences for 'the weak' or 'evenings only' workers who combine responsibilities.

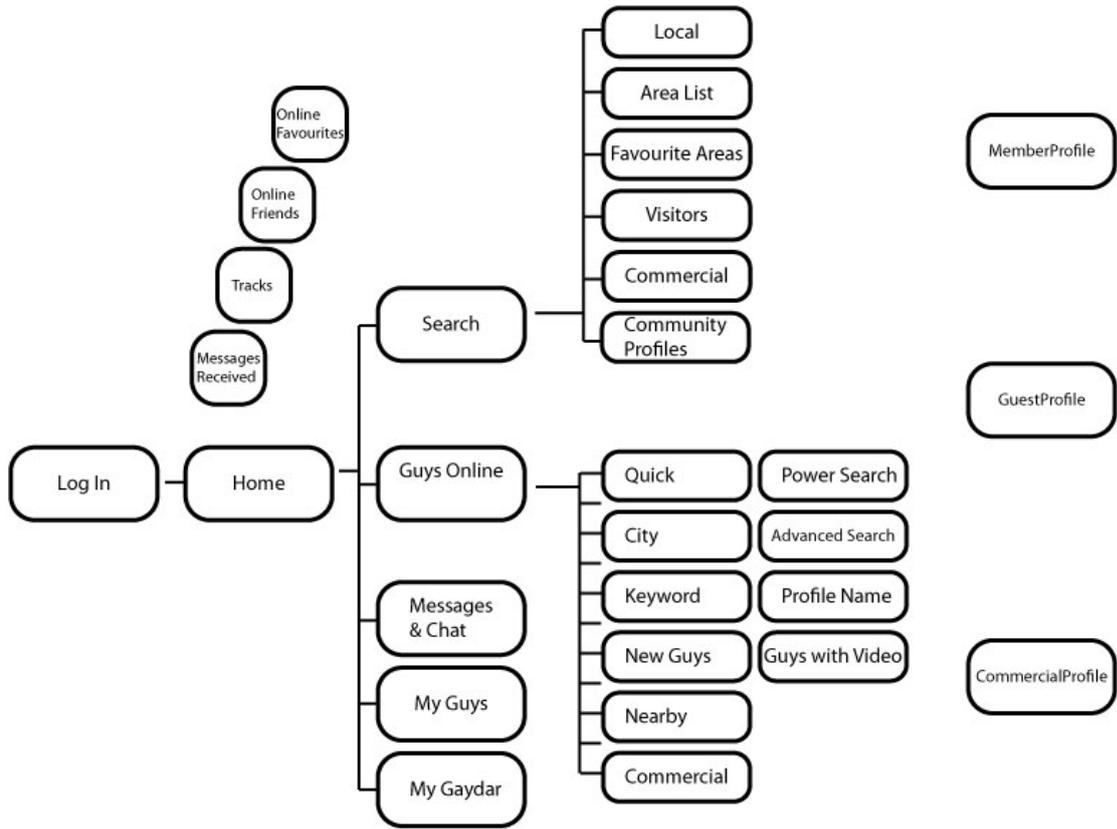
**R. Appendix: Greimas' Semiotic Square, cited in Chandler (2007)**



(I have reproduced this image from Chandler, 2007, p.107)

**S. Appendix: Simplified Gaydar.net user experience (UX) flowchart (returning UX, search detail, 2014)**

I created this UX flowchart to illustrate the user experience of a returning Member or Commercial member performing a browse or search on Gaydar.net in 2014.



**T. Appendix: Sample table of A.D.U.L.T. model developed from grounded theory analysis of M\$M data in London queer scenes**

<b>Action categories from GT Analysis</b>	<b>Matthew</b>
Addressing Scarcity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ not financial scarcity but a desire to ‘prove’ that he ‘could’ sell sex.</li> </ul>
Defining Performativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ liking sex;</li> <li>▪ liking sex with men;</li> <li>▪ knowing about sex work;</li> <li>▪ presenting as culturally masculine;</li> <li>▪ being comfortable with kissing other men</li> <li>▪ and comfortable kissing older men</li> </ul>
Utilising Embodiment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ being young,</li> <li>▪ handsome,</li> <li>▪ muscular, and</li> <li>▪ well-endowed;</li> <li>▪ and White, Commonwealth, English-speaking</li> </ul>
Locating Contact(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ knowing a friend of a friend who had sold sex</li> <li>▪ Seeing escort ads in magazines</li> <li>▪ Seeing an agency’s ad and contacting them</li> </ul>
Thinking Temporally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ his knowledge developed over time;</li> <li>▪ his ideation and his practice were not simultaneous;</li> <li>▪ his experiences were bounded to particular times of the week;</li> <li>▪ his experiences were (mostly) bounded to a particular time in his life</li> </ul>

## U. Appendix: Calculation of living costs in London on low income.

	Andrew, 2000	Min wage, 2000	Allan, 2000	5 x £100 per week	1 x £100 per week
Retail work			£3.70		
Hourly rate					
Daily rate	£45.00	£29.60		£100.00	£100.00
Annual gross	£11,700.00	£7,696.00	£32,641.00	£26,000.00	£5,200.00
Tax at 0	£0.00	£0.00		£0.00	£0.00
Tax at 10%	-£150.00	-£150.00		-£150.00	-£150.00
Tax at 22%	-£1,279.30	-£398.42		-£4,425.30	
Tax at 40% or Tax total			-£5,934.22		
Ad costs (est.)			£60.00	-£540.00	-£540.00
Net annual	£10,270.70	£7,147.58	£26,706.78	£20,884.70	£4,510.00
Allan's rent	-£4,680.00	-£4,680.00	-£4,680.00	-£4,680.00	
Net annual after rent	£5,590.70	£2,467.58	£22,026.78	£16,204.70	
Groceries	-£1,200.00	-£1,200.00	-£1,200.00	-£1,200.00	
Net annual after rent and food	£4,390.70	£1,267.58	£20,826.78	£15,004.70	£4,510.00
Net monthly	£365.89	£105.63	£1,735.57	£1,250.39	£375.88
Net daily	£12.03	£3.47	£57.06	£41.11	£12.36
Rent as % of Net	-45.6%	-65.5%	-17.5%	-22.4%	
Net daily (exc food)	£15.70	£6.93	£61.87	£45.52	

\* I have estimated advertising costs as £45 per month (Commercial) and £60 per year (Member)

\* For ease, I have only costed a Commercial or Member profile per income