

“I’m not proud, I’m just gay”: Lesbian and gay youths’ discursive negotiation of otherness¹

Lucy Jones

University of Nottingham, UK

Short running title: “I’m not proud, I’m just gay”

Word-count: 10,126

ABSTRACT

This article outlines the shared identity construction of five gay and lesbian members of an LGBT youth group, situated in a conservative, working-class, Northern English town. It is shown that the young people’s identity work emerges in response to the homophobia and ‘othering’ they have experienced from those in their local community. Through ethnography and discourse analysis, and using theoretical frameworks from interactional sociolinguistics, the strategies that the young people employ to negotiate this othering are explored; they reject certain stereotypes of queer culture (such as Gay Pride or being ‘camp’), and aim to minimise the relevance of their sexuality to their social identity. It is argued this reflects both the influence of neoliberal, ‘homonormative’ ideology, which casts sexuality in the private rather than public domain, and the stigma their sexuality holds in their local community. These findings point to the need to understand identity construction intersectionally.

Keywords: othering; identity; LGBT youth; homonormativity; homophobia; intersectionality

1. INTRODUCTION

It has been argued that British society, and Western societies more broadly, have entered a 'post-gay' era (Savin-Williams 2005), where the identities held by gay men and lesbians have become mainstreamed, or assimilated with heterosexual norms (Seidman 2002, Warner 1999). This has been termed 'homonormativity' by Duggan (2002), who argues that Western neoliberalism has led to a more individualistic culture, which in turn has impacted upon non-heterosexual identities. 'Neoliberalism' refers to the global political and economic processes of increased privatisation, deregulation, and decreased state support since the end of the twentieth century; Leitner *et al.* (2007: 2) argue that this equates 'individual freedom with self-interested choices, making individuals responsible for their own well-being, and redefining citizens as consumers and clients'. In relation to neoliberal politics associated with gay rights in the twenty-first century, Duggan asserts that this has translated to a focus on gay people's private and domestic lives, illustrated by the drive for marriage equality in many countries. As Seidman (2002:15) puts it, the most successful modern gay rights discourse has aimed to 'bring gays into the circle of citizenship and social respectability'. Valentine (2007) similarly describes this homonormative turn as a process of institutionalisation, leading to the expectation that gay and lesbian people will 'conduct themselves as implicitly "straight" members of society' (2007: 64). Agathangelou *et al* (2008) refer to this as the 'ideal queer citizen', an idealised model of homosexual identity which is state-sanctioned and palatable to the mainstream in its similarity to what is broadly considered 'normal' (heterosexuality and gender conformity). In the data presented here, I show how a group of gay and lesbian youths from the UK engage in identity construction which reflects this homonormative discourse, yet also foregrounds its contradictory and exclusionary nature. As I will

outline, an important aspect of the young people's identity work concerns opposition; they wish *not* to be defined by their sexual desires and romantic relationships, and *not* to be othered. Below, I consider approaches from sociolinguistics for theorising identity construction in relation to sexuality, before drawing on key concepts from queer theory which inform the discourse analysis in this study.

2. THEORISING SEXUAL IDENTITY

In recent sociolinguistic studies of gender and sexuality, many scholars have focused on the construction of identity relevant to interactive moments. This draws on 'third wave' approaches, whereby identity may be viewed as the outcome of social practice (Eckert 2012): language, rather than reflecting the 'true' identity of its users, holds sociocultural value which allows speakers to index contextually meaningful identities. This is rooted in Butler's (1990) argument that identities are performative, a perspective which has influenced developments in language, gender and sexuality over the past three decades; language is viewed not as *reflecting* broader categories but instead as *producing* gender and sexuality. Many studies illustrate how speakers index personas in line with broader identity categories related to being, for example, a lesbian woman (e.g. Morrish and Sauntson 2007; Jones 2012), or a heterosexual man (e.g. Kiesling 2002).

In recent research, however, speakers have also been shown to index identities which do not directly map onto easily recognisable cultural categories. For example, Levon's (2016) analysis of creaky voice by an Orthodox Jewish man who experiences same-sex desire shows patterns of variation which allow him to produce an identity related to his negotiation of the conflict between his religious and sexual identities, but do not index either orientation. Instead, the speaker positions himself as

committed to his religion *despite* his identification with homosexuality. Similarly, Podesva and van Hofwegan (2016) find, in their study of a rural North California community, gay men using fewer features indexical of non-normative masculinity than those in San Francisco, a comparatively liberal city with a large LGBT population. Rural gay men *do* use more of these features than their straight counterparts, but they do so within the parameters of what is considered to be typical for men in that community; this shows that the socio-political structures of a community impact on the degree to which speakers will project particular identities. There is therefore a need to think *intersectionally* about identity by accounting for ‘the notion that subjectivity is constituted by mutually reinforcing vectors’ (Nash 2008: 2). As Crenshaw (1989) argues, various aspects of a person’s experience can combine to marginalise them in specific ways, differing according to factors including race, age, class, and community membership.

To fully explain the relationship between language use and identity construction, then, we might view identity as multifaceted rather than one-dimensional. Such an approach is facilitated by small-scale analyses of identity construction, taking into account local contexts as well as broader macro-level categories of identity; as Jaffe (2009: 4) argues, speakers manage multiple identities or aspects of identity in different settings and within different communities of practice (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992). Through close attention to such local contexts, we can look beyond the most obvious factor joining speakers together, such as a shared sexual orientation, and to other cultural aspects which intersect with this, such as their ethnicity or age.

A particularly useful framework for such close examination of language comes from Bucholtz and Hall’s (2004, 2005) intersubjective, context-dependent perspective:

‘sociocultural linguistics’. Central to this is their focus on interaction itself, arguing for an approach which views identity as social *positioning*. They place indexicality as fundamental to identity construction, arguing the process creates links between language use and social meaning which are rooted in ideological beliefs about people’s identities. For Bucholtz and Hall, that which is indexed through interaction is not simply ‘an identity’, but an ‘identity position’; this distinction is important, differentiating between that which we may think of as a coherent identity category, such as ‘lesbian’, and that which we recognise as being specifically produced in the moment and thus more locally salient. They call this the ‘positionality principle’, arguing that:

Identities encompass (a) macro-level demographic categories; (b) local, ethnographically specific cultural positions; and (c) temporary and interactionally specific stances and participant roles. (2005: 592)

This places ‘identity’ as something momentarily achieved by interlocutors in relation to the local context of their interaction, but also shaped on a fundamental level by their habitus (Bourdieu 1991). We can make sense of identity work by considering individuals’ experiences in light of what *they* understand to be meaningful and valuable in a given context, then, as well as how this is determined by broader social structures: this allows analysts to actively move beyond culturally prescribed categories.

Recent sociolinguistic studies exploring sexuality and gender reflect this, with many drawing on queer theory: work which aims to deconstruct and critique hegemonic, heteronormative² ideologies in society (Whittle 2005: 117). For example, Zimman (2014) considers how transgender men perform their identities in an online forum. He argues that individuals’ performance of masculine gender is successful

irrespective of what genitalia they have, as they refashion traditionally ‘female’ terminology (for the vagina) and claim traditionally ‘masculine’ terminology (for the penis) to discursively construct themselves as male-bodied despite a dominant reading of their bodies as ‘female’. In this way, he demonstrates that binary gender is a cultural construction, and highlights the performative nature of identity. Other studies have also demonstrated that gender and sexuality are not rigid categories indexed by speakers in straightforward ways. Motschenbacher (2013), for example, considers the Eurovision Song Contest, a competition whereby European countries each put forward one musical act to represent their nation. Motschenbacher positions the artists’ engagement in non-normative behaviour (e.g. men wearing make-up or inviting a male gaze) as an established practice within this context, arguing such performances challenge heteronormativity but do not necessarily index a gay identity; instead, speakers construct a progressive, European identity through this behaviour, one which is entirely context-specific. Similarly, in my analysis of a British lesbian hiking group (Jones 2015), I argue that gender and sexuality are connected in complex ways; the women engage in discourse allowing them to reject traditional ideas of femininity, whilst simultaneously constructing a specifically *female* identity as butch lesbians. These studies draw on queer theory to focus on *normativity*, whereby cultural norms are prescribed as ‘natural’ or ‘typical’, in order to reveal ideas of stable, homogenous, binary gender and sexuality to be false and constructed.

Another important contribution to queer theory, as outlined above, has been critical evaluation of the ‘mainstreaming’ or ‘assimilation’ of gay identity – an aspect of what Duggan (2002) terms homonormativity. In relation to gay men specifically, Seidman (2002) claims that the idea of one’s sexuality being at the core of one’s identity has become culturally out-dated; instead, gay people can be seen as

integrated, ‘normal’ citizens who ‘blend in’ with heterosexuals thanks to the perceived similarity of their lives. According to Duggan, this has emerged from political developments many see as progressive – being openly gay while serving in the military, for example – but which are deeply problematic in that they focus on domestic, private issues rather than cultural ones. She argues they reproduce and enable ‘dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions’ which are damaging and restrictive, whilst simultaneously depoliticising gay culture by conforming with neoliberal, capitalist ideals of consumption (2002: 179). The consequence of homonormativity, it is argued, is that gay men and lesbians who engage in practices such as marriage and child-rearing, and perform broadly gender normative identities, are rewarded for being good citizens; those who fail to meet the normative ideal and are perceived as being too ‘queer’, in contrast, continue to be marginalised. On the other hand, it may be argued that framing such practices as ‘assimilationist’ positions them as part of the heterosexual domain, reproducing sexual binaries (Hall 2013) and casting gay men and lesbians who engage in them as passive or ignorant (Manalansan 2005; Motschenbacher and Stegu 2013).

It is clear that an idealised ‘norm’ of gay identity tends to be put forward in popular culture in the West, however, and that this gay identity is restrictive. For example, in American television shows such as *Will and Grace* or *Modern Family*, the gay characters are typically white, able-bodied, cisgender³, and affluent. They live in metropolitan cities where they are openly gay, are involved in monogamous relationships which reflect heteronormative values, and their sexuality is widely accepted by their peers and families. As Brown (2012) points out, while this represents the ordinary lives of *some* LGB people, the experience is far from universal, especially for those not living in the world’s ‘global gay cities’ (such as

London and San Francisco). Homonormativity not only relates to the politics of privacy and equality, then, but to the consequences of the visibility gay rights campaigns have led to. Indeed, the increase with which gay culture has become represented in mainstream contexts may have led to a restricted perception of what is a 'normal' gay identity; this inevitably influences the identity construction of gay and lesbian people.

In the analysis below, I consider this in relation to the identity construction of a group of lesbian and gay youths. I show how they take stances to normalise their sexuality through their identity positioning which, in some respects, draws on homonormative ideology. However, I also argue that certain ideals associated with homonormativity – namely being open and proud about one's gay identity – are absent from the young people's positioning; this is as a consequence of their age and socioeconomic situation. In the following section, I outline the ethnographic methodology employed in this study and introduce the five young people included here, before briefly outlining my analytical approach.

3. THE YOUTH GROUP

The data included here comes from interviews with members of a community of practice (CoP): an LGBT youth group in the north of England, who met for several hours once a week at a local state-funded youth centre. In order to understand the meaning of language as it is used in a CoP, we must also understand the typical practices of its members and their overall effects on shared identity construction (Eckert 2000); this is possible through participant observation. I therefore spent four months between July and October 2012 with this CoP, taking the role of researcher and recording interviews during the final month of my fieldwork. The young people

collectively agreed to my participation in the group as an ethnographer, but only those who gave signed consent took part in the recordings.

Though the group was open to all LGBT and questioning youths, the majority of those I met during my fieldwork had been referred to by a teacher or other professional due to concerns over their welfare – most members had self-harmed and some had attempted suicide. These young people also experienced homophobia and transphobia on a regular basis, and the group was therefore a safe place of refuge where they could get support and advice from qualified youth workers, as well as a social space. I met fifteen young people during my ethnographic fieldwork, the majority of whom were cisgender (with only two transgender members) and identified as lesbian or gay (rather than bisexual). The young people were aged 15-22 and, broadly speaking, were working-class. Social class is, of course, notoriously difficult to determine (Chambers 2003), but I categorise the young people in this way because they were mostly intending to pursue apprenticeships or vocational qualifications, and those not still in school were typically working in low-paid jobs, having left compulsory education aged 16. The town was also classed by the government as relatively deprived, and there was high unemployment in the area. During my fieldwork, I witnessed no conversations in which CoP members talked of leaving the town, and all the young people spoke with a pronounced regional accent. The majority were white (just one member – who was trans – was of mixed racial heritage) and living in a predominantly white area; in this sense, they were culturally privileged, but they were also disadvantaged in terms of their low socioeconomic status. Furthermore, as mentioned above, they frequently experienced homophobia; their local community was typically very conservative, with far-right groups enjoying

success there, and the young people's frequent experience of marginalisation and abuse reflects this.

Only data from cisgender members of the group are included here, all of whom identified as either lesbian or gay. Two young women feature in the data: Paige⁴ (aged 15) and Emma (16). Three young men feature: Ryan (16), Josh (22) and Tom (18). All were white. Josh, Ryan and Tom had been attending the group for around three years, whereas Emma and Paige had joined within the last year. The five were friendly but did not socialise outside of the group. They were also reluctant to get involved in what they called 'serious' activities; they were particularly unenthusiastic about engaging in educational activities about LGBT history or politics, and few expressed interest in attending LGBT events. During my fieldwork, it became clear that, although the young people clearly attended the group due to their shared LGBT status, this was not a defining factor in what they chose to do together. Their self-directed time was mostly spent on activities not obviously related to their LGBT status, such as playing pool or singing karaoke. Indeed, during my interviews with them, I asked if they used any particular terms to define themselves in relation to their gender or sexual identity; Paige was particularly vocal on this point, claiming she would never use labels such as *lesbian* or *dyke* because "it's like you're labelling yourself, and I hate labelling myself." I asked her, if she had to, how she would describe herself, and she replied "normal, like everybody else, 'cause you are, you're not different, it's normal." Paige's use of 'everybody else' refers here to heterosexual people – those who are not marked as different for their sexuality – and reveals her concern not to be marked out as unusual or other. As will be shown below through four interview extracts, although the young people (both female and male) were

typically willing to make use of the label ‘gay’, they tended to reject the idea that this marked them out as ‘different’.

To conduct this analysis, as outlined above, I conceive of ‘identity’ as a process achieved through interaction, enabling speakers to make sense of their position in the world. I engage in close discourse analysis of the speakers’ utterances, considering how they reflect the broader context in which the talk is situated as well as the practices of this CoP specifically. I consider moments of stance taking in terms of how the young people construct particular personas in that moment, and draw upon wider ideologies. I also pay close attention to the young people’s choices of lexis and naming, in terms of how this allows them to index membership to locally salient and more broadly recognisable identity categories. Bucholtz and Hall’s (2005) principal of positionality is therefore central to this analysis, in that I focus on how the young people use language in their interactions to position themselves as particular types of people.

4. ANALYSIS

4.1 Rejecting gay stereotypes

As stated above, the young people typically engaged in identity work which aligned them with ordinariness – that which they considered to be ‘normal’. In addition, I will argue here, they worked to downplay the significance of their homosexuality; one aspect of shared practice within the CoP was the discursive rejection of stereotypes associated with gay culture. Extract 1 shows an example of this, from my conversation with Tom (T), who told me (L) during his interview that he had experienced homophobia; he stated that what angered him about this was that it drew attention to his sexuality, making those who might not have known about it aware that

he was gay. This led me to ask about his feelings about being gay, including whether he felt proud of his sexuality. As shown below, from line 3 onwards, he dissociated himself from this:

Extract 1⁵

- 1 L so are you proud to be gay would you say? is that a word you'd attach-
- 2 <Tom shakes his head vigorously> no?/
- 3 T /I don't like (.) I'm sorry (.) I
- 4 do not like the words proud and gay in the same sentence./
- 5 L /oh really
- 6 okay why's that?
- 7 T 'cause it (.) again (.) to me that visions (1) a stereotypical gay camp
- 8 gay man/
- 9 L /mm
- 10 T flaunting around the <@place@>
- 11 L mm
- 12 T (2) I'm not proud I'm just (.) I'm gay. that's it.

Tom engages here in what Bucholtz and Hall (2005) call the tactic of 'denaturalisation' to separate the culturally salient stereotype of campness, or effeminacy, from what he perceives to be 'just gay' (line 12). He positions himself in direct opposition to 'a stereotypical gay camp gay man' (lines 7-8), making the notion of pride symbolic of this. This mirrors Tilsen and Nylund's (2010: 96) argument that, whilst gay culture was once concerned with being transgressive and resisting heterosexual norms, this is now typically perceived by younger generations as old-fashioned and restrictive. Tom's rejection of a 'stereotypical' gay man aligned with

‘camp’ behaviour draws on this, and reflects homonormative ideology which positions the ‘ideal queer citizen’ (Agathangelou *et al* 2008) as normative in their gender presentation. Indeed, Tom takes an explicitly negative stance toward displays of camp identity, including his description of a man ‘flaunting around the place’ (line 10); ‘flaunting’ shares a performative connotation of being showy, and is used here to mean overt displays of behaviour associated with ‘effeminate’ gay men. Tom explicitly links the word ‘proud’ to this ‘vision’ he has constructed, affording the word a pejorative connotation. This is interesting, considering the typically positive use of the word, especially in relation to being gay; ‘Pride’ may refer to the festivals held around the world for LGBT activism and awareness, and the word ‘proud’ might therefore be more typically associated with *not being ashamed*. It is clear that for Tom, however, the literal meaning of this word does not hold when associated with gay men; he takes it to mean something flamboyant and expressive, instead. Tom therefore positions his sexual identity as a private rather than public matter in this moment (a move reflecting Duggan’s 2002 claims about the depoliticising of gay identity in neoliberal times), and himself as a comparably ‘normal’ type of gay man.

This identity positioning is strengthened by Tom’s claim that the words ‘proud and gay’ should not be ‘in the same sentence’ (line 4). By focusing on these two adjectives and positioning them as incompatible, Tom takes an assertive stance in articulating his distaste for ‘proud gay’ men. It is notable that he apologises for this first (‘I’m sorry’, line 3); this indicates awareness that his stance may be controversial but, by emphasising ‘do not’, he clarifies the strength of his feelings. This is central to his identity construction; his statement in line 12, ‘I’m not proud I’m just...I’m gay’, allows him to claim an identity distinct from the persona he has just put forward. The use of the adverb ‘just’ to modify ‘gay’ is an important resource for him in

positioning himself as not ‘proud’; being gay is presented as a simple fact of Tom’s life rather than something worth foregrounding. The use of ‘just’ also allows him to distinguish between the cultural stereotypes attached to the identity category of ‘gay’ and his desire for men; he positions being proud as one character trait, and being gay as another, with only the latter being relevant to him. His use of the declarative ‘that’s it’ in combination with falling intonation (line 12) produces a stance through which he definitively rejects the notion of pride as being attached to his sense of self as a gay man. This reflects current trends; the psychologist Savin-Williams (2005) argues, for example, that many young people do not associate homosexuality as having any particular identity characteristics, preferring instead to claim same-sex attraction without using the label ‘gay’. This is mirrored in Coleman-Fountain’s (2014) sociological interviews with British lesbian and gay youth; he argues it is indicative of a desire to be ‘ordinary’, to not stand out as ‘other’, and as a means to counter homophobia. In line with this, Tom’s identity positioning in this moment hinges on his redefining ‘gay’ as a non-stereotypical, non-camp, and non-proud persona.

This was echoed in a moment during my interview with Ryan (R) and Josh (J), below. I asked them if there was a key message they would want to get across to adults, the implied audience of this research: was there a main point, for them, about what it means to be gay? In response, they worked together to develop a stance against the notion that their sexuality in any way defined their identity:

Extract 2

- 1 R see I (.) all I want to say is (.) being gay does not define me. being gay
 2 is just a part of me it is not (1) me. I am Ryan (.) I am this big loud
 3 bubbly person:: (2)
 4 J being gay has made me who I am (.) and the experiences that I’ve had

- 5 (1) but at the same time you wouldn't go up to someone and say (XX)
 6 this is Sarah and she's a horse-rider
 7 L <@yeah@>
 8 J her horse-riding experiences and being around horses has made her
 9 who she is.
 10 L mmhmm. mmhmm.
 11 J it doesn't have to be the thing that defines you.
 12 R yeah

The verb 'define' is used by both Ryan (line 1) and Josh (line 11) in this extract, and plays an extremely important role in their identity positioning. In line 2, Ryan states that being gay 'is not me'; he does not reject the label 'gay' but, in claiming that it is 'just a part of me' (line 2), positions his sexuality as merely one aspect of his identity, rather than his essence or definition. Similar to Tom in Extract 1, Ryan's use of 'just' minimises the cultural significance of his sexuality; indeed, being gay is placed in contrast to three alternative adjectives, 'big loud bubbly' (line 2), which he positions as better describing himself. Since they follow the statement 'I am Ryan', these words index an alternative identity associated with characteristics of being personable and enthusiastic, foregrounding these qualities over the mere fact of his sexual orientation.

This is further shown in Josh's turn. Initially, in line 4, Josh seems to contradict Ryan's positioning, saying 'being gay has made me who I am', and arguing that his experiences have in some way shaped him. The use of 'who' in 'who I am' (as opposed to 'what I am' or 'how I am') is indicative of this, and signals Josh's acknowledgement that his sexuality has impacted on his sense of self. However, the construction 'but at the same time' (line 5), followed by an analogy of a horse-rider

(line 6), serves to quickly problematise the idea that this is all that matters. Being a horse-rider, of course, is a hobby or sport. To make this analogous to being gay is to position sexuality as an activity. In this sense, Josh foregrounds the ‘doing’ of sexual orientation, or of being with another person, in his analogy between horse-riding and ‘being gay’ (line 4). In doing so, he emphasises the *private* aspect of a person’s sexuality rather than the *cultural* aspect; this draws on the homonormative, neoliberal ideology of a gay person’s role as a citizen with equal rights to a romantic life being more important than the *nature* of that life. Indeed, Josh’s final turn in line 11, where he argues that one’s homosexuality ‘doesn’t have to be the thing that defines you’, allows him to separate his sexual desires from his social identity; like Tom and Ryan, he positions his sexuality as an almost incidental fact of his life.

In the above moments, Tom, Ryan, and Josh position themselves as ordinary and normal, enabled through the downplaying of the significance of their own sexuality to their lives and their rejection of cultural stereotypes associated with gay identities. On the one hand, this is certainly reminiscent of homonormativity; rather than engaging in identity construction that would index queerness and difference, they aim to present themselves broadly in line with heteronormative ideals of gender, and to de-emphasise the significance of their actual sexual desires. It is on this basis that many gay rights have been won, a consequence of which, of course, is these young people’s readiness to be ‘out of the closet’. On the other hand, however, what is missing from their identity construction is another key aspect of the homonormative stereotype: the gay person who has not only ‘come out’, but is *open* and *proud* about their sexuality. In contrast, it was typical practice in this CoP for the young people to not only avoid that which might mark them out as different, but to avoid that which might mark them out as *gay*. In part, this may be explained due to their experiences of

abuse from those in their conservative town, a point I consider in more detail in the following section.

4.2 Avoiding being ‘othered’

In my interview with Emma and Paige, we discussed the role of the youth group in their lives. I asked them if they had ever been to Gay Pride events, triggering an important discussion; Emma argued that Pride is important for raising public consciousness of gay people, but it also highlights their otherness. In this sense, Pride events may in fact be counterproductive by triggering intolerance and prejudice:

Extract 3

- 1 E I-I’m really happy that we can like have Pride but I’m not the one
 2 who’ll go round and celebrate it ‘cause I don’t think we’re at that
 3 stage yet.
- 4 L we as in::
- 5 E (.) like as a group like (.) I don’t think we are.
- 6 L do you mean like this group or do you mean like all gay people?
- 7 E no I just mean like I just like generally gay people I mean we are:: as
 8 a like general group I- just the entire community I think’d be better
 9 like I- as like a like gay community I don’t think we are. (1) and it’s
 10 not something that I- I mean- I don’t know how to explain it without
 11 sounding so homophobic @(.)
- 12 L it’s alright you’re not (.) I’m not gonna think you’re homophobic.
- 13 E <@I just@> (3) I don’t know because like I obviously like all my
 14 friends are straight and I get it a lot like why do you have Pride? (.)
 15 because you don’t get a straight pers- straight people like big

16 celebration about it and then when you sit and you're trying to explain
 17 to them that it's because it's never been- like you've always been
 18 supported whereas (.) you know it's never really been acceptable (.)
 19 erm:: like when I see that people still actually think like that I think
 20 maybe we're not ready (.) yet. maybe we're just throwing it in people's
 21 face.

22 L okay/

[one minute omitted]

23 L so if you- right so there's something about actually are you just making
 24 yourself a target?

25 E yeah (.) and that's our- like (.) I think I think that someti::mes (.) you
 26 possibly could be (.) because we're all in the same place at the same
 27 time.

28 L (3) <to Paige> what do you- do you feel like that?

29 P (1) a bit but like (.) I've been to Pride once but all other times my
 30 mum's made me go somewhere else. and it's like (.) last time we wen-
 31 I did go:: there was people there like giving you grief (.) like once it all
 32 finished there were people walking past like <indicates shouting> "get
 33 the fuck out" and all this like "it's not a gay (.) meet up" (1) "why
 34 don't you just die?"

35 L <shocked intonation> re::ally?

36 P yeah.

This interaction is shaped by Emma's attempt to negotiate complex issues as well as her own conflicting feelings about gay politics and identity. Dominating her speech

are false starts and self-interruptions as she attempts to explain herself, for instance ‘I just mean like I just like generally gay people I mean we are as a like general group I-just the entire community’ (lines 7-8). Whilst the use of ‘like’ as a filler was typical of Emma’s idiolect, its frequency here, in combination with multiple disfluency features and repeated use of ‘just’ as a hedging device, points to her uncertainty in this moment. This reflects the difficult positioning she is involved in here, whereby she takes controversial stances against Gay Pride and is concerned to avoid ‘sounding so homophobic’ (line 11).

Emma’s main resistance to Pride is based on its purpose of highlighting the presence of gay people and its apparently unexpected consequence: homophobia. Though she positions Pride as important (claiming she is ‘really happy’ it exists, line 1), she expresses concern that by ‘throwing it in people’s face’ (line 20), homophobic incidents may in fact rise. Her use of ‘people’ signals a generalised group separate to the ‘gay community’ (line 9). Emma does not prefix ‘people’ with a classifying adjective (such as ‘straight’), which leaves ‘people’ unmarked and therefore ideologically neutral; this serves to position the ‘gay community’, in comparison, as a minority group. This aids the construction of Pride as potentially dangerous; if gay people are a minority, they are vulnerable, and this is especially true when ‘we’re all in the same place at the same time’ (lines 26-27). Here, through the use of the inclusive pronoun ‘we’, Emma positions herself as a member of the earlier ‘gay community’, affording her insider status and authenticity in taking a negative stance towards Pride. Emma’s contradictory stances in this extract, whereby she is ‘happy’ to have Pride but argues against it, may be explained by the fact of her perceiving herself as vulnerable (given ‘it’s never really been acceptable’ to be gay, line 18). Again, it is evident from the frequent disfluency features in her speech that she finds

this particular positioning difficult and potentially face-threatening, given her concern not to sound homophobic (line 11).

Emma's overall identity work becomes complicated as this extract progresses; she begins by positioning herself within an 'entire community' of gay people (line 9), repeatedly using the inclusive plural pronoun 'we' to align herself firmly with a 'general group' of other gay people (line 8) and claiming an in-group identity relevant to the context of her CoP. Indeed, she constructs a category of 'just...generally gay people' (line 7), engaging in the identity tactic of adequation (Bucholtz and Hall 2005) to position this as a somewhat homogenous group with members holding some sort of generalised characteristics. This draws on homonormative political rhetoric, whereby 'appeals [are] made on behalf of an LGBT community that is cast, *and inscribed in the process*, as relatively homogeneous' (Richardson and Monroe 2012: 37, emphasis in original); this enables Emma to straightforwardly position herself as part of this imagined community (Anderson 1983). Yet in lines 13-14, Emma engages in contradictory identity positioning, claiming her social circle is primarily heterosexual. In contrast to her earlier use of 'we' in relation to other gay people, she states here 'obviously like all my friends are straight'. The adverb choice 'obviously' presents as logical and inevitable the fact that her friends are heterosexual, indicating that her social life (indexed through 'friends') and her sexual orientation (her membership to an imagined 'gay community') are separate. This again reflects the shared CoP practice of *not* placing sexuality as intrinsic to one's life.

In this particular extract, however, Emma's conflicting feelings about Pride makes her claiming of membership to these two groups awkward. From line 15, as she tries to explain why she feels Pride is problematic, she refers to 'straight people' in the third person, moving her (heterosexual) friendship group into this distanced

category; this is evident from her continued use of ‘we’ to refer collectively and inclusively to gay people. At this point, her unease becomes clearer and her association with a broader gay community more important: ‘they’ do not understand why Pride is relevant, which in turn suggests that ‘we’ do not have full acceptance. Given Emma simultaneously positions herself as a member of the social network ‘they’ belong to as well as the imagined community signalled by ‘we’, she describes herself as being in a position whereby she must try to explain it to ‘them’ (line 16): ‘I get it a lot like why do you have Pride’ (line 15). In quoting her friends as using the second person pronoun ‘you’ in this question, Emma signals that they identify her, specifically, as different to them, making it unappealing for her to be a member of this visibly *other* group. In this sense, Emma’s rejection of Pride, an activity which would emphasise her sexual orientation, is motivated by her desire to suppress or adequate the differences between her and her heterosexual friends.

Emma’s belief that her peers positioning her as ‘other’ will be compounded by her engagement with Pride is strengthened by Paige’s turn at the end of this extract (lines 29-36): she positions Pride as an event which can leave LGBT people vulnerable to attack. Indeed, she expresses her own experience of feeling threatened when at Pride (‘there were people walking past like (...) “why don’t you just die?”’, lines 32-34), and her mother’s insistence that she ‘go somewhere else’ during the event (line 30). Paige’s turn demonstrates quite clearly that the fear of othering is not merely about wanting to ‘fit in’, as many teenagers do; it is also a response to her lived experience of homophobic abuse and the influence of her family’s fears. Whereas Pride events around the world are often seen to epitomise homonormativity – as shown, for example, in Milani and Levon’s (2016) analysis of the rugged version of masculinity promoted by the Tel Aviv Pride organisation – they do not represent an

opportunity to feel ‘normal’ for these young women. Rather than see Pride as a chance to feel part of a ‘gay community’, they are fearful of the fact their sexuality would be foregrounded if they were to attend. There is therefore a distinction between the version of ‘normal’ constructed in this CoP, whereby the young people’s sexuality is erased or minimised, and that put forward in homonormative discourse. As I go on to argue in the final analysis, below, the circumstances these young people find themselves in – whereby they experience homophobia on a regular basis, and feel genuine fear for their safety at times – are key motivating factors for this.

4.3 Negotiating homophobia

During my fieldwork, the majority of young people in the group shared stories of their experiences of homophobia. Tom, for instance, revealed that his stepfather refused to acknowledge he had come out and, though he was not directly abusive towards him, at “every opportunity” would disparage gay people more generally. For example, Tom reported that when openly gay celebrities were on television, his stepfather would call them “fucking queers [who] should all be lined up and shot”. Ryan also recounted stories of homophobic abuse that he had received, such as people shouting ‘faggot’ from passing cars in the street. Paige told a story of having her school blazer set on fire in a chemistry lesson, while her girlfriend had water thrown at her by classmates pretending it was acid. When taking the young people’s experiences of homophobia into account, their motivations to construct an identity where their sexuality is minimised become apparent.

In the final extract below, I consider a more subtle form of homophobia. In my interview with Paige and Emma, I asked why they attended the LGBT youth group. In

their response, they told me it was a ‘comfort zone’ (line 2) where they could ‘just talk’ (line 3), placing this in opposition to their experiences with heterosexual friends:

Extract 4

- 1 L so why do you come to the group?
- 2 P comfort zone.
- 3 E (.) I think that- I just think being around people you can just talk like
4 if-when I talk to my friends or you need to talk like something they’ll
5 be like ‘Emma we really don’t need to kno::w’. like they are okay
6 with it but there’s some stuff they’re like you can talk to us about
7 anything (.) and when it comes to it and you really do need to talk to
8 them about something they’re only there to judge.
- 9 L so like what kind of things?
- 10 E (2) we were in the library the other day and we were messing around
11 and there was one of the Asian girls who- (.) ‘cause we were talking (.)
12 she- well but (.) like it came out (.) that I was and she was like ‘oh
13 are you?’ and I was like ‘yeah’ and then erm:: (.) and then yeah my
14 other friend looked at me and I went ‘don’t worry. you’re not my
15 type.’ (.) like just to- ‘cause you could see what she were looking at me
16 (.) it was just
- 17 L (.) mmhmm-
- 18 E -you could see it in her face that- it was just-
- 19 P -yeah there’s
- 20 people at my school as well like [*<inaudible>*] I’m not into every:: girl.
- 21 E [yeah]

22 just because you've got boobs and a vagina does not mean I like you
 23 for heaven's sa::ke.

This extract highlights the difficult negotiation between the youths' desired identity, where their sexuality would be unmarked, and the reality of being othered; Emma explains that her friends are apparently accepting of her sexuality yet not particularly supportive. She elaborates on Paige's description of the group as a 'comfort zone' by stating there are 'people you can just talk [to]' (line 3). The adverb 'just' both emphasises the simplicity of the need to be able to talk about one's experiences, and describes the type of talk it is possible to engage in: to be able to 'just talk' positions talking itself as a natural and straightforward activity. This is in sharp contrast to the way Emma positions her friends' response 'when you really do need to talk to them about something' but 'they're only there to judge' (lines 7-8). This positions the CoP as a safe place to articulate issues relevant to her sexuality, and her friendship group, by contrast, as a relatively unsupportive space. This construction is strengthened by Emma's use of 'need' and her emphasis on 'really' in line 7, suggesting it may be *necessary* to talk to people and assigning the otherwise ambiguous 'something' she might speak about a degree of importance. She chooses not to specify what this 'something' might be, but her friends' quoted response in line 5 ('Emma we really don't need to kno::w') presents this as romantic or sexual due it being something they might find uncomfortable (indicated by the lengthening and emphasis on 'know', and use of the adverb 'really'). Emma articulates her disappointment in her friends, feeling they judge her for having this need (line 8).

In narrating this experience, albeit in a hypothetical sense (indicated by the future tense quotative 'they'll be like', lines 4-5), Emma highlights a difference

between her and her heterosexual friends. She positions an aspect of her life – related to her sexuality – as somewhat unpalatable and *other* to these girls. Evidence of Emma’s conflicted feelings around this comes from her description of her friends’ level of comfort with her sexuality; in line 5 she claims ‘they are okay with it’. Emma emphasises the modal verb ‘are’, repairing the preceding (and contradictory) claim that they tell her they ‘don’t need to know’ about her problems, allowing her to reinforce her affiliation with them. Yet she also opts for the ambiguous pronoun ‘it’ in place of explicitly referring to her sexuality as the thing her friends are apparently comfortable with, reducing its significance despite it being the topic of her utterance. More broadly, this reflects the young people’s typical concern not to be defined by their sexuality, but it also indicates Emma’s desire for her queerness to be unremarkable rather than othered (which is how her friends position it, here).

Indeed, it becomes apparent that, while Emma perceives her friends as being ‘okay with it’, they are largely *tolerant* rather than *accepting*. Furthermore, their tolerance is apparently limited when she needs to talk to them about her personal life; from line 8, she positions them in more negative terms, suggesting ‘they’re only there to judge’. Here, Emma constructs an opposition between what she requires of her friends – for them to help or advise her – and what, instead, they do; the use of ‘only’ precludes any other, more supportive, behaviour. The verb ‘judge’ positions them as believing in their own superiority and critiquing her for being controversial or non-normative. Emma therefore positions herself as *other* in her friends’ eyes in this moment, showing a disconnect between her own self-image and that which they project onto her.

Also at issue here, and articulated by both Paige and Emma from line 14 onwards, is what they outline as the assumption they will be sexually attracted to their

friends – or, more specifically, to *all* girls. Emma tells a story in which she felt it was necessary to defend herself against this: ‘I went “don’t worry, you’re not my type”’ (lines 14-15). She explains this not as a result of a direct accusation on the part of her friends, but instead her interpretation of their reaction once they realised she was not heterosexual – she refers to the way her friend looked at her (lines 15, 16) and explains she ‘could see it in her face’ that her friend would assume she was attracted to her (line 18). In itself, this is important: the modal verb ‘could’ expresses a factual statement regarding Emma’s interpretation of her friend’s facial expressions, whereas the only actual response she quotes is the seemingly innocuous ‘oh are you?’ (lines 12-13). This indicates her self-consciousness and heightened awareness of her sexuality as being marked in this context and, again, her desire for it to be *unmarked*; a clear motivating factor for this is the fact she is positioned by her friends in a particular (pejorative) light because of her sexuality.

It is also telling that the speaker quoted in line 11 is an ‘Asian girl’, rather than being explicitly labelled as one of Emma’s friends. As discussed in Jones (2016), a common aspect of the CoP’s identity work was to position people of South Asian descent as homophobic, using racist discourse as a defence mechanism for the othering they encountered more broadly. Though Emma is not explicitly racist here, and does not position this girl as homophobic, by labelling her ‘one of the Asian girls’ rather than one of *her friends*, she engages in a process of distinction (Bucholtz and Hall 2005). She elides the girl’s individuality in favour of foregrounding her membership to a particular ethnic group, and presents whiteness as an unmarked category – this reflects Emma’s relative privilege, one of the facets of the youths’ experience that allows them to position themselves in line with *some* homonormative ideals.

Following this, Paige reinforces Emma's implicature – that it was assumed she would be attracted to her friend because she was female – by claiming in line 20 that 'people in my school' make similar judgements, and 'I'm not into every:: girl'. The phrase 'every girl', with 'every' suggesting a generic subject position, is then linked to by Emma: she argues 'just because you've got boobs and a vagina does not mean I like you' (line 22). Here, Emma reduces Paige's 'every girl' to body parts normatively associated with women; if she *were* attracted to every girl she met, it would not be their personalities that she was interested in but these sexualised organs, and this construction allows Paige to reject this premise by emphasising that her interest in girls goes beyond sex alone. In doing this, she minimises the link between the identity category 'lesbian' and the fact of engaging in sexual acts with other girls. Paige and Emma draw here on their experiences of implicit homophobia; they have both faced the assumption that they are driven primarily by sexual desire, and in turn that they are predatory because they are gay. Once again, this conflicts with their desire to construct a 'normal' identity whereby their sexual orientation is not foregrounded and does not prevent them from being 'like everybody else'; to repair this, they downplay the relevance of sexual desire in this moment.

Finally, it is notable that Emma's reference to what triggered this event is the fact her friends learnt she was gay. However, her articulation of this is both ambiguous and passive: 'it came out (.) that I was' (line 18). Not only does Emma avoid the use of a term to define her sexuality (e.g. 'that I was gay'), she also positions herself as passive in the process, claiming 'it came out' and thus distancing herself from this revelation. This erasure indicates her discomfort with explicit identity claiming in relation to her sexual orientation, reflecting the overall practice of the CoP. It also highlights a central conflict in the youth's identity construction, and

the symbolic obstacle they must overcome: though they wish for their sexuality to be unmarked and refute that it defines them, heteronormative culture continues to position it as *other*, and as something they have to ‘come out’ about. While these young people do identify with the non-normative sexual category ‘gay’, then, they aim to reimagine it in ways that do not foreground their otherness, by minimising and at times even erasing the fact of their sexual orientation.

5. CONCLUSION

It is apparent that some aspects of this CoP’s identity construction are informed by salient homonormative ideologies. The young people position themselves as ‘normal’ by distinguishing their private sexual desires from their social identities, and eschewing stereotypical aspects of gay identity which deviate from gender norms. In part, this reflects their experience as white, cisgender, able-bodied Westerners identifying as lesbian and gay; they see themselves reflected in homonormative images of the ideal gay citizen that are prevalent in mainstream culture. This finding differs to many sociolinguistic studies carried out with previous generations, which show lesbian and gay speakers indexing stereotypes from gay culture to articulate their distinction from mainstream, heterosexual norms (e.g. Leap 1996, Morrish and Sauntson 2007, Jones 2012), and reveals evidence of the relatively recent impact of neoliberalism on gay culture. Yet these youths’ identity construction also goes beyond the positioning of themselves as broadly aligned with a homonormative rejection of queerness; they do not simply *normalise* their gayness by likening it to heterosexuality, but actively *reject* the significance of their sexuality in an effort to make it unremarkable.

This can be explained by considering the other intersecting aspects of their experience. These youths have no resources to leave their conservative hometown, and are typically dependent on either their families or on low-income jobs. The gay scenes of big cities (many of which are restricted to older people due to alcohol licensing laws) are currently inaccessible to them, yet it is in these urban spaces that the idealised homonormative citizen is assumed to exist. Indeed, homonormative practice is characterised, in part, by foregrounding one's sexuality through consumption choices such as shopping in gay-friendly stores or drinking in gay bars (Brown 2009). However, these young people do not aspire to a lifestyle shaped by gay culture and, in any case, their socioeconomic background and relative youth render this impossible for them. Rather than confirm and project their identities as gay, their shared experience of homophobia leads them to construct their own alternative ideal: one where their sexuality would be backgrounded, they would not stand out as different to their heterosexual peers, and they would therefore no longer be the target of abuse. Their identity construction does not reflect broader homonormative ideals of the happy, proud, openly gay subject, in this sense; it is an attempt at a survival strategy.

The identity positioning outlined here may be understood through Bucholtz and Hall's (2005: 592) positionality principle; identities are intersubjectively constructed through interaction in relation to broader ideologies (in this case, homonormative constructions of the gay subject) and local context (the reality of the youths' lived experience, including homophobia and isolation). This study also demonstrates a clear need for sociolinguists to consider the intersection of a range of social factors – including sexuality, class, age, and location – to gain a fuller understanding of how mechanisms of social inequality impact on the identities of

individuals. For critical analyses aiming to comprehensively examine the relationship between language, social structure, and identity, an understanding of how social categories are ‘mutually constituted’ (Crenshaw 1989) through interaction is key (Levon and Mendes 2016). In particular, these young people’s sexual identities are shaped by their whiteness and the cultural privilege this affords them, meaning they have their own version of queerness legitimised to some extent. Yet their sexuality is also shaped by their socioeconomic situation, and they experience marginalisation in a way gay youths in more affluent or liberal areas might not. Though there has not been space to discuss it here, the life experience of the young women compared to the young men will also inevitably intersect with their class, race, age and so on, due to broader structural inequalities of gender.

A concern emerging from this research is that, by de-emphasising that which others perceive as different about them – their sexuality – yet continuing to experience homophobia and intolerance, these young people may be at particular risk of social exclusion. Though they do not speak explicitly of hiding their sexuality, they avoid ‘throwing it in people’s faces’, as Emma put it; because they recognise that others in their community perceive them as *other*, they avoid behaviours or situations which will render them queer. Ultimately, this may lead to a sense of shame and internalised homophobia, as well as preventing the young people from finding validation amongst a community of others. In this way, this study has highlighted the complex and competing ideologies influencing young LGBT people today, especially those lacking the cultural and economic privilege to create change in their communities. This makes it all the more important for those with privilege – such as academics, who have access to and the potential to influence those with decision-making powers in society – to gather evidence of the causes of ongoing disadvantage

and inequality in a range of contexts, and work with those who *can* create change. Investment in support groups, educational programmes, employment policy and training may help to improve the situation for young LGBT people, and sociolinguists investigating language and sexuality have a role to play in ensuring this happens.

NOTES

1. I am very thankful indeed to two anonymous reviewers of this article for their extensive and insightful remarks, and to Allan Bell and Bonnie McElhinny for their patience and support as I refined and reworked my argument. I am also grateful to Susan Ehrlich for her advice on an early version of this manuscript, and to William Leap and Erez Levon, whose feedback was invaluable to me in formulating the ideas presented here. Any shortcomings are, of course, my own.
2. Heteronormativity may be defined as the general assumption that most people are heterosexual and engaging in romantic relationships which support a dominant understanding of the gender binary.
3. Cisgender (as opposed to transgender) people identify with the gender identity assigned to them at birth.
4. Pseudonyms are used throughout.
5. The method of transcription used here is adapted from Jefferson (2004):

[beginning of overlap
]	end of overlap
-	self-interruption or false start
/	latching (no pause between speaker turns)
(.)	pause of less than 1 second
(2)	timed pause
.	end of intonation unit (falling)
?	end of intonation unit (rising)
<◇	transcriber comment
::	lengthening of sound
(XX)	emphatic breath out/sigh
@(10)	laughing, plus duration

<@ @> laughing quality
underline emphatic stress or increased amplitude
<* *> rapid speech

REFERENCES

- Agathangelou, Anna M., Morgan. D. Bassichis Tamara L. Spira, 2008. Intimate investments: Homonormativity, global lockdown, and the seductions of empire. *Radical History Review* 100:120-143.
- Anderson, Benedict. 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso Books.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1991. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brown, Gavin. 2012. Homonormativity: A metropolitan concept that denigrates “ordinary” gay lives. *Journal of Homosexuality* 59(7): 1065-1072.
- Brown, Gavin. 2009. Thinking beyond homonormativity: performative explorations of diverse gay economies. *Environment and Planning A* 41: 1496 -1510.
- Bucholtz, Mary, and Kira Hall. 2004. Theorizing Identity in Language and Sexuality Research. *Language in Society* 33: 469-515.
- Bucholtz, Mary and Kira Hall. 2005. Identity and interaction: A sociocultural linguistic approach. *Discourse Studies* 7(4-5): 585-614.
- Butler, Judith. 1990. Performative acts and gender constitution: An essay in phenomenology and feminist theory. In Sue-Ellen Case (ed.) *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*, 270-282. Baltimore: John Hopkins Press.
- Chambers, J.K. 2003. *Sociolinguistic Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell.

- Crenshaw, Kimberle. 1989. Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review* 43(6): 1241-1299.
- Coleman-Fountain, Edmund. 2014. Lesbian and gay youth and the question of labels. *Sexualities* 17(7): 802–17.
- Duggan, Lisa. 2002. The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism. In Russ Castronovo and Dana D. Nelson (eds.) *Materializing Democracy*. Durham: Duke University Press, 175-193.
- Eckert, Penelope. 2000. *Linguistic variation as social practice: the linguistic construction of identity in Belten High*. Massachusetts: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Eckert, Penelope. 2012. Three Waves of Variation Study: The Emergence of Meaning in the Study of Sociolinguistic Variation. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41:87–100.
- Hall, Kira (2013). “It’s a hijra!” Queer linguistics revisited. *Discourse and Society* 24(5): 634-642.
- Jaffe, Alexandra. 2009. Introduction: The sociolinguistics of stance. In Alexandra Jaffe (ed.) *Stance: Sociolinguistic Perspectives*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 3–28.
- Jefferson, Gail. 2004. Glossary of transcript symbols with an introduction. In Gene H. Lerner (ed.) *Conversation analysis: Studies from the first generation*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 13-31.
- Jones, Lucy. 2012. *Dyke/Girl: Language and Identities in a Lesbian Group*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Jones, Lucy. 2015. Masculinity in lesbian discourse: The case of 'butch' and 'femme'. In Tommaso Milani (ed.) *Language and Masculinities: Performances, Intersections, Dislocations*. Oxon: Routledge, 174-96.
- Jones, Lucy. 2016. "If a Muslim says 'homo', nothing gets done". Racist discourse and in-group identity construction in an LGBT youth group. *Language in Society*. 45(1): 113-133.
- Kiesling, Scott. 2002. Playing the straight man: Displaying and maintaining male heterosexuality in discourse. In Katherine Campbell-Kibler, Robert Podesva, Sarah Roberts and Andrew Wong (eds) *Language and Sexuality: Contesting Meaning in Theory and Practice*. Stanford: CSLI Publications, 249-266.
- Leap, William. 1996. *Word's out: Gay men's English*. University of Minnesota Press: Minnesota.
- Leitner, Helga, Eric S. Sheppard, Kristin Sziarto and Anant Maringanti. 2006. Contesting urban futures: Decentering neoliberalism. In Helga Leitner, Jamie Peck and Eric Sheppard (eds) *Contesting Neoliberalism: Urban frontiers*. New York: Guilford Press, 1-24.
- Levon, Erez. 2016. Conflicted selves: Language, sexuality and religion in Israel. In Erez Levon and Ronald Beline Mendes (eds.) *Language, Sexuality and Power: Studies in Intersectional Sociolinguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 215-39.
- Levon, Erez and Ronald Beline Mendes (2016) Introduction: Locating sexuality in language. In Erez Levon and Ronald Beline Mendes (eds.) *Language, Sexuality and Power: Studies in Intersectional Sociolinguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1-18.

- Manalansan, Martin F. 2005. Race, violence, and neoliberal spatial politics in the global city. *Social Text* 23:141-155.
- Milani, Tommaso and Erez Levon. 2016. Sexing diversity: Linguistic landscapes of homonationalism. *Language and Communication*. 51: 69-86.
- Morrish, Elizabeth and Helen Sauntson. 2007. *New Perspectives on Language and Sexual Identity*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Motschenbacher, Heiko. 2013. 'Now everybody can wear a skirt': Linguistic constructions of non-heteronormativity at Eurovision Song Contest press conferences. *Discourse & Society* 24(5): 590–614.
- Motschenbacher, Heiko and Martin Stegu. 2013. Introduction: Queer linguistic approaches to discourse. *Discourse and Society* 24(5): 519-535.
- Nash, Jennifer. 2008. Re-thinking intersectionality. *Feminist Review* 89: 1-15.
- Podesva, Robert. 2007. Phonation type as a stylistic variable: The use of falsetto in constructing a persona. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 11: 478-504.
- Podesva, Robert and Janneke van Hofwegen. 2016. /s/exuality in Smalltown California: Gender normativity and the acoustic realisation of /s/. In Erez Levon and Ronald Beline Mendes (eds.) *Language, Sexuality and Power*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 168-88.
- Richardson, Diane and Surya Munro. 2012. *Sexuality, Equality and Diversity*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Savin-Williams, RC. 2005. *The new gay teenager*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Seidman, Steven. 2002. *Beyond the Closet: The Transformation of Gay and Lesbian Life*. Oxon: Routledge.

Tilsen, Julie and David Nylund. 2010. Homonormativity & queer youth resistance: Reversing the reverse discourse. In Lyndsey Moon (ed.) *Counselling ideologies: Queer challenges to heteronormativity*. Surrey: Ashgate Publishers, 93-104.

Valentine, David. 2007. *Imagining transgender: An ethnography of a category*. London: Duke University Press.

Warner, Michael. 1999. *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life*. New York: The Free Press.

Whittle, Stephen. 1996. Gender fucking or fucking gender? Current cultural contributions to theories of gender blending. In Richard Ekins and Dave King (eds.) *Blending genders: Social aspects of cross-dressing and sex-changing*. London: Routledge, 196-214.

Zimman, Lal. 2014. The discursive construction of sex: Remaking and reclaiming the gendered body in talk about genitals among trans men. In Lal Zimman, Jenny L. Davis and Joshua Raclaw (eds.) *Queer Excursions: Rethinking binaries in language, gender, and sexuality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 13-34.