

# **In the Shadow of the Gay Capital:**

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Equalities in  
'Rural' and 'Non-Urban' East Sussex

by Nick McGlynn

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## Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Equalities in 'Rural' and 'Non-Urban' East Sussex

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## **Abstract**

The Equality Act 2010 ended a decade of legislation addressing discrimination and social exclusion on the basis of gender or sexual difference. This was followed by the economic and social climate of 'austerity' under the Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government. I bring together social policy scholars who have critically interrogated austerity and the Conservative 'Big Society', with geographers of sexualities who have challenged rural imaginaries of sexual and gendered oppression. Using poststructural approaches to space, sexuality, the state and society, I understand such phenomena to be fluid, porous and co-constitutive, and aim to explore public sector/community partnership work for LGBT equalities in rural and non-urban areas.

My research was developed in partnership with the 'LGBT Equalities in Hastings, Rother and East Sussex' forum (2009-2012). This empirical research used qualitative and quantitative data gathered through 12 recorded meetings of the forum and 175 responses to an online questionnaire addressing the experiences of LGBT people from rural and non-urban areas in East Sussex.

Quantitative data was analysed using statistical tests of significance and correlation, with some of this analysis done in partnership with members of the LGBT Equalities Forum. Qualitative data was analysed using a detailed discourse analysis inspired by the work of Michel Foucault.

My findings continue to challenge binaries of urban safety and rural oppression, as well as the converse of LGBT rural idylls. My research sites contest and escape clear boundaries of urban/rural - the latter remain crucial to understanding LGBT lives and communities but can render alternative and neglected geographies less visible. Local LGBT communities and public services worked in partnership, revealing new hybrid possibilities but also emerging neoliberal and conceptions of 'responsibility' for equality, located within local LGBT communities. Nevertheless, the discursive slipperiness of 'equality' combined with discussions surrounding the Equality Act 2010 challenges interpretations of LGBT equality as necessarily assimilative or negative. In this way, this thesis reveals the messy, uneven and yet situated discursive and material effects of public sector LGBT equalities work in rural and non-urban East Sussex.

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## **Author's Declaration**

I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university of a degree, and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

Signed:

*Nick McGlynn*

# **Chapter 1 - Introduction to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Equalities**

## **in 'Rural' and 'Non-Urban' East Sussex**

### **1.1 - The Background and Development of This Thesis**

In 2010, the introduction of the Equality Act 2010 marked the end of a decade of equalities legislation in the UK which had addressed discrimination and social exclusion on the basis of gender and sexual difference, which is increasingly addressed through the acronym LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans). Though developed and passed under the New Labour government of 1997-2010, the Act was implemented under the following Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government, and in the prevailing economic and social climate of 'austerity' which begun in 2008. It was during this time – through the years 2010 to 2012 – that a diverse group of public sector workers, academics, students, LGBT activists, community members and interested individuals were meeting as part of an LGBT Equalities Forum in the predominantly rural county of East Sussex, in the South East region of the UK. During its three years of meetings, the forum raised and discussed issues pertinent to public sector LGBT equalities work throughout East Sussex, and engaged in Participatory Action Research in order to progress LGBT equalities in the local area and produce empirical evidence of benefit to all partners.

I began to work as an academic researcher as part of this project, which was based at the University of Brighton and funded for two years through the university's Community/University Partnership Programme (Cupp<sup>1</sup>), via an initiative called 'On Our Doorsteps' which sought to make the university a better 'neighbour' to its local communities. It quickly became clear that the geographic and temporal specificity of this project could offer vital political and academic insights into how public sector organisations in the UK, as well as LGBT communities, were developing and rationalising a variety of 'LGBT equalities' through partnership work. While research on LGBT lives has historically

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<sup>1</sup> For an overview of the University of Brighton's Cupp programme and ethos, see Hart 2007 and Laing & Maddison 2007.

focused on cities and urban spaces (Bell & Valentine 1995b; Brown 2008; Halberstam 2005; Gorman-Murray et al 2012; Kirkey & Forsyth 2001:423; Lindhorst 1997; Tongson 2011), there has been a growth over the past decade in research on LGBT lives in rural areas which challenges assumptions of such areas as being necessarily hostile (Bell 2000; Gray 2009; Herring 2007; Kazyak 2011; Kennedy 2010; Kirkey & Forsyth 2001; Pierce 2010; Smith & Holt 2004; Soderstrom 2010; Whittier 1997). However, this valuable work offered little in the way of engagement with public sector service provision for LGBT people (except to note its absence – see Comerford et al 2004; Fenge & Jones 2012; Friedman 1997; Haag & Chang 1997; Kennedy 2010; Kirkey & Forsyth 2001; Lindhorst 1997; Smith 1997) or with ‘equality’ for LGBT people, as was being discussed through the LGBT Equalities Forum. The recorded meetings of the forum, along with data gathered through its Participatory Action Research (a Mapping Exercise of local public sector LGBT equality policies, and an Online Questionnaire for local LGBT people), thus form the basis of this thesis. The Mapping Exercise and the Online Questionnaire were developed and analysed in partnership by forum members (including myself), and resulted in two research outputs. These were a Mapping Exercise Initial Findings report written by Dr Kath Browne and myself (McGlynn & Browne 2011), and an LGBT Online Questionnaire Initial Findings Report written by me (McGlynn 2012). The recorded forum meetings were analysed by me alone and were not used as data in any LGBT Equalities Forum research outputs. Data from all three data collection methods was analysed and used in the development of this PhD thesis.

Through the rest of this introductory chapter I first outline some of the key concepts I utilise and the academic and activist literatures they emerge. The research question and aims that emerge from these literatures are then described. The empirical research involved a mixed methods Participatory Action Research-based study within the county of East Sussex, and therefore I then offer a brief overview of the geographic and demographic context of the county and neighbouring Brighton & Hove. Finally, I conclude with a summary of the forthcoming chapters.



## **1.2 - Introduction to LGBT Equalities**

One of the key elements of this thesis is the term 'LGBT', a term with increasingly traction in academic, activist and political discourse in the UK. Despite the frequent use of the term, critical discussion of the development of the term 'LGBT' itself is remarkably absent in the literatures surrounding LGBT lives and sexual and gender identities, save for noting the continued exclusions of bi and trans people from supposedly LGBT spaces and the often tokenistic inclusion of 'B' and especially 'T' (Doan 2007; Beemyn 2003:2; Monro 2005; Nash 2011; Richardson & Monro 2012; Stone 2009:336). 'LGBT' brings together sexual identities (LGB) with gender identity (T), and there has been considerable debate surrounding the inclusion of the 'T' in LGBT (Stryker 2006; Stone 2009; Valentine 2002a; see also the online exchange between Aravosis 2007 and Stryker 2007) and there is an ongoing history of lesbian and gay victimisation and exclusion of trans people (Devor & Matte 2006; Doan 2007; Kirkland 2003; Meyer 2004; Monro 2005:95; Nash 2011; Stone 2009; Stryker 2006; Valentine 2002a). Despite this there is a similarly ongoing history of social, political and spatial overlap between trans and lesbian, gay and bisexual communities (Devor & Matte 2006; Doan 2007; Minter 2000; Monro 2005:93; Namaste 2006; Nash 2011; Stone 2006; Stryker 2006; Stryker 2007) which suggests that, as Stryker puts it, 'the T in LGBT is here to stay' (Stryker 2007). Throughout the thesis I recognise and retain distinctions between sexual and gender identities, occasionally distinguishing between 'LGB' (referring to work or politics which engage with sexual identities only) and 'LGBT' (referring to work or politics which also incorporates gender identities). I understand 'LGBT' as a development of thinking surrounding lesbian and gay sexual identities in the global West, through a loose model often referred to as an 'ethnic model' (Beasley 2005:123; Devor & Matte 2006:402; Epstein 2002; Gamson 1995; Lovaas & Elia 2006; Seidman 1993; Seidman 2002; Rubin 1993), through which sexual identity is seen as innate, generally unchanging and assigned at birth. This view is, in academic circles at least, commonly described as 'essentialism' (Beasley 1995:136-138; Fuss 1989; Richardson 2000:266; Sayer 1997). The growth in popular understanding of this 'born this way' framework is said to mirror a shift in the aims of mainstream

lesbian and gay politics from liberation from oppression to a politics of acceptance and recognition (Bain & Nash 2007:20; Currah 2001; Drucker 2000; Mertus 2007; Newton 2009:35; Plummer 1999; Porter 2010; Seidman 2001; Wilson 1995:3-5), which seeks equality with heterosexuals and non-trans people (Bernstein 2002; Gamson 1995; Miceli 2005; Phelan 2000; Rahman & Jackson 1997; Spade 2011). Many writers agree that the ethnic model of sexual identity has proven effective in mobilising lesbian and gay people to work for political changes and in advancing such changes within a liberal democratic system such as that of the UK (Altman 1997; Bernstein 2002; Epstein 2002; Gamson 1995; Miceli 2005; Nash 2005; Seidman 1993:110; Thompson 2004). Indeed, writers have recognised that sexual identity in the West, as well as mainstream LGBT 'equality' politics, are primarily based in the theory and discourse of liberalism (Bernstein 2002; Cooper 2004:69; Duggan 1994; Duggan 2003; Brown 2009:1499; Lehring 1997; Lister 2011:6; Mertus 2007:1064; Monro 2005:74-79; Newton 2009:47; Phelan 2000; Rahman & Jackson 1997; Richardson 2005; Sharma 2006; Spade 2011), assuming a 'neutral/abstract' individual on which to attach identities and categories such as 'gay' or 'sexual minority'. The connection with liberalism and neoliberalism has also been made in terms of acceptable expressions of sexual and gender identities, so that expressions which emphasise personal responsibility, self-care and being a productive member of society are validated (Adam 2005; Bell 1995; Duggan 2003; Rubin 1989; Smith 1997; Spade 2011; Stychin 2003).

Alternative approaches to LGBT identities dominate academic social sciences – theories which put forward the 'socially constructed' nature of sexual identities have become widely accepted by academics studying sexuality, if less so by activists and communities centred around sexual identities (Beasley 2005:146; Hostetler & Herdt 1998; Phelan 2000:433; Rahman & Jackson 1997:118). These latter approaches do not generally deny the existence of sexual identities or attempt to do away with them altogether, but rather focus on their cultural, historical and spatial specificity (Beasley 1995:137; Delamater & Hyde 1998; D'Emilio 2002; Epstein 2002; Gamson 1995; Nash 2005:117; Phelan 2000:433; Rubin 1993; Seidman 1993:125-127; Weeks 1985; Weeks 2002) and/or how these identities operate within society and as part of regimes of power structures

(Beasley 1995:165; Butler 1990; Butler 1997; Foucault 1975; Foucault 1979; Jagose 2009; Leiring 1997:190-191; Seidman 1993; Seidman 2002; Stein & Plummer 2002). Building on such insights are 'queer' scholars and theorists. Queer theory is less a unified theory or discipline and more a variety of approaches to sexualities and sexual (and, if less frequently, gender) identities, in a broadly postmodern and poststructuralist vein. Challenging normative discourses which centre heterosexuality, or indeed other sexual identities or expressions, as 'normal' (Beasley 2005:161; Butler 1997; During & Fealy 1997:117; Fryer 2010; Gamson 1995; Hostetler & Herdt 1998; Jagose 2009; Warner 1993), queer approaches generally understand sexual and gender identities to be fluid and incomplete, always in the process of becoming rather than fixed (Browne & Nash 2010; Butler 1990; Hostetler & Herdt 1998; Jackson 2010; Muñoz 1999; Valocchi 2005). Crucially, this does not mean that such identities are insignificant or not 'real' (Butler 1990; During & Fealy 1997:120-124; Epstein 2002; Seidman 2002). It is this queer understanding of unstable and yet influential subjects and subjectivities which I draw on in this thesis, with particular attention paid to the repeated practices and performances which endlessly re/construct subjects and identities, including 'LGBT'.

Many writers have made the point that while liberal 'born this way' sexual identities remain problematic, they remain politically useful and enabling and could be 'strategically' used in a way that minimises exclusion given adequate reflection on the specificity of the political context (Beasley 2005:147-148; Fuss 1989; Gamson 1995; Hostetler & Herdt 1998; Perumal 2006:738; Probyn 1997:142; Seidman 1993; Sinfield 1997; Thompson 2004). Bernstein has argued that supposedly 'essentialist' identity politics-based movements do generally use identity in a strategic way (Bernstein 2002) – however, like Nash (2005), her argument is not that these groups voluntarily or with firm belief choose to engage in identity politics. Rather, these politics are in some ways predicated on what 'cultural' and 'political' changes are sought and what the 'available resources, social networks, and external political conditions' are (Bernstein 2002:537; see also Gamson 1995). The deployment of identitarian politics based on coalescings such as LGBT can therefore be seen as a response to existing social, cultural and political conditions; Nash further

argues that such coalescings are not inherently 'fixed' and highlight identities that are unstable and in flux (Nash 2005:129). These writers demonstrate the importance of recognising and accepting the continued discursive and political force behind terms such as LGBT, while at the same time understanding that they do not necessarily produce or reify a fixed LGBT subject or identity. It is possible, then, to use 'LGBT' discursively and politically while holding its boundaries and meanings in a state of permanent tension.

The politics of LGBT equalities, while highly problematic not least for their implication within broader social and political regimes of liberalism and neoliberalism, require consideration due to their dominance in our political and cultural lives, and also because sexual identity politics still holds out possibilities for enabling productive political change, particularly when there is a reflexive awareness of how the identities coalesce around specific, local contexts. In my analysis I largely follow queer and social constructionist understandings of sexual and gender identities as unstable and multifluous, always performed and never fixed or complete – however, I also draw on the insights of 'strategic essentialism' by recognising the importance of broadly liberal LGBT identity politics within the contemporary UK, both in terms of this model of sexual and gender identity as a powerful and popular discourse and of its potential political power. My use of the term reflects this thesis' engagement with activist and public sector groups which extensively deploy the term in a variety of ways, both problematic and progressive. At the same time, my drawing on social constructionist and queer insights means that the term is always held in tension, expansive and non-specific, through which I aim to refer to a wide variety of sexual and gender identities, communities and practices beyond simply 'lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans', while recognising the various imaginings and discourses which 'LGBT' is produced by and itself produces.

Geographers have explored the spaces of LGBT life and the ways in which space impacts on LGBT identities and politics, and vice versa. Despite the growth in work on the geographies of sexualities and gender identities, there has been a dearth of research surrounding the geographies of public sector LGBT equalities work (Monro 2010). Such research seems all the more vital given the crucial

intersection of the implementation of the Equality Act 2010 and 'austerity' and the 'Big Society' under the post-2010 Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government. In addition, Jack Halberstam has provided a key critical intervention in LGBT geographies through his identification of an overarching 'metronormativity' (Halberstam 2005) in research on LGBT lives, while Gavin Brown has called for more engagement with LGBT life in 'ordinary' cities and towns (Brown 2008). With this in mind, I now turn to how I deploy geographic terms such as 'rural', 'urban' and 'non-urban'.

### **1.3 - Introduction to Geographies of the Rural and the Urban**

The definition of the rural is highly contested (Bryant & Pini 2011; Gallent et al 2008; Halfacree 2004; Holloway & Kneafsey 2004; Woodward & Halfacree 2002:74-76). Cloke (2006a) has identified three broad approaches to defining 'the rural' - the 'functionalist', the 'political economic' and the 'social constructionist' – according to a rough chronology. Cloke's 'functionalist' approach can perhaps be best exemplified through official designations based on population size, measurements of agricultural land use, etc. For example, in the UK the Office for National Statistics designates a specific area as 'urban' if it has a population of 10,000 people or more; all other areas are designated as 'rural' (ONS 2011).

These official designations deny the ways in which geographic imaginings impact on everyday lives – the urban and the rural are not simply markers of population, but are implicated in wider social and cultural discourses and are themselves influenced by these discourses. This can be seen clearly through reference to LGBT lives - writers note a common connection made between urban space and safety and tolerance of LGBT expression (Gorman-Murray 2009; Hanhardt 2013; Kennedy 2010:1074), access to LGBT-focused and LGBT-friendly services (Gray 2009:5; Lindhorst 1997) and the existence and development of LGBT identities and communities (Herring 2007:344-345; Doderer 2011; Kramer 1995; Brown 2009; Johnston 2009; Gray 2009; Kazyak 2011; Lindhorst 1997; Gorman-Murray 2008; Bell 1995; Annes & Redlin 2012; Smith 1997:16; Soderstrom 2010; Valentine

& Skelton 2003:849). Rural space, conversely, has long been perceived as a space of sexual and gendered intolerance and potential risk and violence (Bell 2000; Bowen 2005; Comerford et al. 2004; D'Augelli 2006; Doderer 2011:432; Gorman-Murray 2009:72; Gray 2009; Kazyak 2011:561; Kramer 1995; Lindhorst 1997:3; Little 2006:373; Little 2007; Philo 1992:202; Soderstrom 2010; Valentine and Skelton 2003:115). Official markers and designations of rurality and urbanity fail to capture these imaginings, and therefore in this thesis I draw primarily on what Cloke calls the 'social constructionist' approach (Cloke 2006a), understanding 'the rural' as well as 'the urban' to be imagined (and yet utterly real) entities brought into being by particular, complex and conflicting discourses of that are constantly re/produced by a wide variety of subjects. In using this approach I also utilise poststructural understandings of space and place, recognising these concepts not as simply existing and easily defined, but as actively produced by and productive of social identities and meanings, brought into being through repeated discursive utterances and embodied performances (Massey 1999; Valentine 2002b). The constant and endless re/production and consequent contestation of the rural and the urban implies multiple and fragmented 'rurals' and 'urbans' rather than any single definition. My uses of the terms 'urban' and 'rural' then are less definitions and more possibilities, recognising the multiple ways in which such spaces are imagined to exist and the multiple places which can be variously imagined as urban, rural, neither, or both.

Furthermore, in recognising the potential contestations surrounding rurality, I also invoke the term 'non-urban' throughout the thesis. This reflects my recognition of the continued force of the rural/urban dynamic as a means of imagining and structuring geographies, while simultaneously acknowledging other spatialities and areas of East Sussex (and elsewhere) which do not appear to fit easily or consistently into simple 'urban' or 'rural' brackets – areas such as (though by no means limited to) the large towns of Hastings, Eastbourne and smaller towns such as Lewes (see Chapter 2 Section 3.1 for more on my critical use of 'urban', 'rural' and 'non-urban'). Although common in the UK, such areas are often overlooked in geographic research surrounding LGBT lives (Brown 2008), and therefore the term 'non-urban' should be seen as simultaneously highlighting and challenging the metronormative centrality of the urban in LGBT research.

This thesis brings together these two areas of literature – LGBT equalities and the construction of the urban and the rural (as well as other geographic imaginaries) - and addresses them simultaneously through a situated exploration of the LGBT Equalities Forum for Hastings, Rother and East Sussex. Through this research I highlight the importance of attending to specific and complex local geographies in the construction of public sector LGBT equalities, and vice versa.

#### **1.4 - Research Question and Aims**

Based on these areas of literature, a research question was formulated to bring LGBT equalities and geographies of the urban and the rural into dialogue. This thesis, therefore, seeks to answer the question, '**How are public sector LGBT equalities produced and implemented in rural and non-urban East Sussex?**'. In order to answer this expansive question, four overlapping aims were developed to capture the spatial and temporal specificity of the research, and to draw together geographies of LGBT lives and partnership work for public sector equalities:

1. Examine public sector equalities policies and initiatives for LGBT people in Hastings and Rother.
2. Explore the localized impacts and implementation of LGBT equalities legislation in a time of financial austerity.
3. Explore the co-construction of the urban, the rural and sexualities through policymaking and research in the context of Hastings and Rother.
4. Contribute to studies of the geographies of sexualities beyond the urban metropolis.

In addressing these four aims, this thesis challenges what Halberstam has described as the 'metronormative' trend in writing and research on LGBT lives (Halberstam 2005), and the related association between cities and urban spaces and LGBT equality. It offers a critical engagement with geographies of sexualities (and gender identities) beyond the metropolitan urban, situated

geographically (in rural and non-urban East Sussex), temporally (from 2010 to 2012) and politically (within a climate of 'austerity' and the 'Big Society'). Attending to the grounded processes which underpin LGBT equalities work, I bring together research on geographies of sexualities and partnership work for public sector LGBT equalities, arguing for the importance of attending to specific and yet messy local geographies in the production of diverse and complex public sector LGBT equalities, and vice versa.

These four aims were addressed through a mixed methods Participatory Action Research (PAR) project, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data and analysis. Note that as well as these research aims tackled through this PhD thesis, the LGBT Equalities in Hastings, Rother and East Sussex project as a whole had a key stated aim of improving lives of local LGBT people by creating strategic networks (see Appendix A). Furthermore partners who attended meetings of the LGBT Equalities Forum brought their own personal, activist and institutional aims to different phases of the research, which were to be addressed primarily through the Mapping Exercise and the Online Questionnaire reports (see Chapter 3 Section 3).

Since this project was based in the county of East Sussex in the south of the UK, I now offer a brief overview of the area.

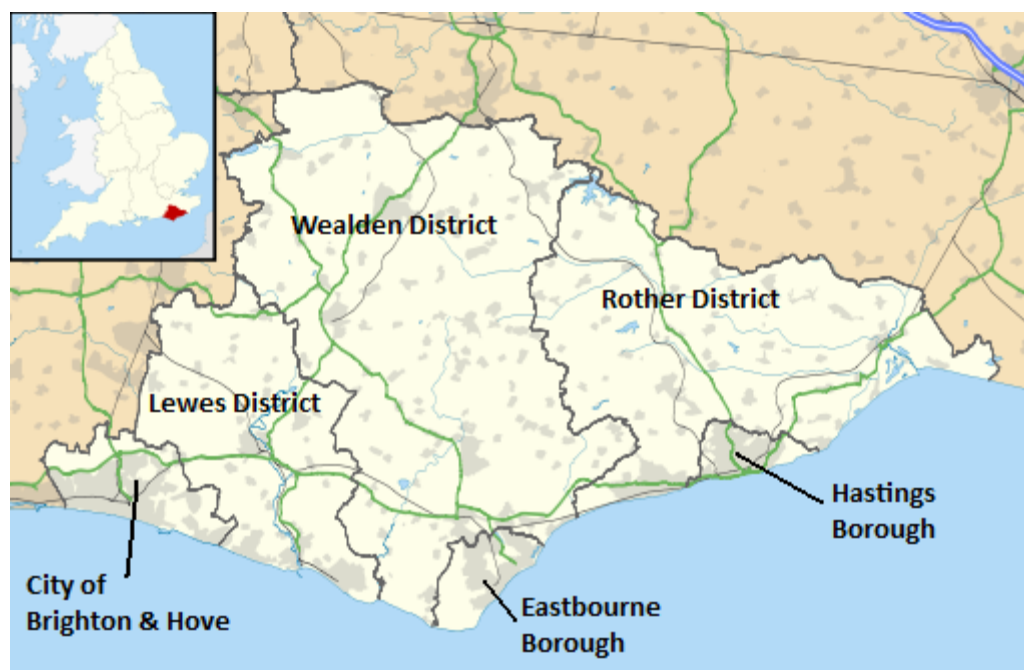
### **1.5 - The Geographies of East Sussex**

This section offers a brief overview of the geographic and demographic context of the county of East Sussex, where the research underpinning this thesis occurred. Figure 1 provides an indication of the location of East Sussex within the United Kingdom as a whole, and marks the local political authorities of the county. Black lines denote local authority boundaries; green lines denote rail links; and grey shaded areas denote settlements. Each district, borough and city has its own local authority - these are the three districts of Lewes, Wealden and Rother, the two boroughs of



Hastings and Eastbourne, and the city of Brighton & Hove; in addition, the districts and boroughs also fall under the aegis of East Sussex County Council (ESCC).

**Figure 1 – Local District, Borough and City Authority Boundaries of the County of East Sussex**



Source: Wikimedia (annotations mine)

([http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AEast\\_Sussex\\_UK\\_location\\_map.svg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AEast_Sussex_UK_location_map.svg))

### **1.5.1 – The County of East Sussex – Geography and Demographics**

East Sussex is a county situated on the coast of the south east of England in the United Kingdom, with a population of around 526,700 (ESCC 2012). As a whole, the population of East Sussex skews towards the older end compared to the rest of England (ibid.) with the third-highest percentage of the population over 75 years of all English counties. In terms of employment, the retail and health/social work sectors are strongly represented and account for almost a third of all employment (ESCC 2013a). According to the 2011 Census East Sussex is less ethnically-diverse than England as a whole, with black and minority ethnic (BME)-identified people accounting for around

8% of the population (ESCC 2013b) – however this differs geographically across the various local authorities. Although the city of Brighton & Hove is popularly assumed to have a high proportion of LGBT residents, no demographic data has been collected with regard to the sexual orientation or gender identity of Brighton & Hove or wider East Sussex residents.

Much of East Sussex can be described through reference to the rural and the countryside. As can be seen from Figure 1, while Brighton & Hove, Eastbourne and Hastings are have relatively large settlements, settlements through Lewes, Wealden and Rother districts are smaller and sparse, with green areas, areas of agriculture and countryside between them. In addition, the South Downs National Park – a chalk downland comprising hills, fields and smaller wooded areas - runs through much of Lewes District, southern Wealden District and into Eastbourne Borough.

East Sussex is administered at a local state level through East Sussex County Council and one local (district or borough) authority. Service provision is divided between the county and district/borough councils. Key services provided by East Sussex County Council include:

- education;
- social services;
- transport;
- waste disposal;
- libraries.

Key services provided by local district and borough councils include:

- waste collection;
- environmental health;
- tourism;
- leisure and public amenities;
- housing services
- collection of council tax.

These differences impact on the roles of the various local authorities with regard to LGBT equalities legislation and within service provision. In the following subsections I briefly discuss each borough

and district of East Sussex as well as the city of Brighton & Hove, highlighting some key demographic and geographic features and any LGBT communities or activist groups.

### **1.5.2 - Eastbourne**

Eastbourne is a coastal town forming the centre of a borough with a population of around 100,000 (ESCC 2013c). At a local level it is governed through Eastborough County Council, and at a county level via East Sussex County Council. Some areas in the borough are in the 10% most deprived areas in England (ESCC 2011). Local LGBT community groups include BourneOut ([www.bourneout.org.uk](http://www.bourneout.org.uk)), which operates under the auspices of Eastbourne Borough Council, and Eastbourne Rainbow ([www.eastbournerrainbow.org.uk](http://www.eastbournerrainbow.org.uk)) which champions older LGBT people in the local area.

### **1.5.3 - Hastings**

Hastings is a coastal town to the east of East Sussex, with a population of around 90,300 (ESCC 2013c). It has rail links to Brighton (westward via Eastbourne), London (northward) and Ashford International Airport in Kent (eastward). Hastings is governed via East Sussex County Council at a county level, and Hastings Borough Council at a local level. Hastings was noted in the Census 2011 as including some of the most deprived areas in England, and as a whole was one of the 20 most deprived authorities in the country (ESCC 2011). The Hastings and Rother Rainbow Alliance (HRRRA) are an LGBT community group based primarily in Hastings, in partnership with whom the LGBT Equalities Forum and its research was organised. Foregoing research on LGBT life in Hastings includes Go Hastings! (Fairley & Noudjem 2004), a large report which detailed ongoing issues for local LGBT people with regard to public sector service provision, such as a lack of consultation with LGBT people and discrimination in services.

#### **1.5.4 - Rother**

The second largest district of East Sussex in terms of geographical area, Rother occupies the east of the county and surrounds the town of Hastings. It has a population of around 91,100 people (ESCC 2013c) and includes large areas of countryside and agricultural land. Rother falls under the auspices of East Sussex County Council and Rother District Council, and two areas of Rother fall within the 10% most deprived areas in the country (ESCC 2011). Along with Hastings, Rother is served by the HRRRA community group for LGBT people.

#### **1.5.5 - Wealden**

Wealden is the geographically largest district in the county, with a population of around 151,000 people (ESCC 2013c) and surrounding Eastbourne. As with Rother and Lewes, Wealden includes large areas of agricultural land and countryside, including the South Downs National Park, and is governed via the county council and Wealden District Council. According to the results of the Census 2011, three of areas of Wealden suffer from deprivation, falling within the 20% most deprived areas (ESCC 2011). Wealden has no LGBT activist or community groups.

#### **1.5.6 - Lewes**

Lewes is both the name of the third district of East Sussex and the largest town in the district. The district itself has a population of around 98,700 people (ESCC 2013c), and is governed by Lewes District Council as well as the county council. The town of Lewes is connected by rail to Brighton (south) and London (north), as well as Eastbourne and Hastings to the east. The district does not suffer from particular deprivation and some areas were noted as among the least deprived in England in the Census 2011 (ESCC 2011). Lewes has no LGBT activist or community groups, though anecdotally is imagined to have high numbers of lesbian residents.

### **1.5.7 - Brighton & Hove**

Brighton & Hove (often shortened to simply 'Brighton') is a small city on the south coast, with a population of around 273,400 (BHCC 2011), which makes it the largest population centre in East Sussex. It has transport links via rail and bus to London (northwards) and through Lewes, Eastbourne and Hastings, seen in Figure 1. Brighton is governed at a local level through Brighton & Hove City Council.

Brighton is popularly imagined as the 'gay capital' of the UK, with a popular gay 'scene', a large number of LGBT community groups and a small LGBT press, most prominently Gscene magazine. The annual Brighton Pride parade and party are some of the largest Pride celebrations in the UK. Foregoing research on LGBT Brighton includes the award-winning Count Me In Too research project, which found significant issues for LGBT people in the city despite its status as the 'gay capital', such as the exclusion and discrimination faced by bi and trans people and issues of violence and safety (Browne 2007; see also Chapter 4 Section 2.2).

### **1.6 – Summary of Thesis Chapters**

Having provided the broad academic, temporal and geographic context of this thesis, I now summarise the following chapters. In Chapter 2 I build on the knowledge outlined in Sections 1.2 – 1.5, detailing the academic and activist literatures which underpin my research. Specifically, I highlight four overlapping areas of importance to this thesis: work on varied understandings of sexualities and sexual and gender identities; geographic research surrounding LGBT lives in both rural and urban areas; theoretical and empirical explorations of 'equality', both generally and with specific regard to LGBT people; and the complex processes of state and policymaking which contribute to the UK's public sector. I suggest that a poststructuralist perspective (outlined in Chapter 2 Section ) can grapple with what I reveal to be messy and complex performances which

produce LGBT equalities in a specific context, and offer a potentially fruitful challenge the liberal understandings of LGBT equalities which have come to dominate in the UK.

In Chapter 3 I explain the methodology and methods through which this thesis' research took place. I review a variety of foregoing methodological approaches regarding geography, sexuality and public sector equalities, demonstrating that qualitative approaches dominate the field. I then set out and justify my use of a multi-method Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, which was carried out in partnership with the LGBT Equalities Forum for Hastings, Rother and East Sussex. I engage with the complexities and issues involved when the research underpinning this thesis has been so closely entangled with the research of the LGBT Equalities Forum, and note and address potential problems regarding PAR. This chapter also details ethical procedures and reflections with regard to designing and implementing the research, and gathering, analysing and maintaining the subsequent data. I outline my approach to discourse analysis inspired by Foucault for the purposes of analysing qualitative data, and my statistical analysis for the purposes of the quantitative data, justifying this mixed-methods approach as suitable for this type of in-depth, longitudinal research.

Chapter 4, 'Geographies in the Shadow of the 'Gay Capital'', offers my first analysis of data emerging from the LGBT Equalities Forum for Hastings, Rother and East Sussex. Noting academic calls to explore and make visible LGBT lives and communities beyond the urban metropolis and gay and LGBT 'hotspots', I make a number of critical interventions in geographies of sexualities. First, I demonstrate the challenge my research offers to popular imaginaries of the rural as inherently hostile and intolerant to LGBT lives, and the urban as inherently friendly and tolerant. Second, I demonstrate that while the 'urban/rural' dynamic remains a common and important discursive framework for understanding and organising LGBT lives, analysis of the data surrounding public sector service provision for LGBT people in East Sussex complicates not only common assumptions of what urban and rural LGBT lives are like, but also any simple distinctions between urban and rural. Finally, I reveal how my data indicates that specific, grounded urban and rural geographies

operate relationally to construct one another, and to structure the ways in which LGBT lives are understood by within public sector equalities work and by LGBT people themselves. I argue that these relational constructions may make it harder for us to recognise and engage with LGBT lives focused in areas which do not fall comfortably into either 'rural' or 'urban', which are in turn elided from research or folded into broader urban/rural categories. I conclude that while the urban/rural dynamic clearly remains important, my data challenges its unquestioned dominance and suggests that other aspects of LGBT lives and communities could be explored by moving beyond it, for example by pointing to other geographic imaginaries (such as the 'gay capital' and the 'small town').

In Chapter 5, 'The Hybrid Possibilities of Partnership Work for LGBT Equalities in East Sussex', I move on to examine the processes and discourses of partnership work which emerged from the LGBT Equalities Forum. I show how spaces of partnership work such as the forum demonstrate not only blurring but hybridisation between the state/public sector, and LGBT community groups and communities. Crucially, I argue that these kinds of sectoral hybridisations (that is, the apparently distinct 'public sector' and 'community sector' are in fact inextricably enmeshed with and composed through one another) are not limited to the actual spaces of partnership work themselves (such as the actual meetings of the LGBT Equalities Forum), but in fact point to how public sector organisations as well as LGBT community groups are **already** made hybrids through the everyday, re-iterated institutional performances of their members and workers. In these discussions I reverse the general focus of the literature surrounding partnership working and hybridity, by concentrating primarily (though not exclusively) on hybridities of the state and public sector rather than communities and community groups. Such hybridities were contested - I show that the institutionalised 'managing' of LGBT equalities work in the public sector through institutional 'firewalls' can be a feature of partnership work. Specifically, I explore how perceived institutional hierarchies and discourses of evidence and validity could slow, halt or rechannel LGBT equalities work even through partnership. However, these hybridities can be seen to challenge discourses of partnership working as **necessarily** problematic or co-optive with regard to LGBT communities and community groups.

The final analysis chapter 6, 'The Duties and Subjects of LGBT Equalities', explores how concepts of LGBT equality were produced and deployed within the discussions and research of the LGBT Equalities Forum. I begin by exploring various discursive deployments of 'equality' regarding the public sector, and connect these to broader literatures surrounding equality in the current political climate, and to the three public sector equality duties brought about as part of the Equality Act 2010. In this thesis I refer to these as Equality Duties A, B and C. I demonstrate that equality as a matter of either 'discrimination' (Duty A) and/or 'equality of opportunity' (Duty B) emerged frequently and appeared unproblematic to both forum members and online questionnaire participants. However, constructions of equality which could map onto Duty C (the duty to 'foster good relations' between various groups) appeared to be considerably more problematic not only in terms of implementation, but also whether such a duty should belong to the public sector in the first place. Despite this, I show that in fact ideas of equality being underpinned by changing relations with non-LGBT people were seen as key by many forum members and questionnaire respondents. I argue that this duty can suggest more expansive and inclusive constructions of 'equality', implicating a wider variety of subjects into LGBT equalities as a political project and challenging the liberal underpinnings of public sector LGBT equalities work in the UK as well as critiques of equality which align it with a politics of assimilation. Following on from this, I devote the second part of the chapter to exploring the subjects of equality as constructed through the LGBT Equalities Forum and with reference to the era of 'austerity' and the 'Big Society' within which the forum operated. While highlighting problematic subjectifications which connect equality to neoliberal modes of responsibility, I also demonstrate that slippery discourses of equality, enabling multiple constructions, can also offer progressive potentials when incorporating the wider array of subjects implied by Equality Duty C.

To conclude, in chapter 7 I draw together my foregoing analyses and demonstrate how exploring the embodied performances and processes of partnership work offers new insights into public sector LGBT equalities work in rural and non-urban areas of the UK. Challenging binaries of assimilation/transgression, I argue for a more grounded and in-depth approach to public sector



LGBT equalities work which recognises the multiple possibilities of a hybridised public sector engaging with slippery evocations of ‘equality’, while still attentive to the problematic ways in which LGBT equalities can simultaneously be sidelined or rechanneled to the detriment of local LGBT communities. Such work also challenges the popular conceit of progressive LGBT equalities work stemming from urban metropolises and gay ‘hotspots’ – my research demonstrates that rural and non-urban areas can be hubs of progressive and challenging work, yet at the same time it contests easy deployments of rural/urban dynamics and shows how these dynamics themselves are implicated in LGBT marginalisations, potentially blinding us to the important LGBT work going on in areas which do not fit easily into the dynamic.

### **1.7 – Conclusion to Introduction to Thesis**

In this introductory chapter, I have outlined the background to this research in terms of the temporal, political and geographic context; explained my research question and the aims through which I intend to answer it; and summarised how I meet these aims through the forthcoming chapters. This research captures a key moment in the history of LGBT equalities in the UK – the implementation of the Equality Act 2010 by the austerity-led Coalition government, in a time of increasing partnership work. In bringing together rural/non-urban geographies of sexualities and public sector LGBT equalities, I address crucial gaps in the scholarly literature. In Section 3 of this chapter I noted a dearth of research on LGBT lives in rural areas, despite clear concerns identified in the LGBT Equalities Forum’s research regarding a variety of everyday issues in precisely these areas of East Sussex (McGlynn 2012). At the same time, as Gavin Brown has noted clear gap in LGBT research on cities and towns aside from large urban metropolises (Brown 2008), which could include a number of the geographic areas described in Section 5 of this chapter. In the following chapters I argue that discourses of the urban, the rural and of LGBT equalities can elide rural LGBT lives **and** LGBT lives in areas which do not fit comfortably into ‘urban’ or ‘rural’ and/or to which either geographic discourse could at times attach. I build on this argument to develop

understandings of how these complex rural/urban dynamics impact on public sector LGBT equalities, and vice versa, via the complex and messy practices and performances of public sector/community partnership working.

## **Chapter 2 – ‘LGBT’, Rurality, Equality and the State,** **a Review of Existing Literature**

### **2.1 – Introduction to Existing Literature**

This chapter outlines the foregoing literature through which I develop my research and research questions. I focus on four key areas – LGBT identities and lives, rural and non-urban geographies of LGBT people, notions of equality, and finally the state and policymaking - each expanding on the previous area. Through my discussions and explorations of these four key areas, I show that the literature indicates important points which feed into my thesis:

- 1) Sexual identities and lives have been primarily approached through an ‘ethnic model’ of liberal identity politics by mainstream sexuality-based activists as well as the state, with a related focus of achieving ‘equality’. Studying trans identities and lives reveals similar political approaches.
- 2) While LGBT people in rural and non-urban areas have historically been overlooked by researchers (in favour of urban metropolitan settings), a growing body of research attests to diverse LGBT lives beyond the city and the co-construction of ruralities, genders and sexualities.
- 3) ‘Equality’ is a contested and malleable term, and liberal approaches to equality enact their own inclusions and exclusions and construct sexual subjects in particular ways;
- 4) In the UK, equality is intimately linked with social policymaking and the welfare state, but policymaking itself constructs and is constructed by sexuality, and does not simply ‘enact’ equalities of sexualities.

Finally, I conclude by suggesting that the current discourses surrounding ‘equality’ used by LGBT people, and operationalised through state systems, are imprecise and highly problematic. However, this does not mean that they should (or even can) be dispensed with – as well as being in some

respects politically powerful, they are also used by LGBT to claim rights, resources, recognition and to avoid discrimination and even violence. Instead, I argue that we must respond to the political approach outlined by writers such as Jeffrey Weeks (Weeks 2007; Weeks 2008) and Surya Monro (2005) through which these discourses and systems of equality are worked within and changed, negotiating so-called 'assimilatory' and 'transgressive' positions and recognising that others (including states and state institutions) do so too.

## **2.2 - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Identities<sup>2</sup>**

Readings of the literature surrounding lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans identities reveals relatively little in the way of detailed discussion of the term LGBT itself (for notable exceptions see Richardson & Monro 2012, and Richardson & Monro 2013), save for noting the continued exclusions of bi and trans people from supposedly LGBT spaces and the often tokenistic inclusion of 'B' and especially 'T' (Doan 2007; Beemyn 2003:2; Nash 2011; Stone 2009:336). I begin by outlining thinking about sexuality in Western, primarily Anglophonic academia. The most prominent way in which sexual identity is thought of in popular culture is through what is sometimes called the 'ethnic model' (Beasley 2005:123; Devor & Matte 2006:402; Epstein 2002; Gamson 1995; Lovaas & Elia 2006; Seidman 1993; Seidman 2002; Rubin 1993). This model treats sexual identity as innate and essential, generally unchanging, and in the term itself the ethnic model suggests that sexuality is assigned at birth and that gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and straight people have fixed sexual identities. This view is, in academic circles at least, commonly described as 'essentialism' (Beasley 1995:136-138; Fuss 1989; Richardson 2000:266; Sayer 1997). Alternative approaches dominate academic social sciences – theories which put forward the 'socially constructed' nature of sexual identities have become widely accepted by academics studying sexuality but considerably less so by

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<sup>2</sup> There is an extremely extensive array of works from a variety of literatures available regarding the theorisation and construction of sexual and gender identities. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to engage with all of them, and so given the nature and aims of the LGBT Equalities Forum for Hastings, Rother and East Sussex (outlined in Appendix A) I attempt to concentrate on those which relate most clearly to 'mainstream' activist and political understandings of 'LGBT' lives and identities in the contemporary UK.

activists and communities centred around sexual identities (Beasley 2005:146; Hostetler & Herdt 1998; Phelan 2000:433; Rahman & Jackson 1997:118). These latter approaches do not generally deny the existence of sexual identities or attempt to do away with them altogether, but rather focus on their cultural, historical and spatial specificity (Beasley 1995:137; Delamater & Hyde 1998; D'Emilio 2002; Epstein 2002; Gamson 1995; Nash 2005:117; Phelan 2000:433; Rubin 1993; Seidman 1993:125-127; Weeks 1985; Weeks 2002) and/or how these identities operate within society and as part of regimes of power structures (Beasley 1995:165; Butler 1990; Butler 1997; Foucault 1979; Jagose 2009; Lehring 1997:190-191; Seidman 1993; Seidman 2002; Stein & Plummer 2002).

I intend to emphasise the importance of *how* these discussions operate rather than debating the 'correctness' of essentialism or social constructionism, or in other words seeking an answer to the question 'Why am I gay?'. This question is not unimportant, but it increasingly pales next to the need to study the political effects of the *question* and the *debates*, rather than the answer (Epstein 2002; Gamson 1995; Probyn 1997; Seidman 1993:128; Tzedek 2005:254). In consequence this section of the chapter focuses more on the political operations of these debates instead of trying to prove one or both approaches to be right or wrong.

### **2.2.1 - Sexual Identities, Identity Politics and Queer Theories**

Contemporary 'mainstream' British and American society, and particularly the legal and political system, seems saturated with the idea that sexual identity is a fixed and essential feature of a person. Scholars have noted that while LGB activists have tended to focus on this understanding it tends to be those who subscribe to a politics of anti-homosexuality who vocally disagree (D'Emilio 2002; Lehring 1997:118; Rahman & Jackson 1997:119). In this section I briefly examine some of the key features of 20<sup>th</sup> century theories and politics of 'deviant' sexualities and sexual identities. I then move on to examine what is often dubbed 'strategic essentialism' and how it features in sexual identity politics.

The 'ethnic-like' (Devor & Matte 2006:402) model of sexual identity is often said to be the main way in which sexuality is thought about and deployed politically in contemporary Anglo-American society, linked with a framework positing these 'essentialist' identities as natural and normal by virtue of their spontaneously-arising and unchanging essence (Bell & Valentine 1995b:22; Currah 1997; Hostetler & Herdt 97; Rahman & Jackson 1997; Seidman 2002). This framework can in turn attach itself to a politics that seeks respect and integration with the rest of 'normal' society – sometimes described as an 'assimilationist' approach (Bernstein 2002; Gamson 1995; Miceli 2005; Phelan 2000; Rahman & Jackson 1997; Richardson 2005). It is an approach to both politics and personal subjectivity which has been described as comforting (Probyn 1997:133) and 'personally affirming' (Wilson 1997:101) for those whose sexuality deviates from the heterosexual norm.

Many writers agree that the ethnic model of sexual identity has proven effective in mobilising lesbian and gay people to work for political changes and in advancing such changes within a liberal democratic system (Altman 1997; Bernstein 2002; Epstein 2002; Gamson 1995; Miceli 2005; Nash 2005; Seidman 1993:110; Thompson 2004). However, there are disagreements over what effect these political changes have had, and the consequences of engaging in politics based on a supposedly fixed category of sexual identity. For instance, Bernstein, Nash and Miceli each put forward highly detailed accounts of how political action based on gay and lesbian sexual identity politics enabled lesbian, gay and LGB communities to engage with the local political system in order to improve, amongst other things, safety and access to services (Bernstein 2002; Miceli 2005; Nash 2005). Nash and Miceli both identify the relative importance and political strength attached to claiming LGB or other sexual identities as legally legitimate 'minority groups' – in Nash's case she points out that for many this was literally a survival strategy in the face of physical violence directed at lesbians and gay men, enabling the new 'sexual minority' category to advocate for better protections (see also Gamson 1995). However Miceli argues that the increasing polarisation of political speech from LGB and anti-gay activists in the US has led to their political arguments becoming 'stuck' – their potential actions are limited because the arguments and politics on both sides have cemented themselves so firmly so as to withstand the counter-politics of their rivals,

that Miceli sees little chance of any new or radical politics emerging that might more effectively achieve the groups' goals (Miceli 2005; see also Rasmussen 2006).

The political changes wrought through identity politics have been described as being effective only from the standpoint of liberalism (Bernstein 2002; Lehring 1997; Phelan 2000; Rahman & Jackson 1997; Sharma 2006), assuming a 'neutral/abstract' individual on which to attach identities and categories such as 'gay' or 'sexual minority' when in fact this individual is actually depicted in legal and political theory as well as in popular culture as a member of the dominant group – generally a straight, white man (Phelan 2000). I elaborate on this and related issues in Section 4 of this chapter. The common political objective of many identity-based political groups, achieving 'equal rights', therefore translates into seeking equality with the 'normal' people – this in turn reifies heterosexuality, whiteness and being a man as normal, with anything seeking equality with them as necessarily abnormal and so actually working against any cultural (rather than legal) equality (Currah 1997; Phelan 2000; Rahman & Jackson 1997:118; Sharma 2006). Rahman & Jackson additionally argue that this erases the fact that different people may need different rights (ibid. 122), eliding difference and centering the white straight man as the 'default'.

This sense of erasure, of eliding difference and disingenuously maintaining the current normal/abnormal division links this critique of identity politics and the ethnic model to another one – namely, that this kind of politics necessarily gravitates to the politics of a single issue, for instance, gay men's politics. Many writers have voiced concern over the potential for exclusion and shutting down possible alliances with those affected by similar issues but in different ways, either through outright exclusion or through an internal 'policing' of expressions of identity that are considered valid and/or authentic (Bernstein 2002; Perumal 2006:730; Petchesky 2009; Probyn 1997:133; Seidman 1993; Sharma 2006:63), with some specifying exactly who this kind of single-issue identity politics tends to exclude when we talk of sexual identities – frequently black and minority ethnic (BME) people (Beasley 2005:124; Epstein 2002; Seidman 1993:110-120), bisexual people (Beasley 2005:124; Seidman 1993:121; Young 1997) and women (Beasley 2005:123; Rahman & Jackson

1997), as well as 'intersectional' approaches which recognise the distinct subjectivities and issues produced through the coalescing of such factors (Crenshaw 1989; see also Bowleg 2008; Monro 2010; Rosenblum 1994). This internal policing has also been linked to liberal ideology, so that only expressions of identity that emphasise personal responsibility, self-care and being a productive member of society are validated (Rubin 1989; Smith 1997).

While the 'ethnic model' of understanding sexual identities and engaging in related politics dominates the 'mainstream' (both LGBT and non-LGBT), other understandings circulate particularly within academia. Social constructionist models of sexual identities recognise the existence of such identities, but rather than seeing them as essential to particular people's natures such models instead attempt to ground such identities in specific historical, geographic and cultural contexts (Beasley 1995:137; Delamater & Hyde 1998; D'Emilio 2002; Epstein 2002; Gamson 1995; Nash 2005:117; Phelan 2000:433; Rubin 1993; Seidman 1993:125-127; Weeks 1985; Weeks 2002). Note that social constructionist approaches do not deny the material reality either of sexual desires or of lived identities, but see identities such as 'gay', 'lesbian' and 'bisexual' (and indeed 'trans', though the 'T' of LGBT is explored in more detail in Section 2.3) as emerging out of particular social contexts (Epstein 2002; Seidman 1993; Weeks 2002). Related but by no means reduceable to social constructionist approaches to sexual identities is 'queer theory', and queer approaches to understanding sexual identities and related politics. The genealogy of queer theory is, appropriately enough, uneasy and contested (Browne & Nash 2010:4), but it can be seen to have emerged through cultural studies and the humanities, particularly in the early 1990s (Andermar et al 2000; Browne & Nash 2010; Butler 1997; Halperin 2003; Jagose 1996; Kosofsky Sedwick 1993; Warner 1993). Queer theory is less a unified theory or discipline and more an array of loosely linked academic, activist and political approaches to sexualities and sexual identities, and key to such approaches is the challenging of normalising discourses through which some sexual identities or expressions (such as heterosexuality, but also particular expressions of gay, lesbian and bisexual identities) are framed as 'normal' (Beasley 2005:161; Butler 1997; During & Fealy 1997:117; Fryer 2010; Gamson 1995; Hostetler & Herdt 1998; Jagose 2009; Warner 1993). Writers drawing



influencing and influenced by queer theory have tended to be particularly interested in the production of sexualised and gendered subjects, and in detailing and deconstructing the multiple, shifting ways in which they can identify (Beasley 2005:164-168; Browne & Bakshi 2013; Browne & Nash 2010; Butler 1990; Butler 1997; Currah 1997; Foucault 1979; Fryer 2010; Gamson 1995; Halberstam 2005; Halperin 2003:341; Jagose 1996; Kazyak 2011; Lehring 1997; Nash 2005; Rasmussen 2006; Roen 2002; Seidman 2001; Soderstrom 2010; Thompson 2004; Tongson 2011; Tucker 2009; Tzedek 2005) and, as Muñoz has explored in some detail, disidentify (Muñoz 1999). While social constructionist approaches to generally recognised that there was a clear 'gay' (for example) identity to be discussed, queer approaches brought a more postmodern and poststructuralist eye to identities (Beasley 2005; Browne & Nash 2010; Butler 1997; Gamson 1995; Jagose 2009).

Poststructuralism denotes an extremely broad set of approaches to philosophy and theories of the social, which in this chapter I draw on regarding LGBT lives, space, equality and the state. These approaches stem in large part from continental philosophy over the past 50 years (Belsey 2002; Harrison 2006; Williams 2005) and particularly the work of Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. Poststructural theories mark a shift from structural theories of the social (Belsey 2002; Cresswell 2013:197-199; Massey 1999; Murdoch 2006:4-11) by denying clear distinctions between social 'facts' and the limitations to our knowledge of them. A structuralist perspective might search for 'deep generative structures beneath the infinite variety of the surface of life' (Cresswell 2013:207). A poststructural perspective would challenge any assertion of a fixed and identifiable operating system of the social, and see such systems and 'core' social facts as being in a constant process of becoming, endlessly and multiply re/constituted through everyday utterances and performances, and contextual epistemic limits, rather than the other way round (Belsey 2002: 71; Cresswell 2013; Doel 1999; Murdoch 2006; Williams 2005; Wylie 2006). These limits are inescapable and do not so much surround as extend through knowledge. By engaging with and exploring them, poststructuralism enables a politics of 'opening up... many different situations and

structures onto new possibilities' (Williams 2005:19; see also Harrison 2006:128-130, Whatmore 2002, Wylie 2006).

Drawing upon poststructuralism, queer theorists and activists reject the idea that identities are fixed and immutable – rather, sexual identities are generally understood to be fluid and shifting, always in the process of being constructed and never being 'complete' (Browne & Nash 2010; Butler 1990; Hostetler & Herdt 1998; Jackson 2010; Muñoz 1999; Valocchi 2005). As with much of social constructionism, queer theorists and activists do not deny that such identities are 'real' for a given value of 'real', in that it is recognised that such identities have both social and material impacts (Butler 1990; During & Fealy 1997:120-124; Epstein 2002; Seidman 2002), but the material and social performances of such identities shift on an everyday basis through their inextricable intertwinement with their shifting cultural, historical and spatial contexts (Butler 1990). Given that they emerge out of these contexts, queer and social constructionist scholars have been keen to explore how sexual identities operate within society and as part of wider and disparate power structures (Beasley 2005:165; Butler 1990; Butler 1997; Foucault 1975; Foucault 1979; Jagose 2009; Lehring 1997:190-191; Seidman 1993; Seidman 2002; Stein & Plummer 2002).

Writers using and discussing queer theory have also explored identities through the concept of 'hybridity'. In exploring this concept I draw on the work of Sarah Whatmore. Though a geographer rather than a 'queer theorist' or a writer with a specific interest in sexualities, Whatmore has developed theories of hybridity (herself drawing on the cultural and postcolonial theories of hybridity developed by Latour (2000) and Bhabha (1994)) which can be used to explore, critique and reshape ways of thinking about conceptual divides within a variety of geographies – including, as I will demonstrate in forthcoming chapters, geographies of sexuality and gender identity - and she specifically deploys the concept to challenge a 'one plus one logic' (Whatmore 2002:3) of apprehending the world. Rather, she argues, what can be conceived of as fundamentally separate elements are always constituted and composed, in part, through and of one another. Such 'hybridities' can emerge and/or be revealed through particular moments or spaces, but this is not

to say that they are wholly produced, ex nihilo, through them. Instead such spatio-temporal contexts bring into relief the already 'pre-hybridised' nature of supposedly distinct elements. Within Whatmore's work these elements are, broadly speaking, concepts of nature and society, and she emphasises that through the entanglements of hybridity, that which is commonly imagined as being subjectified or acted upon retains the agency to act upon its associated object (ibid. 4-5), such that clear distinction between subject and object breaks down and 'the material and the social intertwine and interact in all manner of promiscuous combinations' (ibid. 4). This is not to suggest that such distinctions are unimportant – as Whatmore states, it is 'just the reverse', and instead 'it is a prerequisite for attending more closely to the labours of division that (re-)iterate their performance and the host of socio-material processes... in which they inhere' (ibid. 6; see also Skelcher 2012 on 'everyday' practices and the performance of hybridities). I note that writers on queerness and hybridity have often explored hybridised racial, ethnic, cultural, sexual and gendered subjectivities and associated dis/identifications (Carrillo 2002; Muñoz 1995; Muñoz 1999; Tongson 2011). Conversely, UK-based scholars such as Sara Ahmed (2012), Kath Browne and Leela Baksi (2013), and Diane Richardson and Surya Monro (2012) have already begun to explore subjectivities 'within' state/public sector institutions and how these can be related to and entangled with LGBT and queer identifications. I suggest building on this invaluable work by using queer theory's attention to fluid subjectivities, with regard to institutional and organisational dis/identifications and the hybrid subjectivities these reveal, specifically as these emerge through practices and discourses of public sector LGBT equalities work in the UK.

It is not the case that social constructionist or queer approaches are entirely rejected by LGBT activists or that they have no currency outside academia, but scholars have noted that in terms of LGBT political projects social constructionist and queer understandings of sexuality and sexual identity are in the minority (Beasley 2005:146; Hostetler & Herdt 1998; Phelan 2000:433; Rahman & Jackson 1997:118). Queer and social constructionist critiques of a 'born this way' understanding of sexual identity and associated identity-based politics can sometimes be perceived as playing into the hands of those who oppose homosexuality and other, non-heterosexual, sexual identities, who

emphasise voluntary choice and 'lifestyles' rather than fixed identities in order to deny access to the ideological and symbolic resources of liberalism and the discourse of 'equal rights' (D'Emilio 2002; Gamson 1995; Lehring 1997:118; Miceli 2005; Phelan 2000:433; Rahman & Jackson 97:119). Responses to some of these critiques have also been formulated – Bernstein, for example, cites numerous examples of identity-based political groups who managed to create productive alliances in spite of the critiques of necessarily single-issue politics, detailed above, and likewise cites examples of non-heterosexual political groups which emphasised fluid and contingent identities but nevertheless failed to negotiate meaningful alliances with other groups (Bernstein 2002:542-568). Going further, Bernstein suggests that rather than debating the pros and cons of this type of politics, we should ask 'why activists at times embrace or at times fail to embrace such politics' (ibid. 532, see also Nash 2005). This point is closely connected with my stated intention for this chapter to focus as much on how such ways of understanding operate as on the 'rights and wrongs' of potential kinds of politics, and is a crucial one for understanding the multiple and complex ways in which LGBT identity-based politics can be produced and can operate. In this thesis I draw on poststructuralist queer understandings of unstable and yet influential sexual subjects and subjectivities, with particular attention paid to the repeated practices and performances which endlessly re/construct subjects and identities, including 'LGBT'. However I also attend closely to the specific context of such identities which can enable or thwart particular forms of politics and which is connected to wider regimes of power - this necessarily involves acknowledging the productive political force of 'ethnic model'-style understandings of sexual identities.

### **2.2.2 - Strategic Essentialism**

Though the term was originally coined by Spivak (1987) speaking primarily of postcolonial politics, the concept of strategic essentialism has certainly found an audience in theorists of sexualities and sexual identities – queer writers (and others) have made the point that while sexual identities remain problematic, they remain politically useful and enabling and could be 'strategically' used in

a way that minimises exclusion given adequate reflection on the specificity of the political context (Beasley 2005:147-148; Fuss 1989; Gamson 1995; Hostetler & Herdt 1998; Perumal 2006:738; Probyn 1997:142; Seidman 1993; Sinfield 1997; Thompson 2004). Bernstein has argued that supposedly 'essentialist' identity politics-based movements do generally use identity in a strategic way (Bernstein 2002) – however, like Nash (2005), her argument is not that these groups voluntarily or with firm belief choose to engage in identity politics. Rather, these politics are in some ways predicated on what 'cultural' and 'political' changes are sought and what the 'available resources, social networks, and external political conditions' are (Bernstein 2002:537; see also Gamson 1995). Contra the critiques raised in the previous section, and writers like Duggan who describe strategic essentialism as 'letting everyone else off the hook' (Duggan 1994), she argues that this kind of identity politics necessarily challenges 'cultural' norms surrounding sexuality. This could be seen as a *carte blanche* for any identity politics to be seen as strategic, but her point about sexual identities being a response to the existing conditions seems valid and is furthered by Nash, who notes that these coalescings of identity-based groups can result in identities that are unstable and in flux (Nash 2005:129) – the temporariness and contingency of this kind of identity politics could be less likely to set up fixed hierarchies of inclusion/exclusion. I broadly accept Bernstein's key point regarding the need to 'strategically' work within dominant political and discursive frameworks surrounding sexualities (as well as gender identities, which I expand on in the following section), however this should not erase the important insights which can be developed through poststructural queer approaches. I draw on both 'strategic essentialism' and queer approaches throughout the rest of this thesis, holding them in productive tension with one another and using them in tandem to explore how sexualities and sexual identities are understood and produced within my data. Part of this research's 'strategic essentialism' which has already been noted involves the 'LGBT' acronym, and so I now explain my 'strategic' use (which, drawing on a number of writers, I argue is genuinely politically strategic) of 'LGBT' throughout this research.

### 2.2.3 - LGB – and T

Up until now I have mostly discussed the L, G and (to a much lesser extent) the B in 'LGBT'. The 'T' in LGBT most commonly stands for 'transgender'. The terminologies surrounding identities expressing gender and sexed variance, transition and deviance are both complex and ultimately imprecise (Adams & Peirce 2006:3; Beemyn 2003:3; Benjamin 2006; Davidson 2007; Davies 2004; Elliot 2009; Johnson 2007a; Monro 2003; Roen 2002). It is vital to recognise that such identities and lived experiences are hugely diverse (Butler 2006:187; Davidson 2007; Davies 2004; Davy 2011; Feinberg 2006; Johnson 2007a; Monro 2003; Monro 2004; Whittle 2006a:xi). However, there is a widely-drawn distinction between 'transgender', referring to a gendered social performance which does not fully match that commonly expected of an associated sexed body, and 'transsexual', referring more to the physiological change of genitals and other physical attributes to match a gender identity (Adams & Piece 2006; Beasley 2005:153; Beemyn 2003; Davies 2004:115; Elliot 2009:8; Feinberg 2006; Heyes 2003; Johnson 2007a; Kirkland 2003; Monro 2003; Paxton et al 2006; Roen 2002; Stryker 2006:3-6). In this section I discuss the growth and use of these categories, highlighting the theoretical and political disagreements surrounding them before explaining my own terminological approach. I also use this section to explain why the 'T' belongs in 'LGBT'.

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century theories of transsexuality and transgenderism were dominated by medical and psychological discourse which pathologised such people as ill and in need of a cure (Beemyn 2003:8-9; Davy 2011; Heyes 2003:1095; Johnson 2007a; Lorber 1996; Stone 2006:223; Whittle 2006a; see Benjamin 2006 for a famous example) – such discourses valorised and normalised particular 'traditional' gendered performances within a male/female binary as part of the curative process (Butler 2006; Kirkland 2003; Stone 2006). However, since the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century writers have noted a shift within trans theorising towards social constructionist and poststructuralist approaches (Beemyn 2003:34; Beasley 2005:153-160; Davies 2004; Davy 2011; Doan 2007:58; Hausman 2001; Lorber 2006; Monro 2005; Stone 2006; Whittle 2006a:xiii; Whittle 2006b:199), so that 'transgender phenomena call into question the stability of the material referent

“sex” and the relationship of that unstable category to the linguistic, social, and psychological categories of “gender” (Stryker 2006:9). These approaches have also led to some (limited) acknowledgement of non-Western variant genders, in addition to ‘transgender’ and ‘transsexual’, within scholarly, popular and political discourse (Feinberg 2006; Stone 2006:229; Stryker 2006:14). However, there have been criticisms of this theoretical approach, which is said to appropriate of transgendered and transsexual lives, casting them as the revolutionary vanguard of the destabilisation of gender with neither their consent nor agreement (Browne & Bakshi 2011:61; Elliot 2009; Monro 2005:97; Namaste 2006; Nash 2011:197; Prosser 1998; Roen 2002; Rubin 1996; Stone 2006; Whittle 2006a:xiii; for suggested examples, see Bornstein 1994; Butler 2006; Lorber 1996) – though it is worth remembering that this kind of theorising is by no means limited to cisgendered (ie. non-trans) scholars (Roen 2002:6). Aside from the issue of appropriation, these critiques also argue that to describe sex and gender as ‘constructed’ or fictive is to deny the lived experiences and desires of those who feel strongly to be of a different gender than their bodily sex (Prosser 1998; Namaste 2006; Rubin 1996). Such critiques could be said to exemplify the political and theoretical divide said to exist between ‘transsexual’ and ‘transgender’, described by Roen (2002) as an ‘either/or’ (transsexual) or ‘neither/both’ (transgender) model. The ‘either/or’ approach has also been criticised for its reliance on assimilation within an oppressive male/female gender system, and the importance placed on ‘passing’ (Bornstein 1994; Davidson 2003; Feinberg 2006:207-217; Stone 2006:232). While sympathetic to the revolutionary potential of gender transgression, I follow a number of writers in highlighting the importance of ‘passing’ and assimilation for many transsexual and transgender people in contemporary society – this approach is often made necessary by medical, psychiatric and legal gatekeepers to open up access to gender reassignment surgery (Butler 2006:191; Prosser 1998) and to avoid discrimination and violence (Browne & Bakshi 2011; Davidson 2007; Davy 2011; Kirkland 2003; Monro 2003; Namaste 2005:590; Rubin 2003).

The divisions between the 'transsexual vs transgender' model, however, are not as fixed as some of these debates suggest – Roen (2002) demonstrates in her research that, in practice, the same people can hold both of these positions and 'very flexibly deploy competing discourses, about passing and about crossing, in order to situate themselves... Crossing openly may be necessary and useful in some circumstances... while passing may be essential in many circumstances' (ibid. 521; see also Elliot 2009; Kirkland 2003; Monro 2003:446). In looking beyond this dichotomy, the importance and fluidity of these positions must still be recognised – hence I follow those writers who argue for the need to recognise a multiplicity of gender identities and positions (Doan 2007:58; Elliot 2009:27; Monro 2004), without fixing them into unhelpful and divisive hierarchies (Beasley 2005:159; Davy 2011:13; Elliot 2009; Roen 2002). While I recognise the perhaps more radical position of Hausman (2001), who argues in favour of abandoning gender, this approach feels unrealistically utopian and dismissive of transgendered and transsexual people who find comfort and empowerment in their gender.

If we are to look beyond a transsexual/transgender division, then the terminologies we use must also move forward – terminologies capable of capturing the importance of the positions described above, as well as their potential for overlap and fluidity. The shortened 'trans' was first used in the late 90s (Whittle 2006a:xi), deliberately intended to be inclusive of these positions and others (ibid.; see also Heyes 2003). Other scholars using the term 'trans' also highlight its imprecision and open-endedness (Browne & Bakshi 2011:62; Browne & Lim 2010:617-618; Heyes 2003; see also the use as an umbrella term in Elliot 2009). I am keenly aware that 'trans' comes with its own problems, particularly surrounding the potential exclusion (or indeed unwanted inclusion) of intersexed people (Davidson 2007), and the symbolic emphasis it may place on 'trans' with its etymological resonances of 'movement across' or 'beyond'. While not dismissing these arguments, however, I feel that it is important to capture and recognise the variety of fluid positions discussed above, and therefore use 'trans' throughout this research to incorporate them.



With regard to 'trans' as the 'T' in 'LGBT', I argue here that this is a justifiable and indeed desirable state of affairs. A number of scholars have pointed out the (continued) history of social and spatial overlap between trans and lesbian, gay and bisexual communities (Devor & Matte 2006; Doan 2007; Monro 2005:93; Monro & Richardson 2010; Nash 2011; Stone 2006; Stryker 2006; Stryker 2007) – but this history stands side by side with a history of lesbian and gay victimisation and exclusion of trans people (Devor & Matte 2006; Doan 2007; Kirkland 2003; Meyer 2004; Monro 2005:95; Nash 2011; Stone 2009; Stryker 2006; Valentine 2002a). Some have suggested that this may be due to the impression that trans lives upset comfortable gay/straight views of sexual orientation (Deon & Matte 2006:387; Doan 2007; Monro 2005), and it is clear that there are some differences in the approaches of gay men and lesbians (Devor & Matte 2006:388-389; Nash 2011; Stone 2009). Regardless, it is clear that specifically including the 'T' in the 'LGBT' acronym is controversial with a number of gay men and lesbians (Stryker 2006; Stone 2009; Valentine 2002a; see also the online exchange between Aravosis 2007 and Stryker 2007), and that even when included the 'T' is often simply symbolic or tokenistic (Beemyn 2003:2; Stone 2009:336). Similar points have been made about the inclusion of the bisexual 'B' by scholars and activists alike (Barker et al 2012; Heath 2005; Hemmings 2002; Richardson & Monro 2012). Crucially however, the literature suggests that LGB and T people may be tackling similar, often gender-related issues in society, which suggests a marked need for social and political unity (Devor & Matte 2006:403; Minter 2000; Monro 2003:439; Stone 2009; Stryker 2007). For example, I find Namaste's 'genderbashing' thesis highly convincing - she argues that what is often coded queerbashing or gaybashing is frequently in fact a form of gender policing (Namaste 2006; see also Minter 2000 and Beemyn 2003 for many similar examples). Monro argues in favour of 'rainbow alliances' to tackle shared histories and lives realities of oppression while recognising difference in such alliances (Monro 2003), suggesting that such alliances would bring together strength of numbers and the strength of a diversity of voices. Thus the 'T' in LGBT is important not just because of the shared histories and communities across lesbian, gay, bi and trans lives, but also because of the greater political possibilities such a configuration enables. Additionally, the particular context of my

research also lends itself to an inclusive LGB and T approach - 'trans' is regularly mobilised as an active part of 'LGBT' in Brighton (Browne & Bakshi 2013: 98-103), and the Hastings and Rother Rainbow Alliance (HRRRA), with whom this research was developed in partnership with, specifically identify as a 'lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans' group (<http://www.hrra.org.uk/>), have a number of trans members (including committee members) and organise a trans-specific group (HRRAT).

Having outlined my approach to sexual and gender identities, and 'LGBT', through reference to foregoing literature, I now move on to review the existing literature surrounding geographies of 'the rural' before building on this section to engage with LGBT lives and communities in rural areas.

### **2.3 - Rurality**

In this section I explore what scholars mean by 'the rural', tackling the idea that there is any single or easily definable approach to identifying it. I also outline academic writings on sexualities in and of the rural, and explore how these have been closely connected with the multiple constructions of the rural. Following other writers I suggest that the rural is an important space for the construction of sexualities and sexual identities, but also that these in turn work to construct the rural – I follow those who argue for a socially constructed and poststructural conception of the rural. Though I discuss how writers have explored heterosexual rurals as well as how rural spaces are co-constructed by the logic of particular heterosexualities, I primarily focus on how rural spaces have been written about with regard to sexual minorities such as gay men and lesbians.

#### **2.3.1 - Historical Approaches to Defining the Rural**

When we talk about 'the rural', it is not always clear what we mean (Bryant & Pini 2011). Scholars have approached the question of defining the rural in a variety of ways, but along with others I follow Cloke's relatively recent historical approach, which outlines three broad frameworks through

which scholars have attempted to answer this question (Cloke 2006a; see also Bryant & Pini 2011, Gallent et al 2008 and Woods 2011:8-9). This approach seems to incorporate much of the literature on the construction of the rural, and follows a rough (though overlapping) chronology. The three frameworks Cloke describes are what he calls the 'functionalist', the 'political economic' and the 'social constructionist'.

Functional approaches are those which utilise a broadly positivist scientific epistemic viewpoint with which to define the rural – this usually links rural areas with agriculture, small human settlements, and productive use of local land, and attempts to use empirical data relating to these factors to designate a fixed area as rural or otherwise (Cloke 2006a:20). With regard to rural people, approaches using functional frameworks often draw on Tonnies' 'gemeinschaft' concept of stable, closet-knit local communities in rural areas (Woods 2011:7-9). However, in spite of these claims a variety of writers have pointed to the continued failure of functional frameworks to actually produce a workable definition of the rural, rather than multiple competing and internally-incoherent definitions (Phillips & Williams 1984:6-13; Woods 2011:32), thus never truly meeting the aims of functionalist writers of the rural and revealing this framework to be flawed (Cloke 2006a; Cloke 2006b; Gilg 1985:83; Woods 2010; Woods 2011:31-34). Despite such criticisms functionalist approaches are still prevalent in governmental discourse in the UK and elsewhere (Woods 2011:33; for example see Gallent et al 2008).

The second theoretical framework suggested by Cloke is what he calls the 'political economic' (Cloke 2006a:20). Writers using the political economic framework noted the profound impact of national and global factors (such as economic policy, global production and commodity chains) on rural areas – therefore rural areas were not isolated, but were in fact fundamentally linked with a much wider world (*ibid.*, see also Woods 2011:7-8). This led some to suggest that 'the rural' was a category of analysis so blurred that they questioned its continued relevance and usefulness (see Champion & Hugo 2004; Hoggart 1990; Woods 2012). This has been an abiding question in rural geography and other rural studies, but one to which writers have responded by positively asserting

the importance of rurality (Halfacree 2004; Marsden 2006:4; Phillips & Williams 1984:2-3). Indeed Halfacree has argued that that 'in spite of receiving a battering from numerous commentators... [the rural] does not simply go away. Indeed, its social and cultural significance today may be as great as it has ever been (Halfacree 2004:285). This quote indicates the direction that interest in the rural has taken since this 'battering' of questions surrounding its relevance, followed by Cloke who argues that while 'traditional' ways of defining the rural and the urban are breaking down, it is in the realm of social differences that the rural remains relevant (Cloke 2006b:19). Cloke's point feel of considerable importance to my thesis, as evidenced by the large number of studies in which research participants frame their lives around geographic logics such as the rural, and attest to its influence in their everyday lives (for just a few examples see Bell 2000; Browne 2011; Comerford et al 2004; Kazyak 2011; Kirkey & Forsyth 2001; Soderstrom 2010). The key point here is that it is in the realms of cultural and symbolic discourse and people's everyday lives and experiences that the rural most clearly retains its importance (Woods 2012:2; similarly see Knopp 1998 on 'the urban') – as my research engages precisely with these discourses and with lived experiences of LGBT equalities, I assert that 'rurality' remains a key category of analysis for this thesis.

This leads onto the third theoretical framework Cloke describes as engaging with issues of rural meanings, that of 'social constructionism' (Cloke 2006a:21). Though to explain the full background of social constructionism is beyond the scope of this thesis, Woods summarises by writing that 'in this new approach, rurality is understood as a social construct – that is as an imagined entity that is brought into being by particular discourses of rurality that are *produced, reproduced* and *contested* by academics, the media, policy-makers, rural lobby groups and ordinary individuals' (Woods 2011:9, my emphasis; see also Bryant & Pini 2011:5). The re/production and contestation of rurality here disavows the existence of one concrete meaning of 'rural', and instead implies multiple, fragmented and dynamically changing rurals. Cloke and others link the social constructionist framework with the 'cultural turn' in studies of the rural and particularly within geographies (Cloke 2006a:22-24; see also Halfacree 2004, Holloway & Kneafsey 2004 and Woodward & Halfacree 2002:74-76). Woodward and Halfacree write that 'the shift has revolved around both a

consideration and a reconceptualization of the meaning of 'the rural' and some of the implications which flow from this', concentrating on imaginaries, representations and everyday lives (Woodward & Halfacree 2002:75). Stemming from this are other approaches. First, having argued that the sign and signifier of 'the rural' have become increasingly detached in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (Halfacree 2006; see also Cloke 1994:165 and Woods 2011:9-12), Halfacree proposes a model which posits 'rural space' as being constituted through the intersections of rural localities (the practices and perceptions of everyday space), official representations of the rural (through government or capitalist economic interests) and everyday lives of the rural (lived social and cultural imaginaries) (Halfacree 2006), politicising the meanings and regulations of 'the rural' itself (Woods 2011:11). The second approach is through Deleuze-inspired hybrid approaches to geographies and spaces (Cloke 2006a:24-25), which 'allow us to identify overlooked spatialities emerging out of the intersections between culture, economy, biology, planning, governance and so on... In this way our understandings of rurality can become more open and crosscut by different relations and rationalities, emerging out of the crashing together of myriad practices and performances' (ibid.). Woods also comments on this approach, suggesting that it may be useful to conceive of the rural as hybrid – 'made (and constantly remade) through the entanglement and interaction of the social and the natural, the human and the non-human, the rural and the non-rural' (Woods 2007:495), but with rurality itself still a key factor (Woods 2011:42; see also Murdoch 2003). Finally, important work related to these 'social constructionist' approaches includes that of Doreen Massey, who has outlined a more poststructural approach to space and place (Massey 1999). Massey argues in favour of a conception of spatiality 'as relative (defined in terms of the entities 'within' it), relational (as constituted through the operation of social relations, through which the 'entities' are also constituted) and integral to the constitution of the entities themselves (the entities are local time- spaces)' (Massey 1999:262). This approach, then, understands space to be both produced (in part) by and productive (if not wholly) of social relations, through which perceived spatialities shift and overlap with one another (Valentine 2002b). Such insights feel particularly important to understanding the discursive force of geographies of the urban and the

rural – therefore I deploy this poststructural approach in my exploration of the imagined and material spatialities of ‘the rural’ and ‘the urban’, viewing these as produced by as well as productive of a variety of discourses and embodied performances through data gathered through the LGBT Equalities Forum. Furthermore, following Woods in acknowledging that ‘the urban’ and ‘the rural’ cannot be easily defined or fixed to specific and bounded physical areas, I also use the term ‘non-urban’ throughout this thesis. I do this in order to allow for the incorporation of a wider variety of spaces and geographies in East Sussex within my research – including spaces which do not fit easily or comfortably into either ‘urban’ or ‘rural’ and those which align more strongly with other geographic imaginaries - while holding easy definitions in tension and highlighting that such spaces cannot be simply slotted into an urban/rural dynamic. Note that, per the poststructural geographic approach I utilise, this does not mean that areas described as ‘rural’ are uncontested, only and always ‘rural’; nor that ‘urban’ areas are uncontested, only and always ‘urban’; nor that ‘non-urban’ areas are uncontested, only and always ‘non-urban’. In Chapter 4 Sections 3 and 4 I actively challenge such accounts, drawing on this literature and my analysis of the data to acknowledge the continuing force of the urban/rural binary which simultaneously highlighting the inadequacies of such geographic descriptives, and to highlight and explore a wider range of much more complicated spatialities. To this I add the insights of Woodward & Halfacree (2002), who argue that understanding rurality to be multiple and fluid can open up new and important ways of understanding geographic politics (ibid. 84). This is what Woods has later called a ‘politics of the rural’ rather than ‘rural politics’ (Woods 2006), and it is this ‘politics of the rural’ expanded more broadly to incorporate a ‘politics of geographies’ (eg. how ‘the rural’, ‘the urban’ and other geographic imaginaries come to be mobilised and what politics these enable or shut down) which I engage with regarding LGBT equalities throughout the rest of this thesis.

### **2.3.2 - Sexuality and Rural Re/Constructions**

Given the insights of Massey (1999) and Valentine (2002a) regarding the co-productive nature of spaces and social relations, and the work of Woods & Halfacree (2002) on multiple 'ruralities', I now highlight ways in which such geographies are co-constructed through sexualities and sexual identities (see also Browne & McGlynn 2012). Though I focus primarily on sexual minorities such as lesbians and gay men, there is a considerable literature surrounding the material and discursive connections between the rural and heterosexuality (for some examples, see Brown & Rasmussen 2010; Hubbard 2005; Little 2002; Little 2003; Little 2007; Little & Leyshon 2003). Literature specifically engaging with bisexual or trans lives and ruralities seems almost entirely absent (though see Halberstam 2005 for some discussion of trans identities and American Midwest ruralities).

Historically, geographical studies of sexualities have focused on metropolitan urban centres (Bell & Valentine 1995a; Brown 2008; Gorman-Murray et al 2012; Kirkey & Forsyth 2001:423; Lindhorst 1997; Tongson 2011), joined to an implicit teleology of lesbian and gay identity development through the supposedly overwhelming rural to urban migration pattern of sexual minorities (Herring 2007:344; Weston 1995) – indeed, particularly with regard to gay men, the city itself has been said to be key to gay identity formation and community development (Bech 1997; Aldrich 2004). With regard to the rural, geographers have previously explored the troubled and secretive lives of rural lesbians and gay men, in which a repressive rurality polices gender roles and sexualities and results in social difficulties for the non-heterosexual (Bell & Valentine 1995a; Bell & Valentine 1995b; Bowen 2005; Comerford et al 2004; D'Augelli 2006; Fenge & Jones 2012; Kramer 1995; Lindhorst 1997; Little 2003:373; Oswald & Culton 2003:72; Smith 1997), and constricts the development of a 'true' (and implicitly urban) gay/lesbian identity (Kramer 1995; Howard 1999). Geographic literature on sexuality regularly refers to particular features of the urban and the rural which are seen to be of significance with regard to LGBT lives, with the urban/rural dynamic functioning to organise such features as existing in one area and not the other – for instance, writers note a common connection made between urban and city space and features such as

anonymity (Annes and Redlin 2012; Bell and Valentine 1995a; Kennedy 2010:1059; Kirkey and Forsyth 2001; Valentine and Skelton 2003), safety and tolerance of LGBT expression (Gorman-Murray 2009; Hanhardt 2013; Kennedy 2010:1074), access to LGBT-focused and LGBT-friendly services (Gray 2009:5; Lindhorst 1997) and the existence and development of LGBT identities and communities (Herring 2007:344-345; Doderer 2011; Kramer 1995; Brown 2009; Johnston & Longhurst 2009; Gray 2009; Kazzyak 2011; Lindhorst 1997; Gorman-Murray 2008; Bell, 1995; Annes & Redlin 2012; Smith 1997:16; Valentine & Skelton 2003:849). Conversely, rural space is commonly imagined to lack such features or to exhibit their opposite - even the more positive of research papers of sexual minorities in rural areas still indicate recurring issues related to access to services, contested feelings of community (both lesbian/gay and the wider rural community), isolation and lack of information (Comerford et al 2004; Fenge & Jones 2012; Friedman 1997; Haag & Chang 1997; Kennedy 2010; Kirkey & Forsyth 2001; Lindhorst 1997; Smith 1997). However, recent scholarship has increasingly called into question the idea that all rural spaces are intolerant, isolating and sites of anxiety for sexual minorities. A number of studies point to sexual minorities' positive experiences in rural spaces and the ways in which particular rural imaginings - such as those relating to nature, simplicity, friendliness and being quiet - are used to construct the rural as a site of acceptance, alternative identity construction and, noted as important by participants in a number of studies, community (Gray 2009; Herring 2007; Kazzyak 2011; Kennedy 2010; Kirkey & Forsyth 2001; Smith & Holt 2004; Soderstrom 2010; Whittier 1997). Indeed recent scholarship suggests that in Eastern Europe it is urban areas which are understood to be sites of particular intolerance and violence towards LGBT people (Kuhar & Švab 2013), attesting to the importance of geographically specific research.

Some writers have already pointed out the importance of this perceived rural/urban opposition with regard to the discursive and material construction of each, even without considering elements of sexuality (Cloke 2006b:18; Lapping 2006:104; Phillips & Williams 1984:11-13; Woods 2011). As Woods points out (Woods 2007:502), this is not to say that the urban is simply 'overlapping' the rural or dominating it - rather, the discursive dyad of urban/rural simultaneously blurs and



produces each in a variety of specific ways through the inference of difference and opposition to the other (Cloke 2006a:19; Lacour & Puissant 2007; Woods 2011:43-47). Relationships between 'the rural' and 'the urban' appear highly important regarding the ways in which sexual minorities such as lesbians and gay men frame their experiences in rural spaces (Bell & Valentine 1995a:120; Kennedy 2010). At a pragmatic level this can be related to the desire or need to access cities and urban spaces for their particular services or to 'reconnect' with lesbian and gay communities (Gorman-Murray 2012; Kennedy 2010; Kirkey & Forsyth 2001; Smith & Holt 2004). Scholars have shown how sexual minorities living in rural areas deploy discourses which stereotype those in urban areas, constructing their own rural identities in opposition (Cody & Welch 1997; Herring 2007; Kazyak 2011; Kennedy 2010:1078-1079; Kirkey & Forsyth 2001; Soderstrom 2010; Whittier 1997). Kazyak, for example, shows how her participants set up oppositions between being both 'boring' and 'settled' within an intimate (rural) community, in contrast with the undesirable excitement and change of an anonymous (urban) community (Kazyak 2011:570). Indeed, contra work which asserts the intolerant attitudes of rural residents (Kramer 1995; Lindhorst 1997; D'Augelli 2006), Kazyak's participants invert the urban/rural binary through attitudes towards sexuality - so the rural, through all members of the community knowing one another while not acknowledging sexual difference, becomes a space of tolerance, while the city, through interpersonal anonymity and openness of sexual difference, becomes a space of potential homophobic danger (Kazyak 2011:574-575; see also Kuhar & Švab 2013). Similarly, Bell has described how male rural sexual subjects are fetishized by some urban gay men through the use of an urban/rural dynamic which constructs the rural as a site of desirable masculinity versus urban effeminacy (Bell 2000; see also Fellows 1996). Therefore we can see that the imagined constructions of urban and rural spaces – and the relationships between them – are complex, but which can allow for productive reimaginings of supposedly negative rural sexual subjectivities, though the stereotypification of urban subjects, and the potentially exploitative fetishisation noted by Bell, should act as a reminder not to accept this as necessarily or entirely progressive.

Another way in which 'the rural' is discussed by rural geographers, and which again has some

particularly sexualised resonances, is through the concept of the 'rural idyll'. Woods says of the concept, 'This imagines the rural to be a place of peace, tranquillity and simple virtue, contrasted with the bustle and brashness of the city. Whilst the rural idyll has become associated with an escape from modernity, idyllic representations of country life are as old as writing about the rural' (Woods 2011:21; see also Cloke 1994:176, Bell 2006, Bryant & Pini 2011:6-8, Bunce 1984, Woods 2011:21-22 and Woodward & Halfacree 2002:76-77). However, as with the rural more generally, there is no singular rural idyll – Bunce, for example, describes a rich variety of iterations of rural idylls as differentiated through nations, specific rural environments, religions and histories (Bunce 1984), therefore we are more accurately talking about a variety of rural idylls (DuPuis 2006:129; Lapping 2006:104; Short 2006; Sibley 2006:403; Woods 2011:26; Woodward & Halfacree 2002:76-77). Rural idylls are not simply imagined spaces – as Woods points out, middle-class imaginings of rural idylls continue to impact on national policymaking and can have a profound material impact on rural landscapes, environments and communities (Woods 2011:22; see also Bell 2006:152, Short 2006:144, Tickamyer 2006:980, Woods 2001:176 and Woodward & Halfacree 2002).

Rural sexualities offer another way in which to look at specific operations of the rural idyll, while also showing how idylls can themselves be constructed through sexuality. While the importance of 'natural' heterosexualities and the disavowal of sexual 'others' in the construction and representation of idylls has been noted (Bell 2006; Cloke 2003), a body of work has also explored homosexual and lesbian and gay rural idylls (Bell 2000; Bell & Valentine 1995a; Gorman-Murray 2011; Herring 2007; Kirkey & Forsyth 2001). Here rural idylls can be constructed to include and valorise homosexuality and lesbian and gay identities, drawing on ideas such as essential womanhood, nature, the primitive and the spiritual (Anlin 1989; Bell & Valentine 1995a:8; Bell 2000; Bell 2006; Gorman-Murray 2011:13; Herring 2007), which in turn leads to the production of particular sexualised subjectivities such as the Bell's masculine farm boys (Bell 2000) and the radical faerie movement (Herring 2007:301). Thus rural idylls do not necessarily exclude the non-heterosexual – they can be part of the production of new identities and subjectivities, actively embraced by rural residents, and also retain the power to reshape the materialities of rural space

through migration, tourism and the construction of the physical landscape (Gorman-Murray 2011).

However, while rural idylls are clearly an important and widely-discussed configuration of rurality, some writers have warned against imputing too much causal or explanatory power to the idyll (Browne 2011; Little 1999; Woodward & Halfacree 2002:84). Therefore other rural imaginaries and constructs remain important. DuPuis has argued that who gets to live in rural space, who is imagined to fit, and what they do there, are key ways in which the rural is constructed (DuPuis 2006:129) – in other words, the discursive and material inclusion or exclusion of ‘the Other’ from a supposedly ‘*gemeinschaft*’ rural community linked with stability and closeness (Clope 2006b; Sibley 2006; Parr et al 2004; Roche 2002; Woods 2011:173-175; Woodward & Halfacree 2002:81). One frequently-cited essay by Chris Philo argues that rural geographers need to stop portraying rural people as ‘Mr Average’ or ‘little armies of faceless, classless, sexless beings... basically obeying the great economic laws of minimising effort and cost in negotiating physical space’ (Philo 1992:200) and start paying attention to neglected rural others to better engage with the discursive and material realities of the rural (see also Clope 2006b:21, Woods 2011:8-9). Clope has also remarked upon the need not just to mark difference or ‘the Other’ but to explore how and why this comes to matter (Clope 2006b; see also Bryant & Pini 2011:9). Otherwise, the risk is that difference becomes trivialised as novelty and/or reified as essential and universal rather than dynamic and geographically particular (Clope 2006b; see also Little 1999). Similarly, Parr asks us to consider that inclusion and exclusion are not a fixed binary, and that rural ‘Others’ may feel and experience both inclusion and exclusion in rural spaces at different times (Parr et al 2004:104).

These two caveats – noting the diversity of rural Others and of experiences of inclusion/exclusion - feel particularly relevant in coming to look at sexuality in rural spaces. Research exploring particular rural communities of sexual minorities often highlight differences between the experiences of inclusion and community of lesbians and gay men (Comerford et al 2004; D’Augelli 2006:204; Kirkey & Forsyth 2001), indicating that there are no universal experiences of rurality with regard to sexualities. Equally important in this research appears to be the role of class and education – while

both Kirkey & Forsyth and their research participants seem reticent about admitting the potential importance of wealth and class in constructing an inclusive rural community (Kirkey & Forsyth 2001), several other writers remark upon how their participants see wealth, class and higher education as being key to their inclusion in rural spaces and developing rural lesbian and gay communities (D'Augelli 2006; Kazyak 2011:369; Kennedy 2010; Oswald & Culton 2003; Smith & Holt 2004; Whittier 1997). Finally, some less socially-marked factors also speak to the diverse experiences and ambiguous feelings of inclusion/exclusion amongst rural sexual minorities. Both Gray (2009) and Kazyak (2011) have noted the importance of factors such as familiarity with the rural community, being known as a good person and having local/familial roots in constructing ruralities as tolerant of sexual difference. However, these factors themselves produce their own logics of specific inclusions and exclusions, with ambiguous acceptance of some sexual subjectivities on the basis of being a 'good person' or a local (Kazyak 2011:574), while creating problematic exclusions of 'gays and lesbians of color living in rural areas who cannot lay claim to having ties to the community for generations' (ibid.).

#### **2.4 - Equalities and Equalities of Sexualities**

In Sections 2 and 3 I have highlighted a number of problems and issues for LGBT people, and particularly in connection with geographies of the urban and the rural. In Section 4 I will examine 'equality' as one of the key ways in which such problems have come to be tackled in the UK. I discuss how the concept of 'equality' has been theorised, particularly with regard to sexualities and sexual identities. Equality is a term used frequently and across a variety of positions on the political spectrum of the contemporary United Kingdom, and indeed throughout much of the world as a whole. Despite its frequent usage, and feelings that equality is something easy to recognise or understand (Hare 2001:352; Raz 2001:37), it has been argued that it is most often used purely for rhetorical effect (ibid. 49-51) – Baker, Lynch, Cantillon and Walsh suggest the term 'basic equality' as a way to describe the most common uses of the term 'equality' (Baker et al 2009:23-24), but

rather than a coherent political or theoretical framework, this seems instead to refer to simplistic and uncritical uses of the term. This is not to say that complex and critical approaches necessarily provide us with clear answers - within political, legal and social theories and activism alike, equality is a fraught and highly contested term, one use of which may stand in direct opposition to another (Baker et al 2009; Beteille 1986; Daniel 1997:11; Hajdin 2001; Wilson 1993:171-172). Due to the diverse and slippery array of often competing definitions of 'equality', and the evident difficulty (perhaps impossibility) of developing a universally-accepted definition, I regularly use the term 'equalities' throughout this thesis to refer to this variety of understandings and discourses surrounding 'equality'.

Rather than examining the concept of equality from every theoretical angle – a project which would be beyond the scope of this literature review – I follow a large number of scholars in focusing primarily on equality from the perspective of liberal ideology (for some alternative approaches, see Thomas & Levin 1999 on libertarianism, and Ball 2003 and Daniel 1997 on communitarianism). I make this choice for three reasons. Firstly, liberalism makes equality one of its key tenets (Baker et al 2009:24:32; Franklin 1997:1) and there is a wealth of literature engaging with the concept. Second, liberalism has been widely influential on political thinking in the UK and in the global north (Blasius 2001:8) and its key tenets of individualism, public/private divide, freedom and equality have come to dominate mainstream politics. Finally, since the initial gay liberation movement of the 60s and 70s, gay and lesbian activists in the UK have been noted to increasingly use liberal conceptions of equality as a means with which to improve social conditions for LGB people (Plummer 1999). Despite the powerful and influential position of liberal thinking, however, a growing number of critiques of liberal conceptions of equality have emerged, particularly from within LGBT and queer activism and theorisation.

I begin by outlining some important liberal concepts that relate to equality through asking the reason for seeking equality, before moving onto exploring key liberal theories of equalities, structuring this using the question made (in)famous by Amartya Sen, 'equality of what?' (Sen 1980).

I argue that egalitarian liberal debates surrounding resource-based equalities of opportunity and equalities of welfare have formed the core of liberal theorising about equality but lack important insights about the lives of marginalised groups, including women, black and ethnic (BME) minorities and LGBT people. I then highlight how equality has been considered and used within LGBT activism and theory. In this section I reiterate some earlier sexuality-based critiques of liberal equalities, but also demonstrate that activists and scholars of sexualities have themselves heavily criticised the liberal equality approach used by many LGBT activists, particularly with regard to the way in which equality is said to promote 'sameness'.

#### **2.4.1 - Introducing Liberal Equalities**

The question of why it is we aim for equality, in whatever form it might take, seems to have little in the way of a definite answer – indeed, as Flathman points out, it has in many cases become self-justifying, an excuse for action purely on the basis that that action will enact or improve equality (Flathman 2001). This uncritical approach, that we would try to create equality without asking the reason for it, has the potential to do harm or violence to those people, groups or societies we would seek to benefit (Anderson 1999:287; Flathman 2001; Hare 2001; Powers 2001). In fact the reason for equality appears to be something rarely asked, though liberal egalitarians often appeal to a sense of fairness, common sense or moral/ethical intuition (Daniels 1989; Kappel 2001; Norman 1995:26; Wolff 1998:98). One of the main reasons for this sense, from a liberal perspective, is the suggestion that humanity shares a particular essence in common, that we are all the same deep down inside - John Rawls, in his famous egalitarian treatise, 'A Theory of Justice' (1972), elaborates on this, saying that because our core selves are neutral and ignorant with regard to any definable attributes or abilities or state of the world – what he calls the 'Original Position' (Rawls 1972:17-21) – they are therefore indistinguishable. The answers surrounding the question 'Why equality?', then, are complex. This has led some to question whether 'equality' is even a useful term (Anderson 1999; Flathman 2001; Hare 2001), with Powers suggesting that instead of

unthinkingly devoting ourselves to an ill-defined 'equality' when we can't even explain why we seek it, we might instead dispense with the concept entirely and instead think of what specific aims and objectives we wish to achieve (Powers 2001). Due to the continuing discursive and political force of equality I continue to explore it here, but I leave this question open.

Since, as I have already noted, conceptual confusion surrounding equality can lead to strife and harm, it is therefore of vital importance that we decide the way in which people are to be made equal (Hajdin 2001). Sen's 1979 Tanner Lecture of the same title asked the question 'equality of what?' (Sen 1980), and Wolff writes that this, along with the writings of Ronald Dworkin and G A Cohen, kick-started serious engagement with the referents of equality. Hajdin outlines the most common answers to this question, including equality of wealth (also called equality of outcome), equality of opportunity, equality of welfare or capability, and equality of recognition (Hajdin 2001). Despite these different areas of theoretical exploration it has been noted that 'equality of what' has very often come down to a matter of money or resources (Anderson 1999; Powers 2001:391) – the American political journalist and scholar Mickey Kaus has suggested that liberal politicians' and political theorists' relentless focus on equality-as-money is in fact one major reason why wider social equalities have not been achieved (Kaus 1992). I therefore begin by examining some of the most influential theories surrounding the equality of opportunity and the equality of welfare via the works of John Rawls and Ronald Dworkin, both of which I argue are resource-focused equalities. I will also argue that neither engages adequately with the subject of sexual identity groups such as lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and trans (LGBT) people, and that the liberal underpinnings of both types of equality actually create particular problems for LGBT people.

Note that I do not engage with equality of wealth/outcome (that is, a situation in which all of those deemed equal possess the same amount of money) in the following sections – as Oppenheimer (2001) has explained, any actual equality of wealth would vanish almost as soon as it came into being. However I will come back to this point in the form of equality of outcome, which Baker et al use as shorthand for their more multidimensional equality of condition (Baker et al 2009:35).

## 2.4.2 - Equality of Resources or Equality of Opportunity?

Liberal approaches to equality tend to take one of two approaches – equality of resources or equality of opportunity (Cooper 2004). The former is epitomised in Dworkin’s pair of classic 1981 essays, ‘What is Equality? Part 1 - Equality of Welfare’ and, aptly, ‘What is Equality? Part 2 - Equality of Resources’. Dworkin argue that since to implement equality of welfare there would need to be a measurement of welfare, he suggests in his second paper that commodifiable resources be used as this measurement, to be distributed according to an equality of opportunity (Dworkin 1981b). Tackling this measurement, John Rawls has attempted to provide a reason for equality and an ostensible means of achieving it that would make sense from the perspective of a purely rational and self-interested individual. This individual in many ways encapsulates the liberal subject – detached, neutral with regard to any defining factors, attributes or abilities, economically rational and fundamentally identical to all other (human) subjects. This is described by Rawls as the ‘Original Position’ (1972:17-21). Basing his arguments on the sciences of genetics and child psychology, he rejects meritocracies as an unfair lottery based purely on chance – instead, his argument is that only what a person chooses should be considered fair and equal. However, as a form of social contract between subjects in the Original Position, a set of Primary Goods are agreed upon to which all should have equal access (see esp. Rawls 1972:62,92) – these Primary Goods are said to be whatever any rational individual in the Original Position would want, no matter what else they wanted. The Original Position and Primary Goods are two of the key concepts in Rawlsian thinking, but both have come under sustained criticism, particularly from feminist and critical race theorists, and also more recently from theorists of sexualities and sexual identities.

Conversely, equality of opportunity is the term used for a conception of equality widely popular throughout the capitalist world and particularly in the global north (Dworkin 1981b; Douglas & Devins 1998; Oomen 2002:46; Van Dyke 1990:35). For the purposes of this review I mostly use Dworkin’s well-known and influential approach to outline the basics of equalities of opportunity. In its simplest form, Dworkin’s approach to equality is an equality of opportunity *for resources*, which



states that only an individual's choices will dictate what opportunities that individual will have access to, with 'opportunity' referring to anything that is beneficial to that individual. This means that any factor, attribute or ability which is not chosen by the individual, with these factors referred to as 'brute luck' (Dworkin 1981b:296-297) will in some way be ameliorated or removed from influencing the outcome of the opportunity. This brings in the aforementioned liberal view of the individual subject – fairness is based on humanity as pared down to their indistinguishable core essence, not the bodies and minds affected by the diverse impacts of genetics, environment or society (Wolff 1998:105-106). Conversely, if a choice is made, with sufficient knowledge of what the choice entails, that individual must stand by the outcome of the opportunity, for better or for worse – Dworkin refers to this as 'option luck' (Dworkin 1981b:293-299).

Elizabeth Anderson has been one of the most scathing critics of this conception of equality, which she terms 'luck egalitarianism' (Anderson 1999). In brief, she firstly argues that it makes normative judgements about who is talented or useful and who is untalented and useless (ibid.289; see also Oomen 2002:47 and Wolff 1998 on the effects of these judgements) – therefore it necessarily assigns certain groups of people lower value and encourages us to see cosmic luck, rather than people, as sources of oppression and suffering (Anderson 1999:336). Secondly, Anderson explains that it legitimises the exclusion of those who lose out via option luck on the grounds that it is their own fault, while simultaneously misrepresenting people's capacity for exercising the personal responsibility it demands of them (ibid.).

### **2.4.3 - Problems for Liberal Equalities**

Probably the most well-established critiques of neutral, rational and universally identical subject positions such as the Original Position, which are central to liberal political theory (references forthcoming), revolve around the irony of universalising individuals to mask their specific differences. As Van Dyke suggests, many egalitarian theorists take surprisingly little interest in exactly who (and what) this concept includes and excludes – surprising due to the vast resources

that any programme of equality implementation might require, which surely would make the question of who it applies to an extremely important one (Van Dyke 1990:24-26). A large number of feminist writers, particularly from within second wave difference feminism, have demonstrated that universalist liberal subject positions inevitably hide gender-based inequalities and specific experiences behind the facade of universal identity, which almost inevitably posits men and culturally male values such as robust individualism and cold rationality as the universal norm, while denying culturally female values such as empathy, emotion and mutual obligation (Abrams 1998; Elshtain 1989; Franklin 1997:1; Lynch et al 2009:26; Mitchell 1989:38-39; Norman 1995:61-62; Phillips 1987; Scott 1994; Van Dyke 1990:9; see also Currah 1995 on the historical contingency of rationality). Similar critiques have emerged from critical race theorists regarding the universalising and normalising of whiteness as the core self, which masks the specific inequalities and needs of non-white people and works to erase their institutions and values (see esp. Days 1998). The parallels between racial and gender-based critiques of the liberal subject position and the situation of sexual minorities such as gays and lesbians has been noted by Mark Blasius, amongst others, who note the positioning of the straight as normal and universal (Blasius 2001:7; Wilson 1997b:166-167). Anne Phillips suggests that a fundamental problem with this kind of subjectivity is that its focus on universal, identical individuality means that it has tremendous problems accounting for *groups* of people, such as women, BME people and LGB people (Ball 2003; Beteille 1986; Oomen 2002; Phillips 1987:15-16), marked as they are by deviation from a norm with which liberalism would align them.

From Dworkin's explanation of option luck we can see that the concept of free will – the ability of a discrete individual to make rational choices, as made manifest in the liberal subject discussed in the previous section – is of vital importance to equality of opportunity (Arneson 1989:87; White 1997:69). Without it there could be no appeal to the fairness of option luck, as choices, effort and hard work would all be revealed to be subject to the same external factors termed as brute luck. Yet despite this, egalitarian theorists near-universally fail to engage with the idea that rational human decision-making could be compromised (for examples, see Dworkin 1981b; Miller 1997;

Lloyd Thomas 2001). Even when the subject is raised, by Arneson for example, who raises the spectres of determinism (Arneson 1989:87) and spur-of-the-moment decisions influenced by emotions (ibid. 82), it is simply brushed aside as though, in the former case, not worth consideration or, in the latter case, easily remedied (see Ball 2001:284; Freeberg 2002:95; Norman 1995).

Finally, related to the critiques of the supposed neutrality of the liberal subject is the critique of liberalism's enactment of a strict division between prescribed public and private spheres. This is based on liberal autonomy, so that only those actions which impinge on the autonomy of others are considered public and therefore valid topic of liberal analysis – by way of contrast, the private sphere is that which is considered not to impact on others and in which an individual subject is therefore free to act without constraint. In 'Affective Equality' Baker et al point out that this distinction actually disregards what many people may consider to be some of the most important things in their lives – their loves and lovers, cares and carers (Baker 2009). Blasius once again points to the lessons which theorists and activists of sexualities and sexual identities can learn from feminism, suggesting that sexuality has been negated as a valid subject of political analysis through the same processes (Blasius 2001:7).

#### **2.4.4 - Alternative Approaches to Equalities**

In this section I describe three other approaches to equality which attempt to break from the resource-based paradigm which seems prominent in liberal egalitarian theory. These are Sen and Nussbaum's capabilities approach; the radical equalities of condition recently described by Baker, Lynch, Cantillon and Walsh; and equalities of status, respect and recognition, which I will argue have had some of the greatest impact on LGB engagements with equality.

When Sen asked 'Equality of what?', he also proposed a paradigmatic shift in thinking about what the referent of equality should be. Rather than thinking about equality in terms of access to wealth

or other resources, Sen followed on from Rawls' idea of Primary Goods to suggest that what is important is what goods *do* to and for people (Sen 1980:218). This leads him to conceive of what he describes as 'basic capability equality (ibid.) and, with Martha Nussbaum, has set out a more encompassing approach to equality in human well-being than older accounts of equalities of welfare (Nussbaum & Sen 1993). Unlike these approaches the capabilities approach can be used to take into account love, sex and caring – usually relegated to the 'private' sphere and hence outside the area of analysis – not merely as impacting on people's lives but as vital to human flourishing and development (Baker 2009:31-32). Anderson also endorses this approach for its awareness of human diversity (see for example Sen 1980:215), which she argues enables us to consider the possibility of planned and deliberate disparity in resources actually contributing to equality (Anderson 1999:319-320).

However, it has long been noted that pinning down what people's basic needs might be is a task of surpassing difficulty (Dworkin 1981a; Oppenheimer 2001), and the capabilities approach has been criticised for some of the same universalising tendencies seen in Rawls' work, in that it aims to produce fixed lists (now of capabilities rather than goods) which are needed to provide certain levels of functioning for everyone (Arnseson 1989:91; Freeberg 2002). Despite its attentiveness to human diversity it may still reproduce some of the universalising tendencies discussed earlier.

A more recent and much more radical approach to equality has been suggested by Lynch, Baker, Cantillon and Walsh in their 2009 book 'Equality – From Theory to Action'. In this they make a pointed move away from liberal theories of equality, advocating a multidimensional set of interdependent equality strands consisting of resources; love, care and solidarity; power; work and learning; and respect and recognition. They suggest that the real reason liberal approaches to equality have been relatively unsuccessful is their focus on resources and for allowing for immense gaps in equality to be created and maintained not long after a baseline equality (eg. Rawls' equal distribution of primary goods or Dworkin's initial equalisation) has been established (Baker 2009:41-42). Arguing that it is liberal institutions themselves which need a radical rethinking, they

advocate creating a context of continuing equality of condition with respect to the strands described above, so that failures and bad choices made would not adversely impact future opportunities (ibid. 34). While this is a relatively new approach without a great deal of discussion in the literature, it demonstrates at least that there is increasing attention to the prospect of moving equalities away from purely resource-based approaches and away from the liberal ideology that often goes alongside them.

Finally, I will discuss in brief the idea of equalities of status, respect and/or recognition. Wolff has argued cogently that ideas like mutual respect are of great importance to human welfare and quality of life, but that they are routinely excluded or ignored in resource-based equality schemes (Wolff 1998; see also Miller 1997). Oomen concurs, suggesting that individual and group perceptions of one another are in fact a main source of inequality in society (Oomen 2002:13). As mentioned in Section 4.3 of this chapter, liberal theories of equalities often have problems dealing with groups, precisely because issues of status, recognition and respect come into play when we abandon the preconception that every individual is ultimately the same deep down inside. Groups express difference. Nancy Fraser links this to the perception of most liberal theorists that claims for recognition are ultimately 'cultural' claims and thus outside the legitimate field of liberal politics (Fraser 2001). Fraser counters this by instead arguing that misrecognition is in fact an inequality just as much a matter for liberal theorists as inequalities based on innate attributes, abilities etc – since individual people are denied the status of being 'full partners in social interaction' due to 'cultural patterns of valuing' (ibid. 25-26), egalitarians should turn to overcoming these patterns of valuing, thus avoiding the problems liberal theory has with the valorisation of particular identities. This politics of equality by 'official recognition' is now widely engaged in by LGB activists (Currah 2001; see also Mertus 2007 Newton 2009:35, Plummer 1999, Porter 2010, Wilson 1995:3-5), and therefore it is now to LGBT people and equality that I now turn to explore this further.

#### **2.4.5 - Equalities and LGBT People**

As mentioned in the previous section, there was a marked historical shift in the UK in LGBT politics towards the end of the last century, from a politics of liberation from oppression to a politics of acceptance and recognition (Bain & Nash 2007:20; Currah 2010; Drucker 2000; Mertus 2007; Newton 2009:35; Plummer 1999; Porter 2010; Seidman 2001; Spade 2011; Stone 2009; Wilson 1995:3-5). However studies of LGBT equalities have tended to rest on 'equality' as a given without exploring its discursive character (see Monro 2010; Richardson 2005); conversely, normative constructions and deployments of 'equality' are explored in some detail through wider literatures surrounding LGBT politics and sexual citizenship (see Cooper 2004; Duggan 1994; Duggan 2003; Spade 2011; Stychin 2000; Stychin 2003), but this literature rarely engages with how 'equality' emerges through the embodied performances and discourses of state and public sector actors. Instead, LGBT 'equality' seems to be generally based around a liberal view of universal humanity (Mertus 2007:1064; Newton 2009:47) and at the moment seems dominated in the global north by the fight for same-sex marriage (Drucker 2000:219; Newton 2009:64-74) – this goes for liberal-leaning academics (Mohr 1988; Ball 2003) as well as activists. In the UK, Ken Plummer identifies the LGB advocacy group Stonewall as the exemplar of this approach (Plummer 1999). In previous sections I have identified serious problems that liberal equality approaches might throw up for LGBT people, but it is clear that there are important reasons for not abandoning this approach out of hand. Firstly, it has been undeniably successful in some regards, winning important legal and political battles in ways that can be said to have improved the lives of many LGBT people (Altman 1997; Gamson 1995; Seidman 1993:110; Spade 2011). However, Plummer has identified a potentially dangerous sense of completed achievement surrounding the successes of this politics of integration and recognition (Plummer 1999:151) – dangerous in that some LGBT people may have gained at the expense of others, as I will outline below, and also because it may discourage LGBT people from pushing for more radical and potentially beneficial changes to society. Furthermore, a number of writers have come forward to suggest that this movement may not have been as successful as we might imagine, citing lost opportunities for change, exclusion, limited effectiveness

of equality policies and a marked gap between policy creation and implementation (Beger 2000; Colgan et al 2009; Herman 1994). Herman also points to the irony of a system which insists on sexual minorities making claims for equality while simultaneously encouraging them to think of the sexuality- and identity-based inequalities they face as inconsequential and unrelated to politics (Herman 1994:252). In addition, Knopp notes that 'mainstream' LGBT equality politics is primarily engaged in and aimed at benefiting urban-dwelling LGBT people (Knopp 1998).

On the other hand, while she is critical of politics of gaining recognition and acceptance, Paisley Currah makes an important point by suggesting that LGB activists, despite academics leaning away from liberal theory, often *need* to work within the dominant (liberal) system in order to make any changes whatsoever (Currah 2001:178-180). This pragmatic approach is echoed by Carlos Ball, himself a liberal-leaning academic. He argues that even if social constructionist and queer theory explanations of sexualities and identities are correct, and that the liberal conception of the individual self is utterly wrong, LGB (and, to extrapolate, trans people, though not specifically discussed by Ball) people still have a vested interest in continuing to engage in liberal equality politics lest we risk losing what we have gained so far (Ball 2001:282-283). In his 2003 work 'The Morality of Gay Rights', however, he advocates a slightly different approach. Arguing that the gay rights movement has ceded ground to the anti-gay religious right by granting them sole access to moral arguments, Ball advocates using Nussbaum's capabilities approach to make a moral case for gay rights – essentially fighting fire with fire (Ball 2003). This seems like a distinctive shift away from his earlier status quo pragmatism – and if LGB politics must change its tactics, then why not make more radical cases? Ball's problem seems to be that he expects queer theoretical approaches to incorporate a familiar sense of equality and common humanity, taking these as a priori facts, while not recognising that more radical approaches to LGBT politics and theorisation may interpret these terms in completely different ways or even abandon them in favour of other explanatory and analytic tools entirely. To return to Currah after this detour, he concludes that, while useful and pragmatic, liberal equality approaches may simply be 'too blunt an instrument' to deal effectively with pluralistic societies and multiple marginalisations (Currah 2001:191), echoing the critiques of

more general liberal equality approaches seen in Section 4.4 of this chapter. However, since it is unlikely this kind of politics will end any time soon, Beger (2000:265) and Herman (1993) both advise looking for ways in which to enact a more radical politics through the struggles for liberal equality for sexual minorities, and suggest that the journey might ultimately prove more useful and transformative than the end. Here there is an echo of the transgender/transsexual 'either/or' 'both/none' discussion earlier – we must understand the importance of both sides of this equation, while realising that these are not two polar positions. Rather, there are multiple positions negotiated and moved across daily in LGBT lives.

Another aspect of the more general discussion of liberal equality theories discussed earlier, and which has particular relevance to LGBT equality politics, is the concept of choice versus 'brute luck', meaning arbitrary factors over which individuals have no control (Thomas & Levin 1999:85). A familiar feature of debates surrounding the equality of sexual minorities, most prominent in the USA but also present in the UK, is an argument about whether or not sexual identity is a choice or an innate feature. LGBT advocates arguing from a liberal equality perspective near-universally argue that it is an unchosen and innate feature of an individual (Cooper 1994:12; Duggan 1994; Forrest & Ellis 2006:92; Stone 2011; Stychin 2003:34-35); anti-gay opponents tend to argue that non-straight sexual identities, at least, are a matter of conscious choice, and have been noted to utilise the some of the arguments of social constructionism (Bower 1997:269; Cooper 1994:12; Currah 1995; Linneman 2004:56-58; Newton 2009:47). Scholars have shown that this has gone beyond a mere matter of political expedience – the former LGBT advocates now *need* to argue from the position of 'born this way', as the strict binary dynamic now in play means that to deny this would leave them open to their opponents' argument (Currah 2001:179; Newton 2009:73). Indeed liberal scholars in favour of LGBT equality, such as Richard Mohr, have expressed considerable fear about the potential damage that could be done by social constructionist and queer theories, which he believes imply that active choice can be exercised over one's sexual identity (Mohr 1988). Although I feel Mohr is wrong on this count, his trepidation is nevertheless understandable, for if he makes this mistake then it is likely that unforgiving opponents of LGBT equality will make it too.



Again, the problem is how to ensure that these positions do not become fixed, and that their fluidity and flexibility can be recognised and utilised. Building on this problem, I move on now to discuss issues of assimilation and normalisation which scholars have linked to LGBT equalities.

#### **2.4.6 - Assimilation and Normalisation**

I have previously discussed the ways in which liberal theories of equality can work to normalise certain dominant identity groups, such as men, white people and straight people. In this penultimate section I elaborate on this with regard to LGB people and LGB equality politics. This normalising of straight lives, in which they are coded as the default, the standard, while non-straight lives are coded as deviant and other, is commonly described as 'heteronormativity' (Lynch et al 2009:25; Weiss 2001). Over the past decade the complementary term 'homonormativity' has gone into wide circulation amongst academics writing about sexualities and sexual identities.

Described by Lisa Duggan in 2003, homonormativity involves the maintenance of heteronormativity by non-heterosexuals while simultaneously regulating practices of sexuality so that 'undesirable' forms of sexuality and sexual and identity are excluded (Bain & Nash 2007:21; Bell & Binnie 2004; Brown 2009:1499; Carabine 1995; Seidman 2001:323; Weiss 2001:96; see also Spade 2011 for a similar argument revolving around specifically trans politics). One manifestation of this is what Bell and Binnie term 'safe exoticism' (Bell & Binne 2004:1816), so that society recognises and legitimises 'good gays' who operate under the aegis of liberal equality, while excluding 'bad queers' who do not (Johnson 2002:330; Smith 1994; Stychin 1995; Stychin 2000). Those so recognised are often expected to demonstrate that they are model economic citizens, high earning and high spending (Bell & Binnie 2004:1815; Beger 2000:250; Weiss 2001:91). Therefore the liberal politics of recognition serves to recognise and legitimise some within groups marginalised by their sexuality or sexual identity, but at the same time regulates these groups – and encourages them to self-regulate – to exclude those not deemed worthy of inclusion within the liberal project. Therefore we may

conclude that the flight to the official recognition of identity may create further problems for LGB people who do not inhabit a position of privilege (Bowers 1997:267).

While this homonormativity is often discussed within the context of LGB communities within the global north, it has wider international implications too. The global spread of lesbian and gay identities as a default to which all sexual minorities are expected align themselves has been widely noted, which may be connected to the spread of liberal-based doctrines of rights (Altman 1997; Drucker 2000; Mertus 2007:1064). Drucker suggests that this may be an actively dangerous approach to impose on burgeoning sexual minority movements in the global south, where economic and social equalities with the rest of the world are lacking, where acceptance and assimilation might be impossible, and where there are already diverse sexual identity cultures at risk of being invisibilised by the globalisation of gay and lesbian identities (Drucker 2000). Others have identified the influence of homonormativity on international foreign policy (Puar 2006), legitimising Western interventions in the Middle East and further afield.

This is not to say that the concept of homonormativity has gone unchallenged. Gavin Brown, for example, warns against positing homonormativity as a universal and all-encompassing force, suggesting that such a construction makes us overlook the complexities of LGB lives and communities (Brown 2009). Meanwhile Johnson and Rosenfeld have both suggested potentially more positive views of homonormativity – Johnson says that practices we might call homonormative, such as same-sex marriage, can have some subversive potential to challenge heteronormativity (Johnson 2002), while Rosenfeld reports how actively upholding heteronormativity, rather than just ‘passing’ as straight, has been an important safety mechanism for older gay and lesbian people in the past (Rosenfeld 2009). Though we may question the validity of this approach today, Rosenfeld’s work along with these others does suggest the need to examine how homonormativity operates in specific situations rather than as a universal force.

Similar to my approach to LGBT identity politics and queer critiques thereof described in Section 2.1 of this chapter, in this thesis I attempt to acknowledge the usefulness and impact of both more

liberal LGBT equality politics and the critiques of them – while the trenchant critiques of ‘equality’ projects are compelling, nevertheless it seems nigh-impossible to escape such projects’ discursive and political gravity, and unreasonable to entirely dismiss their effects as negative or problematically assimilative. As with sexual and gender identities (in Section 2 of this chapter), I consider it less important (for the purposes of this thesis) and far beyond the scope of this thesis to fix on a ‘correct’ approach to LGBT equality, or indeed on an approach which outright rejects equality. Rather I am interested in **how such discussions are developed** and **what such discussions do**, and therefore this more deconstructive and performative approach informs my engagement with LGBT equality throughout the thesis.

## **2.5 - States and Social Policies**

As suggested throughout Section 2.4, equalities and equalities of sexualities are linked by a number of writers to the state and state welfare. In this final section of the chapter I introduce literature from writers exploring social policy and policymaking with regard to sexualities and sexual identities<sup>3</sup>. I then outline the connections writers have drawn between social policy, state services, the welfare state and questions of equality and justice, proceeding to explore how sexuality has been explored through social policy, and vice versa. I then move on to the ‘rational problem solving’ model common within social policy (Bacchi 2009; Hogwood & Gunn 1984; Smith & May 1980; Spicker 1995), and how this interacts with issues of sexualities. Finally I begin to explore issues of sexual citizenship and connections to the state and social policies.

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<sup>3</sup> A note on geographic specificity - due to the different political administrative structures of different countries, not to mention cultural differences in the interpretation of social policy and policy analysis, I attempt to mostly focus my discussion of the state on the UK, particularly through writers such as Carabine, Cooper, Monro, Stychin and Richardson. However, where appropriate writers from elsewhere (particularly the USA and Australia) are also discussed. It may also be worth noting at this stage the temporal and political context important to explorations of social policy and the state with regard to sexualities and sexual identities – the importance of this specificity is made clear through the works of, for example, Cooper (1994) and Stychin (2003, esp. his discussion of indicative ‘moments’, pp. 1-3), revealing that the re/production of the state and social policy is not merely influenced by this context but inseparable from it.

### 2.5.1 - An Introduction to the State

This chapter outlines my conceptualisation of 'the state'. Though the state has been described as dead, dying, 'hollow' or simply irrelevant by some scholars over recent decades it remains widely discussed and an important concept (Cooper 1995:59-60; Cooper & Monro 2003:233; Marinetto 2007:5; Mitchell 1991:77; Peters & Pierre 2006:221-222). Following a wide variety of scholars, I begin with the understanding that the state is an elusive and highly contested concept, and that despite many theories of the state being developed even a compelling definition has yet to be established (Allum 1995:294; Brown 1995:174; Cooper 1995; Flinders 2006:223; Hay 2006:60; Hay & Lister 2006: 1; Lister & Marsh 2006:249; Mann 1984:60; Marinetto 2007:11-30; Mitchell 1991:77; Nozick 1974; Painter 1995:29; Painter 2000:359; Passoth & Rowland 2010:820). In Sections 5.2-4 I begin by outlining attempts to clearly define the state, then explore critiques of these definitions which highlight the difficulties in producing any one definition of what the state 'is'. In Section 5.5 I move beyond the desire to 'define' the state in any kind of fixed or universal way and explain my own use of 'the state' in this thesis – I argue that '*What does the state do?*' and '*How is the state done?*' are more useful questions in interrogating a phenomenon that is spatially widespread; geographically, historically and discursively specific; internally contested (while simultaneously contesting the very idea of a state interior); and constructed by a variety of boundary-making performative practices (Cooper 1995:66; Dunn 2009; Mitchell 1991; Painter 2006).

However, as Wendy Brown has noted, a key problem facing anyone writing about the state from such a position, drawing as it does on poststructuralist arguments which challenge the unified and bounded essential state, is that it is incredibly difficult to *not* essentialise 'the state' when discussing it (Brown 1995:174). It may be particularly difficult not to discuss the state as though it were a coherent actor, given that this is how it is frequently, even if inadvertently, discussed in academia, activism and popular culture in the UK (Duggan 1994; Cooper 1995:106; Lee 2011; Mann 1984:71; Passoth & Rowland 2010; Rhodes 1988:2; Sorensen 2004:15-16). With such caveats in mind, I draw further on the work of Davina Cooper and her writings with Surya Monro, by

suggesting that a performative understanding of the state enables us to capture particular performed state identities – identities which are fragmented and less than coherent, but which may give us some ontological purchase when we wish to discuss ‘the state’ without fully reifying it (Cooper & Monro 2003, see also Cooper 1995).

### **2.5.2 - ‘Classical’ Approaches**

To define the state in any kind of fixed sense would also imply that the state had an essential nature – universal aspects or forms prior to any historical, geographical or discursive specificity – and this has indeed been posited by some of the most widely-known theorists of the state (Hay & Lister 06:5; see esp. Marinetto 2007 on Plato, Hegel and Marx). Colin Hay and Michael Lister have described three broad theories of the state as a ‘classical triumvirate’ (Hay & Lister 2006:15) – specifically these are Pluralism, Elitism and Marxism.

Pluralism, as described by Martin Smith, focuses on the role of groups (as opposed to individuals) in society and suggests that the role of the state should be limited (Smith 2006:36), concentrating on ameliorating the power differentials between these groups (ibid.; see also Hay & Lister 2006, Marinetto 2007:12-15, Smith 2009:53-55). Elitism, too, focuses on groups – specifically, Elitist state theories argue that the state is dominated and controlled by a socially-cohesive, well-resourced group who are separated from wider ‘civil society’ (Evans 2006; Hay & Lister 2006; Marinetto 2007:15-20; Smith 2009:60-65). Evans notes that this position is increasingly difficult to uphold from an empirical point of view, with evidence pointing against cohesive and sustainable groups of elites (Evans 2006:57). Finally Marxist engagements with the state fall short of providing one overarching theory – Colin Hay argues ‘there is no Marxist theory of the state – there couldn’t be’ (Hay 2006:76). However, Hay goes on to argue that Marxist scholars are keenly concerned with whether the state is a tool of capitalism and dominant classes (Hay 2006; see also Hay & Lister 2006, Marinetto 2007, Smith 2009:65-68).

Key to all three of these broad theoretical approaches is that they tend to take a standpoint position regarding the 'ideal' state – in this sense they are normative theories, which seek less to explain than to point out deviance from an ideal (Evans 2005:57; Passoth & Rowland 2010:818; Smith 2006:22; Sorensen 2004:18-21). As Hindmoor notes, these theories then work to construct 'actual' states and the people living as part of them by bringing forth new discourses of what a 'real' state should look like (Hindmoor 2006:92-94). Indeed, while even today it is clear to see that there are multiple varieties of state in the world (Marinetto 2007; Painter 1995) it is only a particular form of liberal democratic Western state which has come to be naturalised as a successful achievement of staterdom (Marinetto 2007:2). Therefore the *explanatory*, as opposed to normative, force of the 'classical triumvirate' appears to be limited.

As can be seen in each of these 'classical' approaches, the state is often poorly or presumptively theorised (Hay 2006; Hay & Lister 2006; Smith 2006; Smith 2009), and generally conceived in terms of a unified actor or structure, which is or should be clearly separate from an external 'society' it wields authority over (Allum 1995; Evans 1996; Flinders 2006; Hay & Lister 2006:5; Mann 1984; Migdal 2001; Mitchell 1991; Painter 2000:362; Passoth & Rowland 2010; Rhodes 1988:15; Smith 2009:243; Sorensen 2004:3; Yuval-Davis 1997:11) – this is often couched in terms of the 'autonomy' of the state (Mann 1984; Passoth & Rowland 2010:821). Where the state interacts with society it is often described as infiltrating or penetrating society (Allum 1995:347; Bhattacharyya 2002; Cooper 1995:68-79; Mann 1984:62; Marinetto 2007:2), emphasising their dual distinctiveness and the state's vertically hierarchical position (Allen & Cochrane 2010; Cooper 1995:7; Mann 1984; Rhodes 1988). State autonomy – particularly regarding whether the state is subject to society or autonomous from it - is a key area of debate within neo-Marxist accounts of the state (Clarke 1991; Hay 2006; Jessop 1991; Mann 1984:59; Marinetto 2007:20-25). 'Statist' approaches seek to emphasise the state's autonomy from society by drastically limiting what counts as the state, limiting it for example to particular administrative and bureaucratic spaces and institutions (the position of Theda Skocpol, 1979) or people in particular jobs or who are imagined to have certain decision-making powers (Nordlinger 1987; see also Evans 2006:46-49; Hay & Lister 2006; Marinetto

2007:26-29; Mitchell 1991:77). Once more we see that the state's boundaries are crucial to its theorisation and construction. Against the statist analyses are set neo-Marxist accounts which draw more heavily on the writings of Antonio Gramsci and his writings on state hegemony. In this configuration, hegemony indicates the ways through which the state relies on attaining consent from its subjects and incorporating aspects of wider society into itself, thus revealing the state to be profoundly and necessarily influenced by society (Gramsci 1971; see also Jones 2006, Fatton 1986, Marinetto 2007:23 and Poulzantas 1978).

These neo-Marxist discussions have been subject to a criticism often levelled at Marxist work in general – specifically, that capitalism (and society as capitalist) is focused on to the exclusion of other socio-political spheres, and that capitalist society is posited as an all-encompassing structural determinant (Marinetto 2007:19). Bob Jessop has made a useful counterpoint to this position through his 'strategic relational approach' (Jessop 2002). Jessop develops Poulzantas' earlier work by ascribing a clearer sense of agency to individuals within the state, removing the capitalist structural determinacy of earlier neo-Marxist approaches and emphasising the importance of a multiplicity of socio-political spheres in the construction of the state (ibid; see also Clarke 1991:49-51, Hay 2006:75, Marinetto 2007:24-25, Painter 1995:64 and Smith 2009). Jessop also removes the causal primacy Poulzantas ascribed to society, offering a view of state and society in which each operates in non-determined dialogue with one another (Jessop 2002).

### **2.5.3 - Breaking Down Boundaries**

These debates are of use because they question the assumption that the state occupies a position of exteriority and/or superiority to wider 'society' – and, as I have argued, the separation between state and society is not only a key area of debate but a key way in which the state is constructed by scholars. However, as we can see these debates do not finally resolve the definition of the state through its boundaries. At best, these debates allow us to come to the conclusion that the state is entangled with and influenced by other structures, forces and institutions – but as Joe Painter

argues, both the statist approach and even Jessop's Poulzantas-inspired relational approach still 'depend[s] precisely on the sharp distinction between state and society that needs to be questioned' (Painter 2006:758; see also Mitchell 1991). They still suggest that the 'state' can be clearly identified, specified, and that we can know it when we see it. The state as implied in the previous section would be something distinct, bounded, unified and identifiable. However, scholars are increasingly suggesting that this conception of the state is simply not viable when researching actual states and their practices (Allum 1995:293; Brown 1995; Cooper 1995; Kantola 2006:125-6; Marinetto 2007:29; Mitchell 1991; Painter 2006; Stychin 2003:8; Yuval-Davis 1997:12). This is not just a poststructural ontological standpoint – writers from more functionalist fields of political and state research increasingly examine the ways in which the contemporary Western liberal state form is subject to boundary-blurring practices, most often through the lens of 'governmentality'. In this section of the paper I will describe two related uses of the term and indicate how both point to a growing discourse and construction of the state as *unbound*. Rather than 'without boundaries' or 'with blurred boundaries', I use the word 'unbound' in to mean both *without boundaries* and in the more liberatory sense of *freed from limitations*. I do this in order to emphasise the blurring of the traditional state/society divide while consciously moving away from the discourse of the declining or 'hollow state' (Evans 1997; Marinetto 2007:88; Marsh et al 2006; Milward & Provan 2001; Sorensen 2004; Smith 2009; Rhodes 2003). Instead, I argue that this conception of the state urges us to take the state even more seriously than ever.

#### **2.5.4 – Governmentality and Hybridity**

Governmentality was first coined as a phrase by Michel Foucault (1991), but as Gordon makes clear Foucault's writings and speeches around the subject were disjointed and his thoughts changed over time (Gordon 1991:1-14), and we cannot take from his work one clear definition of governmentality (ibid, see also Miller and Rose 2008:13-16). In his lecture entitled 'Governmentality', Foucault suggests three meanings. First, the 'ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and



reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power' (Foucault 1991:102); second, 'the tendency which... has steadily led towards the pre-eminence over all other forms... of this type of power which may be termed government' (ibid); and third, 'the result of the process, through which the state of justice of the Middle Ages... gradually becomes governmentalised' (ibid. 103). Foucault appears to use 'government' as verb and not object – government is a process and not just a group of elected individuals as we might instinctively conceive of it, but at the same time such a group of individuals are a part of the wider 'governmentality'. Thus governmentality relates to the 'how' of governing, the embedded acts which make it happen. Gordon also demonstrates that Foucault postulated governmentality in contrast to a unified and monolithic state, and argues that it 'might serve as the rubric for an analysis of a range of distinct *modes of pluralisation* of modern government which contribute toward the relativisation of the notional boundary between state and society' (Gordon 1991:36, emphasis in original). Governmentality, then, may be key not in providing a 'better definition' of the state, but in addressing the troubling state/society division which seems so crucial to the state's construction. Miller and Rose further break down governmentality into 'rationalities' – the 'styles of thinking, ways of rendering reality thinkable in such a way that it was amenable to calculation and programming' (Miller & Rose 2008:16) – and 'technologies' – the 'assemblages of persons, techniques, institutions, instruments for the conducting of conduct' which realise governmental rationalities and 'rationalities' (ibid). I suggest that this concept of governmental technologies finds some expression in the related concept of 'governance', which I will argue demonstrates elements of the instrumentalisation of governmental rationalities and the shift of focus away from the state. In broadening what was previously considered the domain of the state alone – acts of governing – out beyond the state, Foucault argues against the analytic primacy afforded to the state (Foucault 1991; see also Finlayson & Martin 2006:167, Gordon 1991, Marinetto 2007:43, Miller & Rose 2008, Rose 1996:38 and Smith 2009:44). Building on the microphysics of power Foucault developed in 'Discipline & Punish' (Foucault 1975), everyday acts also become sites of power and governing with potentially just as much relevance as acts attributable to the state (see also Painter 2006 and

Passoth & Rowland 2010). As Foucault argues, 'maybe what is really important for our modernity... is not so much the *etatisation* of society, as the governmentalisation of the state' (Foucault 1991:103, emphasis in original). Crucially, this is not an abandonment of the state as a category of analysis – it is clear that the state remains important (Finlayson & Martin 2006:170; Foucault 1991; Gordon 1991; Marinetto 2007:43; Martin 2006; Yuval-Davis 1997:14), but what we have here is a new way of looking at the state itself, as constructed through and present in everyday acts of governmentality. Indeed one of the critiques made against this position is that, in diffusing the state throughout everyday acts while simultaneously robbing it of its analytic primacy, the state is made both powerless and ubiquitously powerful (Smith 2009:70, see also Marinetto 2007:48). I would argue, however, that this is less a firm critique and more a symptom of understanding the state to be highly diffuse and fluid through its governmental construction (Painter 2006) – perhaps a welcome symptom, because it may allow for new ways of viewing state power and how it is resisted or rechanneled.

The powerful state / powerless state paradox has been expressed through discussions surrounding 'governance'. The term is seeing increasing use by scholars of the state to describe a wide variety of practices, policies and engagements which supposedly encapsulate the contemporary transformation of the modern state, and ways of understanding how governing operates beyond the analytic centrality of the state (Goodwin & Painter 1996:643; Jessop 2002; Marinetto 2007:53; Painter 2000; Peters & Pierre 2006; Rhodes 1988:90; Rhodes 2003:46-59; Smith 2006:31; Smith 2009:89-117; Sorensen 2004; Wilson & Game 2006:141-143). Mark Goodwin and Joe Painter describe this shift as follows:

**'Analytically, the concept of governance is broader than that of government. It recognises that it is not just the formal agencies of elected local political institutions which exert influence over the pattern of life and economic make-up of local areas. Within the political processes which affect the fortunes of any local area are a wide range of factors.'**

**These include the institutions of elected local government... but also central government, a range on non-elected organisations of the state... as well as institutional and individual actors from outside the formal political arena, such as voluntary organisations, private businesses and corporations, the mass media and, increasingly, supra-national institutions... The concept of governance focuses attention on the relations between these various actors' (Goodwin & Painter 1996:636)**

Thus we see clearly that the state is no longer taken as the primary agent or focus of inquiry, and its boundaries seem ever more blurry and varied. As Smith writes, 'the fundamental premise of the governance position is that the central state is no longer the dominant force in determining public policy' (Smith 2006:31). To draw on Foucault's governmentality, the power once ascribed to the state alone now appears to be spread throughout a wide variety of spheres, bodies, networks and agencies, and the state is consequently more difficult to draw out and identify.

The paradoxical powerful/powerless nature of the state, per Smith's critique of poststructural and governmental approaches to theorising it, is borne out through discussions of governance. In this section I focus particularly on governance in the UK. As described in the quote from Goodwin and Painter above, the state is now thought to contend with a host of other factors, institutions, organisations, partners and networks eating away at its functions and responsibilities – one of the phrases frequently used to describe this is 'hollowing out the state' (Evans 1997; Hay & Lister 2006; Marinetto 2007:58; Marsh et al 2006; Milward & Provan 2000; Peters & Pierre 2006; Smith 2009; Sorensen 2004; Rhodes 2003:17-19). As Peters and Pierre put it, 'public-private partnerships, market-based administrative reform and the rolling back of the state couple with the deregulation of markets were all seen as elements of a large-scale transformation of the ways in which the modern state – the 'hollow state' – governed society' (Peters & Pierre 2006:210). Thus the blurring of the state and that which was traditionally seen as occupying the private/societal sphere is seen as a key factor in the supposed weakening of the state.

Further explorations of how boundaries are revealed to be important to the construction of the state are possible through looking at governance (Allum 1995; Chandler 2001; Ferguson & Gupta 2002; Goodwin & Painter 1995; Marinetto 2007:60; Painter 2000; Rhodes 2003; Wilson & Game 2006) and governmentality (Cooper 1994; Cooper 2006) in local government. The definition of local government itself is itself implicated in the construction of the state. Local government in the UK has tended to follow a 'welfare state model' (Pickvance 1991:49) broadly financed and supported by an upper-tier central government, as opposed to a 'local self-governance model' of supposed local autonomy (ibid) – thus the UK local government has been said to exist as a relatively unproblematic body with a particular remit (authorised by the 'central state') over a specific geographic area within the wider state (ibid, see also Allum 1995; Chandler 2001; Pickvance & Preteceille 1991; Wilson & Game 2006). Rhodes has emphasised the vertical scalar element this model assigns to the UK state with the term 'sub-central government' (Rhodes 1988, Rhodes 2003). This particular term expresses the boundaries and hierarchies perceived to exist *within* the state itself – the British 'central' government is spatially constructed as simultaneously nuclear ('central') and superior (to the opposition of '*sub-central*'). Thus local government is always local in relation to the central state, and vice versa. Previous formulations of the state's internalities have sought to make clear distinctions between the 'local' and 'central' state and thus define each, most notably in Saunders' dual-state thesis (Saunders 1981; Saunders 1982) which suggested a division be seen in the roles of central government (organising social investment) and local government (organising social consumption) (see also Allum 1995:457; Rhodes 1988:36-39; Wilson & Game 2006). Others note that local government has been mainly described either as a partner of central government – albeit in a relationship of uneven power – or as a mere agent or tool of it (Allum 1995:413; Chandler 2001; Goodwin & Painter 1996; Pickvance 1991; Pickvance & Preteceille 1991; Rhodes 1981; Wilson & Game 2006:157-188). Both the partnership and agent models are often strongly linked to the role of the provision of the welfare state and public services, while the central government is considered to direct or wield authority over local governments (Allum 1995:413-69; Cooper 1994; Chandler 2001; Pickvance & Preteceille 1991; Rhodes 1988; Rhodes 2003) – Pickvance

links this to the idea of 'ultra vires', the central state's legal and constitutional authority over comparatively weak local subsidiaries (Pickvance 1991; see also Wilson & Game 2006). Indeed this perceived weakness of the local state in the UK is raised by other scholars who describe the central state as dominating it, while the local state has limited powers of resistance (Pickvance & Preteceille 1991; Wilson & Game 2006) – governance, once more, is said to be a key element of weakening the local state's ability to resist the central state.

Although the UK state is therefore constructed according to defined local and central aspects to the state, scholars discussing local governance and governmentality have begun to reveal that even these internal boundaries – geographical and functional - are not fixed but fluid and porous. For example, Rhodes' earlier discussions of policy networks – the links within and between state institutions – fixed them in central government as the site of political decision-making (Rhodes 2003:26-45). However Rhodes' more recent discussions blur the traditional divide between central and local government, noting that policy networks (seen through a governance lens) increasingly and perhaps always spans/spanned both central and local government, as well as the state and private and voluntary sectors (Rhodes 2003:12). Rhodes makes clear that he sees this as related to local governance (Rhodes 2003), and other scholars have noted that governance reveals the task of fixing local/central state boundaries to be one of maddening complexity (see esp. Wilson & Game 2006:173), while simultaneously blurring the supposedly clear distinction between 'state' and 'society' through growing governmental rationalities which view non-state actors and forces as relevant to the process of governing (Cooper 2006; Cooper & Monro 2003). In the UK such factors are significantly complicated with regard to the devolution of particular state powers, roles and responsibilities to the national governments of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland – devolution not only adds significant and irregular complexity to local as well as national government (Bennet et al 2002; Jeffery 2006; Williams & Mooney 2008), but 'is not and was not a single event in 1999, but an unfolding process.' (Williams & Mooney 2008:490). Thus the state-interior distinctions between central and local state no longer stand up in practice; nor do those between state and society –

policy networks, partnership projects and the rationalities of governance cross-cut these supposed boundaries and reveal their porousness and instability.

This lends a further element to my earlier discussion of Smith's critique of governmentality, in that it supposedly offers a view of the state as both ubiquitously powerful and powerless. At the same time as the state is described as hollow or in retreat, scholars of local government argue that local government occupies positions of comparative weakness to a dominant central government which it attempts to resist (Allum 1995; Chandler 2001; Goodwin & Painter 1995; Marinetto 2007:60; Wilson & Game 2006). Meanwhile elements of the central state – particularly with regard to surveillance and control over local government – are said to have dramatically strengthened in recent years (Marinetto 2007:64; Painter 2000:362; Peters & Pierre 2006; Smith 2006:32; Sorensen 2004:5-6). At the same time some scholars have pointed out that some party governments in the UK – particularly the Conservative government of the 1980s – worked to boost certain forms of governance while limiting particular aspects of the state through their enactment of it (Cooper & Monro 2006; Pickvance 1991; Wilson & Game 2006:174-78), revealing that the state itself can be desirous of its own 'hollowness'. Through this exploration of governance and the local/central state dichotomy, we can see that the simultaneously powerful/powerless state is revealed not as a paradoxical theoretical flaw, but as the reality of a state which is fractured, with boundaries previously used to delineate state from non-state and to construct the state as a unified whole shifting uncertainly, both internally and externally – indeed, revealing the internal/external view of the state itself as increasingly suspect (Cooper & Monro 2003:289; Ferguson & Gupta 2002; Flinders 2006; Mitchell 1991; Painter 2006; Rhodes 2003; Smith 2009:93-98; Wilson & Game 2006).

In counterpoint to arguments of the 'hollowed out' state, within discussions of governance via partnership work between public sector organisations and local communities it seems often to be the case that the state is constructed as remaining strong and unified, and conversely communities and community partners are positioned as being acted upon, penetrated or co-opted by a distinct state partner or partners (see Andrucki & Elder 2007:100; Cheshire & Law 2005; Hutchinson & Cairns 2010; Howard & Taylor 2010; Milbourne & Cushman 2013) in ways which could be framed as

a matter of 'hybridity' (Whatmore 2002; see Section 2.1 of this chapter) between 'state' and 'community' (Skelcher 2012). Without doubt such research raises important points regarding problematic partnership practices as noted by a large number of scholars (Alcock 2010; Andrucki & Elder 2007; Billis 2010a; Billis 2010b; Butt 2001; Byrne 2001; Carr 2012; Clarke & Glendinning 2012; Coote 2011; Craig & Taylor 2012; Dillon & Fanning 2011, Evans 2011; Featherstone et al 2012; Howard & Taylor 2010; Hutchinson & Cairns 2010; Kisby 2010; Mayo & Taylor 2001; McCabe 2010; Milbourne & Cushman 2013; Seddon et al 2004; Skelcher 2012; Tett 2005; Williams 2012) and which I engage with more fully in Chapters 5 and 6. However even when hybrid practices and performances are explicitly detailed, the tendency within the wider literature on partnership working has been to one-sidedly emphasise these problematic hybridisations of communities and community organisations. Occasional hat-tips towards (following Whatmore 2002) the **necessarily** concurrent hybridisations of **public sector** organisations (Brandsen et al 2005:750; Howard & Taylor 2010:190; Milbourne & Cushman 2013:18) suggest that this aspect of partnership hybridisation remains under-developed (Skelcher 2012). Through this thesis I aim to bring Whatmore's theory of hybridity into dialogue with the multiple ways in which the state/society boundary has been perceived to shift through discourses and practices of governance, specifically regarding the kind of partnership occurring through the LGBT Equalities in Hastings, Rother and East Sussex project.

While Rhodes has argued that governance – particularly local governance - is a new phenomenon (Rhodes 1988), Martin Smith remarks that governance in this sense is not necessarily anything new, and that we should not see it as a transformation unique to contemporary state manifestations but as an indicator that states have never been as separate from society as they have been portrayed – indeed, at the very least its foundations have been present in foregoing states (Smith 2009:89-108; see also Peters & Pierre 2006). Thus governance in this sense should not be taken to refer to a specific transformation of modern to postmodern state (Smith 2009) but instead to highlight the artificiality of the construction of a state/society divide and the paradoxical powerful/powerless state. This strongly suggests that the 'technologies' of governmentality are not just the shibboleths of the present day liberal state. It also suggests that governmentality could prove a useful tool for

rethinking the state and the state's entanglements with LGBT equalities through public sector working. Peters and Pierre express this difference from Rhodes' point of view in the form of a table listing 'models of governance' – this includes the 'etatiste', the 'liberal', the 'state-centric', 'Dutch' and 'governance without government' (Peters & Pierre 2006:212). What they are describing in this table is the multitudes of styles of governing which, crucially, are not limited to the state – the state is not the sine qua non of governance but one of its modes. This resonates strongly with Foucault's suggestion that governmentality involves looking beyond the state as the source of governing, and that the state should not take analytic priority – instead, we should consider how the state itself is governmentalized, how it 'does' and is 'done by' acts of governing (Cooper 2006; Gordon 1991; Foucault 1991; Marinetto 2007:43; Miller & Rose 2008; Rose 1996:38).

### **2.5.5 - Doing the State**

Following Foucault's injunction to look at the governmentality of the state, and the increasing indications that the state must be considered not as a unified and distinct body but as fragmented, unbound, incoherent and contested (Cooper & Monro 2003:240; Brown 1995:174; Mitchell 1991; Painter 2000:361; Sorensen 2004:167; Smith 2009:100-01), I argue that we can conceive of the state as simultaneously the multiple and fluid outcomes of, and contributors to, ensembles of fragmented discourses, practices and activities (Brown 1995:174-177; Cooper 1994; Cooper 1995; Finlayson & Martin 2006; Mitchell 1991; Painter 2006; Passoth & Rowland 2010:825-26; Rose 1996:43), which is always in creation and never complete (Laclau & Mouffe 1985). This is the approach that I engage with in the rest of this thesis, particularly in Chapters 5 and 6. For the state is culturally constructed as well as materially constructed (Cooper 1995; Dunn 2009:66-67; Hay & Lister 2006:14; Marientto 2007:96-118; Migdal 2001; Mitchell 1991; Painter 2000) – evidenced perhaps most plainly by the variety of different experiences of and with the state, such as by women and sexual minorities (see for example Bhattacharyya 2002; Brown 1995; Cooper 1995; Connell 1990; Kantola 2006; Lee 2011; Mackinnon 1982; Smith 2009:105; Yuval-Davis 1997).



These are not just discourses and activities considered 'political' or enacted through an organisation or institution which claims to speak/act for the state – instead they are everyday acts (Foucault 1975; Foucault 1991; Painter 1995:52; Painter 2006:758; Passoth & Rowland 2010:824) which both result from and create the state. In this sense defining the state – asking 'what is it?' – is a less meaningful or useful activity than asking 'What does it do?' (Passoth & Rowland 2010) or 'How is it done?' (Gordon 1991; Foucault 1991). I suggest that the concept of performativity could lend much to this conceptualisation of the state. Here, following Dunn (2009:71), I follow Judith Butler's conception of performativity, particularly the iterative/reiterative nature of everyday performance (see also Cooper 1995:66 and Painter 2006). Performance is not a single act but a constant repetition of linked acts but, crucially, each reiteration of 'the state' offers the possibility for the state to be performed differently. This is not a conscious choice but comes about through the embodied nature of performance through which acts escape their originator's intent. Rather than attempting to delimit the fixed or ideal boundaries of the state both externally and internally – which I have already demonstrated is ultimately a fruitless and futile endeavour – through performative understandings we can engage with the 'prosaic' (Painter 2006) boundary-making practices and exclusions which construct and are constructed by the state (Allum 1995:293; Connell 1990:522; Cooper 1994; Cooper 1995:63-64; Cooper & Monro 2003:239; Laclau & Mouffe 1985; Finlayson & Martin 2006:165; Miller & Rose 2008:56; Passoth & Rowland 2010; Smith 2009:93-120; Stychin 2000), exploring how the state is at once present in everyday and perhaps apparently non-state spaces and situations, and how practices in such spaces are also part of the state's construction. This may also provide useful insights into 'everyday' opposition or resistance to state practices (Allen & Cochrane 2010; Cooper 1995:124-143; Laclau & Mouffe 1985:154; Painter 1995:52), discovering previously-hidden state spaces for the enactment of progressive politics (Cooper 1994:185).

### **2.5.6 - Services and Social Policy**

The boundaries of social policy, and exactly what social policy is made with regard to, are ill-defined and contested. Paul Spicker links social policy – in the UK at least – very clearly with public service provision and the welfare state, contending that social policy is the ‘study of the social services and the welfare state’ (Spicker 1995:3). However, Spicker himself says that the boundaries have at least become stretched in recent years, with other writers such as Michael Cahill arguing for a much wider approach that extends beyond the provision of welfare through the state (Cahill 1994). Certainly the connection with the welfare state, at the very least, suggests important links with questions of equality and justice (Bagilhole 2009:44-46; Orloff 1996:52) as discussed previously in this chapter. Issues of the boundaries of social policy are not merely related to the work policymakers engage in – Cooper identifies the legitimacy of boundaries as key to reactions against local government policies regarding lesbians and gay men in the 1980s (Cooper 1994). Two of the very broad areas which social policy has historically neglected are gender and sexuality (Carabine 1996; Carabine 2001; Cooper 1994:11; Monro 2005:68; Orloff 1996), with Barbara Bagilhole describing homosexuality in particular as a ‘new kid on the block’ for social policy (Bagilhole 2009:40-42).

While this relative inattention is now being addressed to an extent by the writers above, they remain keen to emphasise that this is not simply a matter of extending social policy into a new area. Instead, writers such as Carabine (2001), Cooper and Monro (2003) and Duggan (1994) point to the ways in which sexuality is ‘mutually constitutive’ (Carabine 2001:291) of, and with, social policy and the state. As Orloff points out regarding gender, this is not a top-down imposition from the state onto sexual subjectivities but a complex inter-relationship (Orloff 1996). I outline key facets of this discussion in the following section.

### **2.5.7 - Policymaking and the Mutual Construction of Sexualities**

Social policy is said to utilise models which construct problems to be solved in a 'rational' way (Bacchi 2009; Cahill 1994; Monro 2005; Smith & May 1980; Spicker 1995). Two of the key models discussed are described as 'rationalist' and 'incrementalist' – in brief, the former model suggests organising and implementing the most 'efficient' means to solve an identified problem, while the latter suggests basing solutions to problems on foregoing policy and implementing small and relatively ad hoc changes (Hogwood & Gunn 1984; Monro 2005:69-71; Spicker 1995). Smith and May have argued that the two models are not dissimilar (1985), and it is clear that both share a view to identifying and rationally rectifying perceived problems which is associated with social policy in general. Some writers dismiss the possibility of a purely rational or empirical solution generated through policymaking (Bacchi 2009; Hogwood & Gunn 1984:63-64), with Van Soest stating that 'attempts to find objective, empirical and normative truth as the basis of policy decisions inevitably fail' (Van Soest 1996:55). Against the ideal of achieving the 'most rational' or 'most efficient' solution, Van Soest argues that there may be multiple and equally rational ideologies impacting on the policymaking process, and seems to suggest that a level of 'more rational' detente may be achieved through making such ideologies more visible (ibid. 60-62). A more 'messy' suggestion comes from Davina Cooper, who writes that instead of multiple ways of interpreting policies, what we find instead is that what is conceived by its makers as a single policy is in fact a multiplicity of policies, each 'real' in different spaces and times to different agents (Cooper 1994, see esp. Chapter 5). While this does not necessarily hold out hope for the productive meeting of minds which Van Soest appears to aim for, it seems like a potentially useful tool for exploring the multiple rationalities and realities of the policymaking process.

Providing further, fruitful, complications, Carol Bacchi identifies the rational approach of identifying a problem and creating policy to solve it as a form of governance, which regulates and constructs subjects (such as the poor, drug users, single mothers, etc) through their representation as 'problems' (Bacchi 2009). Writers on social policy, the state and sexualities have similarly identified

the ways in which social policy becomes a means through which particular **sexual** subjectivities are re/constructed, especially through the policy-led legitimisation of 'homonormative' homosexual subjects (Bell & Binnie 2004; Carabine & Monro 2004; Stychin 2003; Vitulli 2010). For example, writing from the USA, Williams et al describe how non-discrimination and equality policies themselves can work to regulate lesbians and gay men, through the production of a 'gay-friendly' working environment. This environment encourages the desexualisation of minority sexual identities and their assimilation to norms of heterosexuality (Williams et al 2009).

Noting that liberal rights-demands from lesbian and gay activists increasingly focus around adoption and same-sex marriage, Stychin suggests that subsequent policies work to construct a new, family-based subjectivity for sexual minorities – but a subjectivity based on heteronorms and a responsibility to the state in remaining in a stable relationship and raising children (Stychin 2003), who can be 'normalised' into citizenship (ibid. 36-37). While Frank and McEneaney argue that the family has been devalued while acceptance of sexual difference has increased (1999:912), other writers note that the family remains as dominant a figure as ever within the areas of social policy as well as the construction of responsible citizenship (Bagilhole 2009:80; Cooper 1994:114-116; Forrest & Ellis 2006:104; Richardson 2000:269; Spicker 1995:22; Stychin 2003:11-12). In the following section I outline in more detail how particular kinds of subjectivities emerge through state engagement with sexualities.

### **2.5.8 - Sexual Citizenship**

The relationship between the individual and the state seems increasingly to coalesce around the idea of citizenship, both as a proposed resistance to the individual as consumer and as a way of judging the legitimate interventions of the state in individual lives, eg. through the welfare state (Cahill 1994:173-177; Monro 2005; Stychin 2003; Richardson 2000). Writers exploring the contemporary political context in the UK under the Conservative / Liberal Democrat coalition government have noted connections between discourses of neoliberal 'responsibility' and 'active

citizens' engaged with state and public sector institutions (Coote 2011; Edwards 2012; Evans 2011; Glasman 2010; Haugh 2011; Kisby 2010; McCabe 2010; Seddon et al 2004; Smith 2011; Stott 2011; Williams 2012). Stychin has more specifically identified liberal citizenship as being focused around individual rights twinned with individual responsibilities (Stychin 2003:7-9), and this model of citizenship has been noted to mirror some of the problems of liberal subjectivities identified throughout this chapter – the theoretical citizen is often implicitly gendered and racialised (Richardson 2000:256) as well as heterosexualised (Monro 2005:147; Richardson 2000:257). Along with the growing interest in how citizenship structures the individual's relationship with the state, these problems have led to the discussion of sexual citizenship, with scholars asking questions of the individual's sexualised rights and responsibilities (Monro 2005:153; Richardson 2000; Stychin 2003:8-24; Weeks 1998). Richardson suggests that the rights of the sexual citizen tend to be based on liberal ideals (Richardson 2000:263-264) and a related 'equal rights' approach, and the potentially disciplinary and normative effects of sexual citizenships appear to remain a key concern (ibid.; Richardson 2006:521; Stychin 2003:8-24).

Another key concern with sexual citizenships appears to be the nature of subsequent responsibilities. Again, we see familiar problems with liberal politics here, including the potential for a politics of assimilation via the policy construction of the sexual citizen as a 'good homosexual' (Richardson 2000:268; Stychin 1998; Stychin 2003). Since citizenship status structures the individual's relationship with the state this may impact on access to the 'benefits' of, for example, the welfare state.

## **2.6 - Conclusion to Review of Existing Literature**

In chapter 2 I have attempted to highlight some key ways in which sexuality-as-essential-identity has been thought about both inside and outside the academy. I suggest that sexual identity politics, while highly problematic, requires consideration due to its dominance in our political and cultural lives, and also because sexual identity politics still holds out possibilities for enabling productive

political change, particularly when there is a reflexive awareness of how the identities coalesce around specific, local contexts. I re-emphasise here that for the purposes of this thesis I consider the 'rightness' or 'wrongness' of the approaches to identities is less important than the ways in which the approaches operate in society, and how they are utilised in moves for political change based on sexuality and gender identity. Drawing on discussions from trans theorists, I also recognise the importance of 'rainbow alliances' which promote a multiplicity of negotiated gender and sexual identities, and assert the consequent importance of engaging with sexualities and gender identities through 'LGBT'.

Exploring the co-construction of rurality and sexuality, it seems clear that the rural is always inflected with something else, be this sexuality, the urban or 'otherness', and that consequently 'the rural' (as well as 'the urban') is an imagined and performed space rather than a pre-existing geographic area. I am still mindful of Halfacree's tripartite model, however, as a reminder of the importance of lived experiences and performances in rural spaces, as well as the impact of 'official' and state-authorised representations. Though my framework for understanding geographies of the rural and the urban stems ultimately from a confluence of social constructionist and poststructuralist influences, I have indicated that these geographies are not purely imaginary but also have profound material effects. Regarding LGBT lives in rural areas, I demonstrated that urban/rural dynamics have been understood as being of particular importance by geographers of sexualities. A growing body of work on LGBT rural lives - contra work which posits cities as the natural space of homosexual and sexually deviant identities and subjects and rural spaces as negative and inhibiting - also points to new rural spaces and subjectivities which, while not universally positive, in turn may reconstruct ruralities in potentially progressive ways. I also noted the importance of engaging with specific geographies in order to challenge assumptions of urban tolerance and rural safety.

Exploring 'equality', I noted that while liberal understandings of equality dominate within the literature and in mainstream LGBT politics, many serious issues have been raised regarding the

normalising and excluding tendencies of such equalities. I also found that 'equality' itself is a highly slippery concept, one use of which can stand in stark opposition to another. Despite this discursive slipperiness, I argue that the continuing discursive and political force of equality for LGBT people makes it essential to engage with. I recognise the political utility of liberal LGBT equality politics and, while noting and accepting associated critiques, I cannot dismiss their effects as entirely negative or simply 'assimilating'. In concert with my approach to LGBT identities and geographies of the rural, I aim to avoid the intractable problem of identifying a 'true' or even 'best' form of LGBT equality, but rather concentrate on how LGBT equality comes to matter both materially and discursively.

Reviewing literature on the state, I argue in favour of a more poststructural and performative understanding of the state, through which the state is seen to be diffused through the 'society' it is so often described in opposition to. Drawing on the work of Painter (2006) and Dunn (2009), I view the state as therefore simultaneously 'strong' and 'weak', performed in multiple and often conflicting ways through the everyday actions of a variety of individuals and communities, not limited to those 'officially' part of the state. This conception of the state is exemplified by political 'governance' trends through policy networks and partnership work, but such projects should be seen as highlighting rather than simply creating the state's fluidity and fracturing. Additionally, I argue that the relationships between social policy, the state, and sexualities and sexual identities, are far from simple. The making of social policy does not – cannot – simply produce equality, even the forms of liberal equality most frequently sought. Following writers such as Carabine and Cooper, I see social policy and sexuality as mutually constitutive, with policy and the state disciplining and regulating sexualities and sexual subjectivities – for example, through agendas which prioritise families - while these simultaneously construct the state, its boundaries and legitimacy.

In this chapter, I have sought to identify key linkages in the theorisation of sexualities, rurality, equalities and state and social policies. In exploring these four areas and gradually highlighting the connections between them, I trace the thread of liberalism and associated approaches to 'equality' throughout, and argue that the liberal equalities project, while utilised by many mainstream

sexuality activists as well as the state, comes with an attendant baggage of problems. These problems have particular relevance for sexual minorities - in particular, the construction of a 'universal' individual subject position; the limited array of accepted homonormative subjectivities; and the reproduction of these issues through the very equality policies which supposedly seek inclusion for all.

However, the slippages and discontinuities identified by scholars in these different areas of study suggest possibilities. If we can recognise the importance of multiple gendered and sexualised positions when it comes to 'equality', we can find ways in which to work within fragmented state approaches to the implementation of various LGBT equalities. This must go beyond strategic essentialism – though it clearly has relations to it – in that the 'essentialism' is understood to be only ever partial and particular to specific geographical and temporal moments, negotiated consciously and unconsciously between one moment and the next. Acknowledging these discursive (and material) slippages across and around supposedly polarising positions offers new directions through which to work within and simultaneously challenge contemporary approaches to LGBT equalities. In the following chapter I detail how my thesis seeks to engage with the questions and issues raised in this literature review.



## **Chapter 3 - Methodology and Methods**

### **3.1 – Introduction to Methodology and Methods**

This chapter begins by reviewing foregoing methodological approaches to research surrounding geography, sexuality and public sector equality policies, demonstrating that broadly qualitative approaches dominate the field. I then set out and justify my own multi-method Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, carried out in partnership with a local research project ('LGBT Equalities in Hastings, Rother and East Sussex'). This chapter also details ethical procedures and reflections with regard to designing and implementing the research, and gathering, analysing and maintaining the subsequent data. My research makes a distinct shift from urban to non-urban in its approach to LGBT public sector equalities, drawing on the strong tradition of focused qualitative research, influenced by queer deconstructionist approaches, while joining this with local quantitative research. It also emphasises the participatory insights and expertise of a highly diverse group through capturing data regarding the research process itself.

My research draws on the diverse social science and geographic literatures exploring sexualities, geographies and UK public policymaking. Building on this foregoing work has required knowledge of the methods and methodologies used in it, as this has necessarily influenced the development of my own research. Therefore in this section I highlight the most common and influential methodological approaches to related research on sexualities, beginning with geographies of sexualities and then UK public policymaking (particularly as relates to LGBT 'equalities'), in order to explain and contextualise my own approach while indicating the unique contribution my approach makes to the field. Crucially, I note a broadly qualitative approach taken by both geographers of sexualities and by those studying public sector engagements with LGBT equalities.

Throughout this chapter, and indeed the rest of this thesis, it will become clear that my work is closely tied to the LGBT Equalities in Hastings, Rother and East Sussex project. Through this project,

research initiatives were developed by and targeted at a variety of audiences – including academics, public sector institutions, local LGBT community groups and local LGBT communities – and were designed to meet a variety of different goals. As such this research challenges traditional accounts of the academic research process which separate researcher/participant; qualitative data versus quantitative data; and which separates research questions and aims, methodology, method, data collection and data analysis into a clearly defined and linear framework. It also highlights the challenges to accounts of research ‘validity’ and ‘success’ made by other scholars engaged in varieties of participatory action research (PAR) and community-based research (CBR) (Bradbury & Reason 2001; Smith & Hodkinson 2005).

### **3.2 - Methodological Backgrounds**

Though diverse, the growing field of geographies of sexualities is dominated by qualitative and broadly cultural approaches to research (Bell & Valentine 1995b; Browne, Lim & Brown 2007). In this it follows wider academic social science engagement with sexualities, influenced by earlier and contemporary feminist research (Edwards & Ribbens 1998) which emphasised the value of the qualitative, the affective and the experiential in understanding social lives in a scientific way. As outlined in chapter 2 section 2, one of the most widespread (though by no means universally accepted) theoretical contributions of scholars exploring sexuality has been the growth of ‘queer theory’, which draws together a deliberately unstable and undefinable blend of deconstruction, anti-normativity and a postmodern suspicion of ‘the truth’ (Browne & Nash 2010; Browne 2010; Gamson 2003) – however Browne and Nash argue that scholars using or engaging with queer theory ‘rarely undertake a sustained consideration of how queer approaches might sit with (particularly social scientific) methodological choices’ (Browne & Nash 2010). Quantitative approaches to sexuality have not disappeared, but scholars remain wary of their implication in the normalising and generalising discourses of power and morality (Crampton & Eldin 2006; Seale 1999:119-138), particularly with regard to sexualities and sexual minorities (Browne 2010). Recent

contemporary works utilising quantitative methodological approaches also work to bolster this separation, downplaying queer and related qualitative approaches as mere sophistry masking a politically and personally empowering 'truth' revealed through quantitative enumeration (Serwatka 2010). While I disagree with this stance on qualitative approaches – which I recognise as invaluable in engaging with the complexities of lived LGBT experiences – I nevertheless accept Serwatka's point that quantitative data offers political possibilities for progressing LGBT equalities.

Studies of sexualities in rural areas have tended to adopt qualitative methodologies, most commonly interview-based studies on very specific populations, usually limited to one town or small area (eg. Comerford et al 2004; Kazyak 2011; Kramer 1995), or broader ethnographic approaches incorporating interviews, participant observation and media analysis (eg. Annes & Redlin 2012; Gray 2009; Kuhar & Švab 2013). Quantitative approaches are limited -it is likely that quantitative approaches are considered doubly unsuitable for exploring rural sexualities, due not only to the reasons regarding generalisations and normalisations detailed above, but also the expectation of a small number of rural LGBT research respondents and participants, which has clear implications for traditional quantitative ways of demonstrating statistical validity (Dancey & Reidy 2011:250-252; Hoyle et al 2002; O'Leary 2005:88-90). Additionally, the drive for a large sample size which can produce generalizable and statistically significant results can lead to the erasure of geographically distinct 'rurals'<sup>4</sup>.

With regard to studies exploring sexuality and LGBT equality issues and policy initiatives in the UK public sector, the extant studies are limited in number (Monro 2006) and again are broadly qualitative in nature, focusing on exploring the construction of the public sector itself through sexuality and public policy (Cooper 1994; Cooper 2006), while other work begins to explore the nature and effectiveness of equalities initiatives (Monro 2006). A variety of methods are used, including interviews with key stakeholders (Cooper 1994; Monro 2006), document and media analysis (Cooper 1994; Cooper 2006) and PAR (Richardson & Monro 2012). In the case of interviews

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<sup>4</sup> For example, in Bowen 2005 the geographic spread of respondents includes 49 US states, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and five other countries.

and PAR, the stakeholders and participants have tended to be those situated within public sector institutions – my research incorporates a highly diverse group of participants from the public and voluntary sectors, from local LGBT community groups and from the academy.

### **3.3 - A Multiple-Methods, Participatory Action Research Approach**

In this section of the chapter I outline the PAR project and methodology used for this research, then explain the methods used to gather data. Note that this section does not claim that the PAR approach was actively chosen as the ‘best’ way to meet my research aims – the LGBT Equalities project did not develop from my thesis, but rather the two have developed in tandem. However, though acknowledging that PAR can incorporate a wide variety of research methods, I can describe the particular advantages a PAR approach brings with specific reference to my research aims and this project. I also note some of the accepted limitations of a PAR project, describing how these have impacted on the research, attempts to ameliorate these limitations, and the implications of PAR for traditional academic and university modes of evaluating research.

PAR is ‘is best understood not as a methodology or a set of techniques, but as an approach or orientation to inquiry’ (Aziz et al 2011:306; Johnson & Guzman 2012). Here I set out the particular orientation of participatory action research, demonstrating the epistemological and theoretical background. Though a diverse and experimental field, and not easily pinned down or defined (Gatenby & Humphries 2000:89; Johnson & Guzman 2012; Koch & Kralik 2006:13), PAR could be described as an attempt to break from what William Foote Whyte calls the ‘professional expert model’ of research (Foote Whyte 1991:8), through which researchers impose their views by directing participant responses towards their expectations (Koch & Kralik 2006:7). Therefore it engages directly with concerns surrounding the researcher’s role in producing knowledge which I highlighted in the previous section by foregrounding reflexivity and advocating the involvement of participants as co-researchers at all stages of the research process (Gatenby & Humphries 2000; Koch & Kralik 2006; Pain 2004; Payne & Brown 2010:334). Indeed, PAR methodologies stress the

importance of the research process as much as traditional outcomes and outputs (Kindon et al 2010:13). Through participation, reflexivity and the explicit goal of creating social change at whatever scale, PAR is described as having the potential to be more 'effective' research (Montoya & Kent 2011), if the effect desired is to create positive social change, particularly for marginalised groups such as LGBT people. Therefore the purpose behind the LGBT Equalities in Hastings, Rother and East Sussex research – to progress positive social change for local LGBT people (see Appendix A) – itself can be said to support a PAR methodological approach.

PAR is described as giving 'voice' to silenced or marginalised groups (Cahill 2007:276; Koch & Kralik 2006:20; Marx 2001:2; Pain 2004:654; Payne & Brown 2010:334) through their participation in the research process, which is connected to the key concern of 'empowerment' through PAR.

Empowerment is difficult to define (Aziz et al 2011; Johnson & Guzman 2012), but writers link it closely with two related outcomes of PAR. First, in theory PAR empowers the participants – especially marginalised participants – to generate and appropriate knowledge and practice to use in their own interests (Aziz et al 2011:306; Koch & Kralik 2006:14). Crucially, this should not be seen as uncovering hidden local knowledge, but instead as the generation of knowledge in a specific PAR context (Cahill 2007; Pain 2004:653). As Pain notes, this is vital in order not to essentialise local knowledge as somehow more real, 'primitive' or 'organic' (ibid). It is possible that the idea of 'empowerment' could be deployed – consciously or not – in a paternalistic way, perhaps imposing the researcher's idea of what 'empowerment' looks like (Cahill 2007:274; for an example see Payne & Brown 2010:334), though the extent to which such projects are 'participatory' is debatable.

The second link with empowerment is through consciousness-raising, which can be described as becoming aware of the multiple ways in which one participates in structures of oppression (Cahill 2007; Koch & Kralik 2006:13-14 and 20-21). This must be an important part of PAR, as it also begins to call into question the power relationship between the researcher and participants. PAR encourages the researcher to reflect on their own privileged position (Aziz et al 2011:306; Cahill 2007:276; Gatenby & Humphries 2000:100; Koch & Kralik 2006:17; Pain 2004:658) and how this

impacts on the research. Here the researcher is held accountable through working with participants. I am mindful of Pain's warning that power differentials between researcher and participants can never be fully erased, only brought to light and engaged with (Pain 2004:656), and that the situation in research is not as simple as the researcher 'having' power and participants being without power (Lyons 2000). Nevertheless, PAR approaches have the potential to be more effective and realistic in tackling of power differentials within the research framework.

Through this discussion, it becomes clear that PAR works within an epistemic framework which denies claims to singular and essential scientific truths – rather, it insists on multiple forms of valid knowledges, and suggests that those who are the most marginalised and oppressed in societies bear particularly important forms of knowledge (Kindon et al 2010) – within the context of this research, this could be said to apply to marginalised LGBT communities in non-urban areas, particularly areas of marked deprivation such as areas in East Sussex (ESCC 2011; Fairley & Nouidjem 2004).

Aside from the theoretical and conceptual issues described, I also note three practical problems commonly associated with PAR, which must be carefully negotiated. First, PAR can be expensive and funding limits the extent to which participation is possible (Bostock & Freeman 2003:470; Gatenby & Humphries 2000:101; Pain 2004:659). Second, PAR takes time and the researcher may well lose the control they may be accustomed to having over this (Bostock & Freeman 2003:470; Monk et al 2003:103; Pain 2004:659). Third, institutional hierarchies and norms (such as those of academia and the university) impact on the research, setting boundaries and expectations (Aziz et al 2011:319; Koch & Kralik 2003:11; Marx 2001; Monk et al 2003:103; Pain 2004:659) which the researcher needs to negotiate carefully – this may, for example, result in PAR being seen as less valid or scientific according to certain academic norms (Bostock & Freeman 2003:472-3; Gatenby & Humphries 2000:102); though a number of scholars have argued that PAR results in alternative or in some respects superior forms of 'validity' (Bradbury & Reason 2001; Cahill 2010:182; Foote-Whyte et al 1991; Kinpaisby 2008:297; Montoya & Kent 2001; Reason & Bradbury 2001),

particularly compared with that achieved by traditional, quantitative-based forms of validity (Fals Borda 2001; Heron & Reason 2001; Howitt & Stevens 2005:45-46; Tandon 2011:88-91). Difficult reflective thinking and work may also be required for the researcher to loosen hold on what they may see as being traditionally their academic 'turf' (Monk et al 2003; Woods & Gardner 2011).

Given the PAR underpinnings of the project, much of the forum's research was developed to meet not only the aims of this thesis, but also the key aim of the LGBT Equalities in Hastings, Rother and East Sussex project as specified in the original funding bid - to improve the lives of LGBT people in Hastings, Rother and East Sussex by creating strategic networks between academic institutions, local communities and local public sector services (see Appendix A). The potential for a PhD thesis stemming from the project, running alongside and exploring related aims, was included within two of the key project activities to be undertaken in the original project outline. A variety of other, equally important research aims were brought to the research by individual project participants, such as benefiting their own organisations' LGBT equality policies and practices; producing specific data comparable with that produced by their own organisations; and building and improving relationships with local LGBT communities. In order to meet the various aims of the research, as well as the aims of participants in the LGBT Equalities forum, a multiple methods approach was pursued which incorporated both qualitative and quantitative data generation. Using multiple methods is a noted means of achieving a greater richness of data (Flick 2009:33-52; Mason 1994; Seale 1999:71-72) and of tackling research questions from different perspectives (Mason 1994; Mason 1996:25) – this is vital when working with a large and highly diverse participatory research group, as well as when attempting to achieve a wide-ranging understanding of the multiple ways in which geographies and LGBT equalities are co-constructed.

The multiple methods approach has been described as 'triangulation' by Denzin (1978) – while triangulation has been used as a suggested way to achieve scientific 'validity, it has come under sustained criticism which casts it as an unnecessarily relic of positivist methodologies (Mason 1994; Flick 2009:444-445; Seale 1999). Seale argues that this is in fact a misinterpretation of Denzin's

original intention of welding a personal and reflective positionality with a scientific perspective (Seale 1999:56-59), and suggests that the concept of ‘triangulation’ could still be used productively in a strategic attempt ‘to convince a sceptical audience’ (ibid. 61; see also Mason 1994). Since, as ‘action research’, my research is intended to promote social change through partnership with and dissemination through diverse audiences, it feels important to bear this strategic potential in mind even if I reject the triangulation-as-validity thesis – a multiple methods approach is therefore further justified.

It should be noted that the incorporation of quantitative data collection within a broadly PAR methodology is in fact a result of the LGBT Equalities project itself, which highlighted the multiple aims and audiences with which this research would need to engage. Furthermore, in adopting the PAR stance used in some foregoing research, my research engages with a specific participatory space and project which incorporates a highly diverse group of participants, not limited to public sector representatives and workers but also including local LGBT community groups, activists and academics, stepping outside of the tendency to sort PAR into different ‘types’ based on who participates (see Cameron 2007). Adopting a PAR methodology therefore situates this research at a specific contemporary moment and space, developing alongside and entangled with this new inclusive governance approach to UK LGBT equalities in the public sector (see Kesby et al 2007:20-25 on PAR’s particular connection with governance; also Chapter 5 of this thesis on partnership working and LGBT equalities). The multiple methods utilised allowed the research to simultaneously engage with, critique and develop non-urban LGBT equalities, meeting the key aims while crucially reflecting back on the participatory project and space itself.

### **3.4 – Project Background to LGBT Equalities in Hastings, Rother and East Sussex**

The LGBT Equalities in Hastings, Rother and East Sussex project grew out of an approach made by a local LGBT community group, the Hastings & Rother Rainbow Alliance (HRRRA), to University of



Brighton researchers, suggesting research on LGBT lives in the Hastings and Rother areas of East Sussex. Through this partnership an LGBT Equalities Day was organised in Hastings in February 2010. This community event was supported by the University of Brighton and connected university academics with HRRRA and other local LGBT community members and activists. One of the key connections was generated through the presentation of findings from the award-winning Count Me In Too project – a community/university partnership action research project based in Brighton & Hove, which had aimed to affect positive social change for LGBT people in Brighton & Hove through a combination of robust quantitative and qualitative data gathered through a large questionnaire. It was suggested that similar action research, designed to improve the lives of local LGBT people, could be developed for the Hastings area.

The earlier findings of the local Go Hastings! Research on local LGBT lives (Fairley & Nouidjem 2004), along with the connections made across university, public sector and community spheres at the 2010 LGBT Equalities Day, led to the development of a participatory action research project – the LGBT Equalities in Hastings, Rother & East Sussex project – a partnership between HRRRA, University of Brighton researchers and local public sector institutions. The stated aim of this project was to improve the lives of LGBT people in Hastings, Rother and East Sussex by creating strategic networks between academic institutions, local communities and services. To further this aim, 8 key activities across two phases were outlined (see Appendix A). Two years of funding was sought and won from ‘On Our Doorsteps’, a project linked to the Community/University Partnership Programme (Cupp) at the University of Brighton, which sought to make the University of Brighton a better ‘neighbour’ to its local communities. Due to my previous work as a research assistant on the Brighton-based Count Me In Too project, I was appointed as an academic researcher on this new project, to be coupled with my enrolment as a PhD student developing a thesis around similar issues. The first meeting of the LGBT Equalities in Hastings, Rother and East Sussex forum occurred in May 2010, and these forum meetings would occur regularly – on a monthly or bimonthly basis – over the next two years, drawing together a wide variety of public, voluntary, community and academic

institutions, groups and individuals. The research undertaken for the LGBT Equalities project was primarily designed within meetings of this LGBT Equalities Forum, through a participatory model facilitated by myself.

### **3.5 - Methods of Data Generation and Analysis**

Given the PAR underpinnings of the project, much of the forum's research was developed to meet not only the aims of this thesis, but also the key aim of the LGBT Equalities in Hastings, Rother and East Sussex project as specified in the original funding bid - to improve the lives of LGBT people in Hastings, Rother and East Sussex by creating strategic networks between academic institutions, local communities and local public sector services (see Appendix A).

Additional and equally important research aims were brought to the research by project participants. These multiple sets of research aims – which do not necessarily conflict and retain considerable overlap – were pursued via three methods which captured different perspectives and different forms of data.

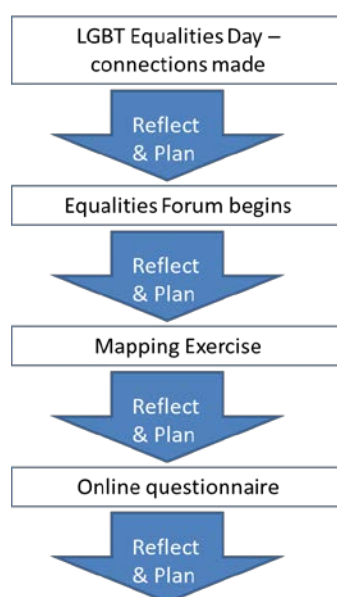
**Method 1** utilised the audio recorded meetings of the LGBT Equalities Forum. From November 2010, all meetings of the LGBT Equalities Forum were recorded from beginning to end, with the informed consent of those present. 11 meetings were recorded in total. The method captured qualitative data from research participants (including public sector and LGBT community group representatives) and the process of doing the research. This data would work towards meeting aims 1, 2, 3 and 4.

**Method 2** was a Mapping Exercise of public sector LGBT equality policies, developed in partnership through the LGBT Equalities forum as a form of Participatory Action Research. 14 East Sussex public sector organisations were asked a series of questions about their equality policies and initiatives for LGBT people. 10 full responses were received. This method captured qualitative and some quantitative data from public sector representatives and 'official' institutional perspectives. The data produced would work towards meeting research aims 1 and 2 and 4.

**Method 3** was an Online Questionnaire targeted at local LGBT people. As with method 2, this questionnaire was developed through the forum as a piece of Participatory Action Research. This extensive questionnaire asked both qualitative and quantitative questions about LGBT equalities and local public sector services. A total of 174 responses were received. This method captured qualitative and quantitative data from local LGBT people. The data produced would work towards meeting research aims 1, 2, 3 and 4.

These different methods emerged through the cyclical action/reflection process of PAR, a slow process according to which the project's activities and research are developed, implemented and reflected upon before a new research phase is undertaken, based on the results of the previous phase (Heron & Reason 2001; Kindon et al 2010:15; McIntosh 2010:31-54; McTaggart 1991; Montoya & Kent 2011; Reason 2011; Wadsworth 2001). Figure 2 shows a simplified overview of this process of action and reflection with regard to this project. While PAR is recognised for its 'messy' nature (Bradbury & Reason 2001; Chisholm 2001), the rest of this section attempts to clarify and simplify the processes behind the three distinct methods of data collection used both for this PhD thesis and as part of the LGBT Equalities in Hastings, Rother & East Sussex project. I outline the development of these three methods, the data gathered, and the data analysis performed in turn.

**Figure 2 – PAR Cyclical Development of LGBT Equalities in Hastings, Rother and East Sussex**



### **3.5.1 – Method 1 - Meetings of the LGBT Equalities Forum**

The first method used to collect data as part of this project involved the audio recording of meetings of the LGBT Equalities Forum. The Equality Forums were implemented per the original LGBT Equalities project proposals, in order to provide a space for a variety of public, voluntary, community and academic groups and individuals to meet, strengthen networks, share best practice in developing LGBT equality policies, and engage in further research. In essence, these forum meetings formed the participatory hub through which the rest of the LGBT Equalities project operated – such spaces are important in community-oriented PAR, focusing on ‘creating settings for collective reflection that enable people from different organisations to see themselves in one another’ (Senge & Scharmer 2001:238; see also Kesby 2007 and Kesby et al 2010 on the importance of considering the spatialities of PAR).

From the initial meeting in May 2010 to the last meeting of August 2012, these forum meetings were planned on a roughly bimonthly basis, with 13 forum meetings in all occurring over this period. The longevity of the forum meetings leads to a richness of qualitative data not just with regard to sheer volume or the particular discussions captured, but also through tracking the development of discussions and local issues over time. The two year plus span of the project may also have contributed to feelings of trust and comfort on the part of participants. The pool of partner groups, organisations and representative individuals was relatively large. While the forums in principle operated on an ‘invite-only’ basis, in practice participants were keen to suggest other individuals and groups to invite, and no-one was ever denied attendance if they asked. Those groups and organisations which worked in partnership as part of the forum were:

- East Sussex Hospitals NHS Trust
- East Sussex County Council (including Adult Social Care, Children’s Services and Libraries & Information Service departments)
- Hastings Borough Council
- Rother District Council
- Wealden District Council
- NHS Hastings and Rother
- Sussex Police
- Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
- University of Brighton
- East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service
- Hastings & Rother Rainbow Alliance (LGBT community group)
- BourneOut (LGBT community group)
- Her Majesty’s Prison Service (HMP Lewes)
- Hastings & Rother Health & Social Care Forum
- Hastings Voluntary Action
- Care for the Carers
- Crime Reduction Initiatives

Participation varied heavily across groups and across time, with certain groups and individuals engaging more fully during times when issues particular to their interests arose, or when specifically requested by other partners.

All meetings of the forum were hosted by the University of Brighton in Hastings, the Hastings-based campus of the university. Although other venues were occasionally discussed, forum participants identified certain key advantages in the use of this particular space: it was felt to be a relatively (though not completely) neutral space; the building was geographically central, close to public transport and easily accessible by participants; refreshments were available over the long meetings; and the closed and soundproofed meeting rooms aided in ensuring confidentiality. Acknowledging the particularities of this space is important if we are to respond adequately to Kesby, Kindon and Pain’s call for researchers to attend to how spatialities impact on PAR projects – the participatory nature of the research is concentrated in this particular space, requiring us to consider how and if participation and empowerment operate outside of it (Kesby et al 2010). Meetings were structured in ways familiar to most participants (see Box 1). Forum participants agreed that

it was desirable to specifically include a space for the open discussion of 'LGBT equalities issues' in every meeting, highlighting the importance of such discussions as part of the forum even if they were in practice threaded throughout the meeting as a whole – this could also be said to counter the impact of academic researchers in organising meetings and agendas, ensuring that all participants could raise their own issues in accordance with PAR goals (Gatenby & Humphries 2000; Koch & Kralik 2006; Pain 2004; Payne & Brown 2010). My role within meetings of the LGBT Equalities form was both facilitator and participant (identified as Researcher 1 in subsequent excerpts), working alongside Dr Kath Browne (identified as Researcher 2). While Dr Browne initially took the lead in facilitating meetings and research initiatives, over time my role expanded to take over more of these duties. In addition to organising each meeting, my role was to book the space and refreshments; to prepare the equipment for audio recording; to distribute and circulate agendas, minutes and other documents electronically before meetings; to create the initial draft of forum letters, reports and press releases; to set an agenda for each meeting according to what was agreed upon in previous meetings; and to facilitate discussion within this loose structure.

### **Box 1 – Sample Forum Meeting Agenda**

<p><b><u>Lesbian, Gay, Bi and Trans Equalities in Hastings, Rother &amp; East Sussex Group</u></b></p> <p><b><u>24<sup>th</sup> January 2012 @ The University of Brighton in Hastings</u></b></p> <p><b>Agenda:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>1.</b> Welcome</li><li><b>2.</b> Last meeting's minutes and actions</li><li><b>3.</b> 'What Have You Done For Us Lately' - feedback/evaluation</li><li><b>4.</b> Online questionnaire - initial demographic stats</li><li><b>5.</b> Online questionnaire – preparing analysis group</li><li><b>6.</b> LGBT equalities issues – open discussion</li><li><b>7.</b> Next meeting dates</li><li><b>8.</b> AoB</li></ol>
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In addition, I engaged in each forum meeting as a full participant, offering my opinions and limited expertise alongside other participants, and reflecting upon my participation.

Although this could potentially result in disagreement with other participants, the very aims of the project encouraged a broad representation and discussion of a variety of viewpoints, as well as sharing information across academic, public, voluntary and community spheres. With regard to the forum's Participatory Action Research, my role was to facilitate participants' development of methods (the Mapping Exercise of Method 2 and the Online Questionnaire of Method 3); collating their ideas into document form for the reiterative development process; finalising questionnaire wording and format; organising the piloting of the research; maintaining the gathered data in a secure way; facilitating the participatory analysis of the data; and writing the final reports based on the PAR initiatives (see McGlynn & Browne 2011 for the Mapping Exercise Report, and McGlynn 2012 for the Online Questionnaire report).

During meetings, participants regularly 'digressed' into discussing personal, local and national LGBT-related issues, and as when acting as the main facilitator I avoided reigning in such discussions unless the time allotted for the meeting was running out. This reflects the epistemological ethos of PAR which recognises participants as experts in their own right (Kindon et al 2010), in this case with regard to local LGBT issues. It also stems from a personal decision to try to avoid 'steering' forum discussions through the lens of my own aims and desires, recognising and negotiating the multiple aims and perspectives which this highly diverse research project necessarily incorporates (Macmillan & Scott 2003; Monk et al 2003; Woods & Gardner 2001:205). Here I am concerned with the unavoidably inequitable power relations within PAR project – the buzzword of 'participation' must not mask inequalities of power within the research (Chambers 2011; Maguire 2011), and power differentials between researcher and participants can never be fully erased, only brought to light and engaged with (Pain 2004:656). As a university-based researcher, facilitating

meetings in a university space, I recognise that my participation and facilitation are inflected with power (Wadsworth 2001), and thus reflective, critical suspicion must be levelled at my career-furthering position within an institution of both traditional intellectual elitism and more contemporary corporate drives (Brulin 2001; Fuller & Askins 2007; Kesby et al 2010; Kinpaisby 2008). At the same time, reflecting on post-meeting entries in my research diary I note that I have sometimes written of ‘biting my tongue’ during discussions, sometimes so as to avoid disharmony, to avoid offending or alienating respected participants and friends through disagreement, and at other times to avoid the embarrassment of potentially revealing myself as ignorant about particular local issues or organisational processes. This reflects the fact that participatory research is not as simple as the researcher ‘having’ power and participants being without power (Lyons 2000) – participants, in their multiple social and spatial positionalities, also wield power unevenly through the research process (Scoones 2011: 123-124; Woods & Gardner 2011)

Although initial meetings of the forum were not recorded, valuable cross-sectoral discussions with regard to local LGBT equalities were occurring which could not be fully recorded by my personal note-taking. In order to capture these discussions, with the intent to analyse them as part of my thesis research, the academic researchers suggested audio recording forum meetings. Thus this first method of collecting data rose organically out of the project itself, in a way which, per the broader epistemologies associated with PAR, would allow for the process, the ‘doing’ of the research, to be captured and held as as important as the outcomes of the forum’s participatory research initiatives (Bradbury & Reason 2001; Chisholm 2001; Heron & Reason 2001; Kindon et al 2010:13; Reason & Bradbury 2001; Wadsworth 2001).

Once it was agreed that forum meetings should be audio recorded, ethical documents were drawn up to fully inform participants about how these recordings would be managed and



used. Consent was secured using a participant information sheet (see Appendix B) which detailed how and why this data would be collected, how it would be managed, stored and used, and how to signal dissatisfaction with the recording before, during and after recordings were made. Before every meeting, each participant signed a consent form (see Appendix C) after reading the participant information sheet at least once. The ethical procedures in place allowed participants to choose whether to be named or unnamed in the recordings – if the latter, any potentially identifying details would also be removed from transcribed recordings. Participants had the power to highlight only certain parts of their words to be removed from recordings, and could signal this instruction either during the recording itself, or afterwards through communication with myself. In time regular participants indicated they would rather give verbal consent, though new or infrequent participants were always asked to read and sign the ethical documentation. These ethical considerations remain of particular importance given the trust built up with regular participants over time – some participants were recorded criticising their own organisations or groups in ways which could potentially compromise their employment, but the ethical procedures in place allowed them to remove their identification at these points or to retroactively remove particularly compromising statements in full. Thus the ethical procedures worked to gradually build trust within the participatory framework, resulting in a richer set of recorded data overall.

### **3.5.2 – Method 2 - LGBT Equalities Mapping Exercise**

The second method of data collection used –and the first specifically developed through the participatory forum meetings described above in Section 4.2 of this chapter – was a mapping exercise exploring the LGBT-related equality policies of a number of local public sector organisations. This exercise was intended not only to build on the foregoing Go

Hastings! research (Fairley & Nouidjem 2004) in examining public sector responses to LGBT equality, but also to provide a tool for local LGBT communities as well as the public sector, with which to hold public sector services to account.

To collect data for this mapping exercise, a routed questionnaire was sent to a number of local organisations and services in November 2010, with many such organisations also receiving an additional suite of bespoke questions specific to them (see Appendix D for the universal questions and the bespoke questions sent to East Sussex County Council Adult Social Care). An initial suite of questions was composed by myself, informed by three main sources. First, suggestions from the LGBT Equalities Forum meetings allowed these questions to address the specific aims and concerns of local participants, in accordance with the aims of the project overall and with the project's PAR ethos – this participatory research development foregrounded and included participants' own aims, challenging the dominance of academic researchers' aims (Foote Whyte 1991:8-9). It also enabled the research to benefit from the PAR insight that local knowledges are as important as professional 'expertise' (Kendon et al 2010). The second source informing these questions was the Go Hastings! research (Fairley & Nouidjem 2004), which enabled the forum's research not only to build on foregoing work, but also to address some of the recommendations made in the Go Hastings! report, exploring whether improvement had been made in certain key areas, and whether public sector LGBT-related initiatives had had a positive impact since 2004. Finally, the questions were informed by the public sector equality duties introduced with the national Equality Act 2010. These elements added a crucial temporal component to the research, enabling the research to explore and capture development in then-nascent LGBT equality initiatives referred to in the Go Hastings! report, as well as laying the groundwork for future local research which may wish to track initiatives and policies related to the Equality Act 2010.

Once produced, these questions were developed, changed and added to within meetings of the LGBT Equalities Forum. Participants also tailored the language used to be more relevant to public sector organisations and to address specific public sector drives and initiatives. Representatives of particular public sector organisations themselves suggested bespoke questions to put to their own organisations. Though this potentially gave organisations a chance to present themselves in a favourable light, in practice the representatives participating in the forum meeting expressed a strong desire for a constructively self-critical approach, using their expert knowledge to add questions related to specific policies and internal issues. The diverse participatory nature of the group enabled further checks by representatives of other public and community groups, to ensure that no one organisation was 'getting off lightly'. Forum participants suggested organisations to target with questionnaires, and advised about particular contacts within each organisation to send the questionnaires to. Responding organisations were asked to include supporting evidence wherever possible, and were asked to submit a response by February 2011. The responses offer both qualitative and quantitative (in the form of 'Yes', 'No' and 'Don't Know' answers) data. The following 10 organisations submitted complete responses:

- East Sussex Hospitals NHS Trust
- East Sussex County Council (including Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Library & Information Service)
- Hastings Borough Council
- Rother District Council
- Wealden District Council
- NHS Hastings and Rother
- Sussex Police
- Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
- University of Brighton
- East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service

The relatively low number of responding organisations is due to the focus on specific public sector bodies and the mapping exercise's particular interest in the implementation of the Equality Act at a strategic level. Additionally, local government organisations have multiple departments - for example Housing, Adult Social Care and so on. These chose to respond as one organisation, indicating a 'top-down' approach to developing equalities policies and their implementation. These 'corporate' responses, combined with the notable diversity of other organisations covered, offer insights into the majority of the public sector organisations in the area. The data offers an insight into the local trends and may have relevance more broadly – for example, this research could be replicated on a national level to examine the implementation of the Equality Act in relation to LGBT people.

### **3.5.3 – Method 3 - LGBT Equalities Online Questionnaire**

The final method of data collection for the project involved the development of an online questionnaire targeted at local LGBT people, which was implemented through the survey construction website [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com) (see Appendix F for the completed suite of questions). The questionnaire went live in November 2011 and ran until the end of March 2012.

As with the mapping exercise, this phase of research grew out of reflections upon the previous phase of the research. Forum members opined that the mapping exercise, while worthwhile, had concentrated on the local public sector and not on local LGBT communities. In order to make this questionnaire data useable by all participants in the LGBT Equalities Forum – including public services – it was agreed to include both qualitative and quantitative data collection, with the latter designed to be comparable with data gathered by local government and public services, with the qualitative data lending clarity

and further detail. Additionally, forum participants heavily altered the initial language used in the questionnaire, to ensure that questions and answers would be useable by as many participating groups as possible. For instance, with regard to particular demographic questions (eg. Question 9 regarding race and ethnicity), some forum participants insisted that these questions should be phrased identically to those used in the England and Wales 2011 National Census, since alternative phrasing would make the data incomparable to that received through their own monitoring mechanisms. In this way, participants openly challenged the academic researchers' control of the questionnaire's development – the researchers were not simply imposing their own views and assumed expertise (Koch & Kralik 2006:7), but instead the direction of the research was contested and negotiated in a participatory framework.

Forum members built on an initial series of questions suggested by the academic researchers – these questions provided the thematic structure of the questionnaire, which addresses demographic information; health and wellbeing; safety; areas of living, working and socialising; policies and legislation; public services; and local community groups. This initial series of questions was based on the design of the Count Me In Too project, as a foregoing example of successful local LGBT research which could be effectively utilised by public services and community groups alike. Some members also included one or two questions particularly pertinent to their group, service or organisation – this resulted in, for example a short suite of questions relating to the perceived importance of LGBT-related local library services (Questions 59, 60a, 60b and 60c), and those exploring the use of East Sussex County Council Adult Social Care services by LGBT respondents (Questions 61 and 62).

Over several meetings of the LGBT Equalities Forum, it became clear that the planned number of questions – around 20 – would not suffice to adequately capture the issues

which various members of the forum wished to tackle. After considerable discussion and negotiation, it was eventually agreed that a much wider array of questions would be used, with the final number of questions totalling 116. Therefore the questionnaire in its final form was lengthy, and piloting performed by myself and HRRRA forum participants indicated that respondents should expect to take around an hour in completing a questionnaire. Length has been negotiated to some extent via the extensive use of routing, which allowed many participants to bypass much of the questionnaire which is not relevant to them. However, this remained a significant investment of a participant's time, and during data cleaning it became evident that some respondents abandoned the questionnaire midway through. However in spite of this limitation, the large number of questions permitted many of the participating groups and organisations to include questions of particular relevance or use to them, while the addition of optional qualitative follow-up questions to many quantitative questions afforded the project the opportunity to gather a rich and diverse data set. According to forum participants the findings from the questionnaire, shared amongst local LGBT communities and services, will potentially benefit both them and local respondents (though participants could also be respondents). These benefits may include enabling local public services to find out more about LGBT equalities, raising participants' particular LGBT issues, increasing the awareness of LGBT lives outside urban metropolises, highlighting the real impact of LGBT equality legislation and policymaking, and tackling the dearth of research on LGBT lives and experiences in the Hastings and Rother areas. These potential benefits are made clear to participants from the outset, as is the length of the questionnaire.

The piloting phase of the project occurred over two weeks, and was engaged in by myself and the committee of the Hastings and Rother Rainbow Alliance, who had agreed to participate multiple times to weed out problems. The piloting phase resulted in two problems with misrouting, firstly with regard to Question 1, 'What is your age?', and

secondly with regard to Question 5, 'Have you gone through any part of a process (including thoughts or actions) to change from the sex you were described as at birth to the gender you identify with, or do you intend to?'. These problems were subsequently rectified. Questionnaire sampling operated via pre-existing contact networks maintained by the academic researchers and forum members, snowballing sampling through previous respondents, flyer distribution in local LGBT and 'mainstream' community spaces, and through notices in local press and publications, including those of participating public services and community groups. The online questionnaire was implemented via the popular survey website [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com). To allow those without personal computers to participate, four 'drop-in' sessions were organised at which those wanting to complete the questionnaire were able to do so with the assistance of the researcher – these sessions took place within the University of Brighton in Hastings, and while uptake was low (4 respondents), these were voices which would otherwise not have been captured through this research.

The online nature of the questionnaire, along with the potentially sensitive information asked for, meant that a number of risks to respondents were identified:

- There was the potential for respondents to be 'outed' (re. sexual and/or gender identity) through someone else becoming aware of their completing the questionnaire;
- Some questions, particularly those regarding hate crime, housing and mental health, could be sensitive and potentially distressing;
- The potential for coercion to submit a response and/or specific answers from service providers and researchers was noted.

To address issues of privacy, an extensive ethical disclosure featured on the front page of the questionnaire. This document suggested that participants use a computer in a public place (such as a local library) if in doubt regarding their personal privacy, and listed simple tips and instructions about how to remove traces of this internet use from a variety of web

browsers – these tips were sourced from a Northern Ireland government website, <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/internet-safety-guide>, which was felt by the researchers to be appropriate. To address issues of the potentially sensitive and upsetting nature of the questioning, the questionnaire provided advice and contact details for sources of support in areas of sensitive information, at the beginning and end of the questionnaire and at the beginning of every new section. These were local support sources, suggested by members of the LGBT Equalities Forum. Where possible these were tailored to the specific area of questioning – for example, mental health support contacts were listed at the start of the Health & Wellbeing section. See Appendix E for the full ethical approval submission made to the University of Brighton regarding the online questionnaire.

The questionnaire also makes it clear that all areas of questioning are strictly optional and should only be answered if the person wishes to do so. At the start of each section it makes clear that the respondent can withdraw at any time during the questionnaire by closing the browser window, and that answers will not be recorded until the completion of the questionnaire. Finally, those participant individuals, groups and organisations advertising the questionnaire or directing their service users towards, as well as myself as the researcher organising the ‘drop-in’ sessions, were asked to remain reflexive about their relationship with potential respondents and ensure that there would be no pressure or influence on them to take part. To ensure this, respondents were asked to note in any qualitative box of the questionnaire if they had felt unduly pressured to take part. During drop-in sessions, I remained present to provide support or answer questions, but emphasised that I would not look at the answers given to questions unless asked to by the participant (see Appendix E for the full ethical disclosure made to the University of Brighton).



### **3.6 - Data Analysis**

In this section I detail the analysis process for each of the three research methods. I explain the different qualitative and quantitative modes of analysis in terms of the analytic theory used and outline the actual process of analysis, offering brief examples where relevant. Of particular note is that while data from methods 2 (the Mapping Exercise) and 3 (the Online Questionnaire) was analysed in partnership with participants from the LGBT Equalities Forum, data from method 1 (the recorded forum meetings) was analysed by me alone. Additionally, subsequent to the participatory analysis of methods 2 and 3, the qualitative data gathered through each of these methods was analysed alongside the data from method 1, according to the same process of thematic coding followed by detailed discourse analysis. Therefore this research involved three intertwined analysis iterations – the first two in partnership with LGBT Equalities Forum participants for output via published reports (see McGlynn & Browne 2011 and McGlynn 2012), and the third by myself which included the re-analysis of some data for this thesis. Consequently the data analysis is described below in **chronological order of analysis** (Method 2, Method 3 then Methods 1-3 together), not in order of the beginning of data generation for each method.

#### **3.6.1 – Participatory Analysis of Mapping Exercise (Method 2)**

Once collected, responses were fed by myself into an analysis matrix developed by myself and Dr Kath Browne at the University of Brighton, using Microsoft Excel software to cross-tabulate each responding organisation's answers to a series of questions. These questions broadly matched those from the original questionnaire, but in some cases were broken down into additional categories (for example, across lesbian, gay, bi and trans as opposed to 'LGBT'), listing a simple 'yes', 'no', 'don't know' or 'non applicable' response and a short

summary of the supporting evidence where available, including direct quotes or policy references. A simple numeric and percentile breakdown of the responses to each question was provided, eschewing statistical significance and traditional models of quantitative generalisability due to the low numbers and the highly localised and exploratory nature of the research. During subsequent forum meetings, participants suggested additional categorical breakdowns of some questions and made recommendations based on the data. Based on the report's intended wide audience, recommendations were targeted at local public sector organisations, local LGBT communities and community groups, and the LGBT Equalities Forum itself.

In accordance with the cyclical nature of PAR, upon reflection participants recommended that in certain areas the responses be bolstered with further evidence in order to better understand responding organisations' answers. Therefore the participants instigated further contact with certain responding organisations to gain richer qualitative data, requesting more evidence with a deadline of April 2011. In particular, some forum members indicated that the evidence and responses to Question 2 ('Does your organisation account for multiple marginalisation with regard to LGBT people [eg. LGBT people with disabilities, older and younger LGBT people]?') suggested a misunderstanding of the question, and agreed that further evidence should be sought using the term 'dual discrimination', as this would be better understood as part of particular institutional jargons. Thus the participants' expert knowledges were deployed to provide more accurate evidence, which would be 'useable' by a larger number of organisations. Although this lengthened the time of the research process, overall this allowed the research to better meet the aims of the mapping exercise, in providing a more detailed overview of equality policies.

### **3.6.2 – Participatory Analysis of Online Questionnaire (Method 3)**

The analysis of the online questionnaire occurred through four meetings of a participatory analysis group, composed of ten members of the LGBT Equalities Forum and myself as facilitator. These meetings followed a structure which would allow participants to undertake analysis and make detailed recommendations based on the data without any statistical knowledge and with respect to participants' limited capacity. After data collection ceased, the responses were downloaded from surveymonkey.com and viewed through SPSS statistical analysis software and manually checked and cleaned. A total of 174 individual responses were received, however for the purposes of the forum's published report based on this research - highlighting LGBT lives in Hastings, Rother and wider East Sussex - cases were tested for validity against two key criteria:

1. Respondents should fall within the umbrella category of LGBT – the analysis group agreed that those identifying as both 'straight' (Question 2 - sexual identity) and not 'trans' (Question 5 - gender identity) would be excluded.
2. Respondents must either live (Question 92), work (Question 97) or socialise (Question 99) mainly in East Sussex, but outside Brighton & Hove. Those responding 'Brighton & Hove', 'not in East Sussex', 'Don't Know', 'N/A' or who did not respond were excluded.

Implementing these criteria resulted in a large number of responses to be invalidated, initially leaving only 84 valid cases for analysis. In consultation with the participatory analysis group, further validation was sought through additional questions to retrieve more cases for analysis. Two other quantitative questions specified that respondents must mainly live, work or socialise in particular areas – Hastings (Question 107) and Eastbourne (Question 112). Additionally, a number of qualitative responses regarding feelings of safety

(Question 56) were agreed by the group to sufficiently demonstrate living, working or socialising in East Sussex but outside Brighton & Hove. This retrieval process resulted in a final dataset of 128 valid cases. Exploratory statistical tests demonstrated that this number of cases could produce statistically significant results. Furthermore, in the initial analysis group meeting, representatives from public sector organisations stressed the importance of balancing the number of cases against the two validation criteria, and agreed that this would be a convincing number of cases in the published LGBT Equalities project report. However, it should be noted that while the **quantitative** data used in the published report and in this thesis is based on these 128 responses, the **qualitative** data from the original dataset of 174 responses, including cases 'invalid' for the purposes of the LGBT Equalities project report, is used as part of this thesis where the data can be used to meet its aims.

The cleaned and validated quantitative data was subsequently analysed with the assistance of SPSS. To ensure that statistics based on this quantitative data were accessible not only to the analysis group, but also to the report's intended audience of public sector workers and local LGBT communities, only simple statistics and related statistical tests were used. Due to the nature of the questionnaire, the generated quantitative data was categorical rather than numerical. Therefore SPSS was used to perform chi-square statistical tests to explore the data with regard to the null value hypothesis, and where necessary to indicate a measure of association between variables. More powerful parametric tests could not be performed due to the vast majority of data being nominal, and thus not satisfying associated assumptions of normality necessary for this kind of testing. This was due to the participatory development of the questionnaire, and the specific aims of partners to make this data comparable with their own pre-existing data. The measure of statistical significance used was set at  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$  – however, while this value is widely accepted as a measure of significance (and thus comes with a measure of explanatory, as well as political, power) it is ultimately a somewhat arbitrary value (Dancey & Reidy 2011:139-141;

Loftus 1996). Therefore the actual p-values for statistics are given in the report, and the analysis group agreed that p-values close to this marker of statistical significance would not be excluded from the findings – rather, their inclusion would be decided upon on a case-by-case basis.

The design of the questionnaire also resulted in a wealth of qualitative data. In order to make this data easier to express, where possible responses to questions were categorised into a quantitative form. While the case counts of this generated quantitative data are generally too low to analyse with statistical tests, the resultant tables were considered useful to quickly explain the results – direct qualitative quotes were also used to further highlight issues for local LGBT people. This coding process began with myself, as I coded each question thematically according to the thematic methodology outlined by Braun and Clarke (Braun & Clarke 2006), allowing meaning and categories to emerge from the data itself rather than asking pre-set questions of it.

Each case's response was listed against a generated 'theme', though some were coded into two or more, and the wider analysis group then checked and revised this coding during meetings and via online correspondence due to the time this could take. For example, when coding the qualitative data from Question 7 ('Please tell us what it is like to be a person who lives, or is thinking of living, as a sex different to how you were described at birth'), the initial coded table listed the count of coded responses and their numerical assignment, followed by the numerical list of responses (see Box 2). In this example, it can be seen that response 9 was initially not coded due to uncertainty over its placement in this table. After discussion with the analysis group it was coded as 'struggle, challenge'.

## **Box 2 – Example of Thematic Qualitative Coding from Online Questionnaire**

<b><u>CODE</u></b>	<b><u>COUNT</u></b>	<b><u>RESPONSE</u></b>
Positive	2	6, 7
Negative	2	3, 4
No difference	1	8
Struggle, challenge	3	1, 2, 5

**Responses:**

- 1) A constant battle between internal drives. Exhausting
- 2) Challenging, annoying, frustrating, often amusing by the confusion it provokes!
- 3) Horrendous.
- 4) Horrible, terrifying, fearful, confusing, upsetting, full of guilt for feeling the wrong way, depressing.
- 5) In some ways, it has little impact on my life. However, there is the ongoing dilemma of whether or not to out oneself, in some situations, never knowing what the consequences might be (not just potential risks to my safety but also risk of my grandchildren being bullied at school, for example).
- 6) Life enhancing. fulfilling.
- 7) Pleasant, Socially accepted, No embarrassment, Comfortable lifestyle. Nothing adverse.
- 8) The same as before.
- 9) We are seeking justice, to many people are openly hostile, some are react with violence, most other people think its unimportant, and have little knowledge. Health concerns are important, sometimes this is denied. Workplace hassles, people lose jobs. This is about gender identity although we all have a sexuality.

### **3.6.3 – Discourse Analysis of Qualitative Data (Methods 1, 2 and 3)**

The recordings of the LGBT Equalities forum meetings were not used as part of the LGBT Equalities project’s participatory action research outputs. However, they offered fruitful potential for analysis as part of this PhD thesis, entangled as it has been with the project, furthering the project’s own stated aim of exploring through academic research some of the issues regarding LGBT equalities in non-urban UK public sectors (see Appendix A). Furthermore, the qualitative data gathered through the other two methods were also considered to be suitable for this kind of analysis. My analysis of this qualitative data draws on discourse analysis inspired by the legacy of scholarship surrounding Michel Foucault. Rather than seeking to uncover any hidden truth or subtext of the recordings, a Foucauldian discourse analysis explores the communication between the texts, my own self, and wider societal issues of institutionalised power and subjectivity. This mode of

qualitative data analysis is born of ‘a theorising that rests upon complexity, uncertainty and doubt’ (Graham 2012:665). That is not to say that it is a strict requirement – numerous writers have noted that discourse analysis, and particularly Foucauldian discourse analysis, comes with no instructions and remains both flexible and imprecise (Flick 2009:341; Graham 2012:663; Hook 2001:521; Marston 2000:351). Hook has argued in favour of a more rigidly Foucauldian methodology of discourse analysis (Hook 2001), but this feels oddly prescriptive given Foucault’s own critical analysis of truth and ‘true ways’ (Foucault 1991; see also Graham 2011:666-7). Ian Parker has suggested some steps, including free associative brainstorming and the systematic itemisation of objects and subjects (Parker 2004), which I broadly follow in my own analysis due to his demonstrations of how these can later be linked together within broader structures of power and ideology (ibid.). Indeed, my decision to deploy a Foucauldian discourse analysis was precisely because it is noted as focusing more on ‘issues of critique, of ideology, and of power’ (Flick 2009:340). Within the context of public policy discussion, writers have shown how useful a tool discourse analysis – not just Foucauldian varieties – can be for highlighting what policy discussion **does** (Graham 2011; Marston 2000; Rydin 2005). Marston writes, ‘policy language constructs welfare identities, legitimates policy interventions and functions as an important site of ideological struggle over the meaning of human services within the welfare state’ (Marston 2000:349). Therefore while any given discourse analysis cannot uncover the ‘truth’ – for no one truth exists – it may be used to show the construction of ‘competing visions of a policy problem and... preferred policy solution’ (ibid. 351, see also Graham 2011:666). Therefore this mode of analysis connects strongly with the PAR epistemology of multiple knowledges, and can be deployed without contesting this theoretical perspective which frames the rest of this diverse project.

To assist with storing and viewing the data, audio recordings of the forum meetings were saved and later transcribed as text by myself, with the assistance of Express Scribe audio

transcription software. Qualitative data from the mapping exercise and the online questionnaire was saved directly as text. Personal and institutional names are recorded verbatim in the raw transcriptions and questionnaire responses, except where requested otherwise by participants. During the foregoing analysis phases for the Mapping Exercise and the Online questionnaire, and the subsequent writing of their respective reports, personal research notes were taken to identify possible areas of interest for the purposes of this thesis. Similarly, during the audio transcription process for the forum meetings, notes were made at certain points in the transcript, highlighting potentially interesting themes and subjectifications, as well as to connect the transcription with my own written notes from the meetings and reflections from my personal research diary. In this way the analysis of this qualitative data began not from an arbitrary date when an 'official' analysis phase started, but from the very moment of the data's generation<sup>5</sup>. These personal notes were later used to assist in producing a loose initial framework through which to frame the analysis. Initial codes indicating frequent discursive elements, or elements which resonated strongly with foregoing scholarly literature surrounding LGBT lives, equalities and geographies, were generated based on my aforementioned written notes.

Once the transcriptions were complete, along with the qualitative data from the Mapping Exercise and the Online Questionnaire they were imported directly into the NVivo qualitative data analysis program, with the transcripts organised chronologically and responses from the two questionnaires separated by individual question and listed in order of date received.

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<sup>5</sup> Admittedly this further complicates the (already complicated) chronological description of analysis as set out in the introduction to Section 5 of this chapter, but for the sake of clarity I have chosen retain this simpler chronology for the purposes of describing my work. However it may be worth noting how this kind of diverse, cross-sectoral partnership work challenges simplistic accounts of a linear research process.



Once the data was imported and organised, the process of coding began in order to produce a useful analysis framework. A full and final list of these analytic codes can be seen in Appendix G. Each transcript and each list of question-delineated responses was slowly read through once, with new codes being gradually generated based on perceived discursive connections and subjectifications – these were named thematically or sometimes ‘in vivo’ from particularly resonant turns of phrase. As the list of codes grew many sub-codes emerged to indicate more specific discourses or practices which could be grouped under a broader heading. Once each source of data had been read through once and initial coding had taken place, the resulting large and robust series of qualitative codes was taken as the core analysis framework. The full set of qualitative data was then re-analysed through this framework, with codes which emerged later during the development of the framework now offering new insights throughout the data. The repeated and reiterative nature of this process allowed the richness of the data to emerge gradually and for links to be made across meetings and discussions separated by time and which may not have appeared to be connected. The codes therefore grouped phrases or larger discussions into broad or more specific themes and connections across the data.

As the coding progressed, preliminary notes were made based on these codes which sought to analyse the discursive and performative details captured through the recorded meetings and questionnaire responses. Where the codes drew together data into broad themes and connected discourses, the subsequent analysis concentrated on the specifics. Rather than seeking to uncover the hidden truth or subtext of the transcribed discussions, my Foucauldian discourse analysis seeks to explore the communication between the texts, myself, and wider societal issues of institutional power and subjectivity. My analysis centres on reading networks of discursive relationships through the text, identifying subjectivities and the modes of subjectification – related elements of the text were captured and noted through the NVivo software. In addition, I draw on my research diary in

order to reflect on the texts' and my own positions within broader discourses of equality, sexuality and geography.

### **3.7 - Data Storage, Ownership and Management**

To ensure the confidence of PAR participants and respondents across all phases of research, the careful, respectful and secure management of data gathered was emphasised at all stages and in the consent form for the LGBT Equalities Forum (see Appendices B and C) and the information given prior to the online questionnaire (see Appendix F). All data was manually transcribed by myself into an electronic textual form where required, with qualitative data also being imported onto NVivo qualitative analysis software. Data thus transcribed had names changed or sections removed per the stated wishes of participants. Names of people were replaced with generic names – where possible these would respect the ethnic and cultural background of the participant, however where it was felt this would lead to the identification of a particular person by someone familiar with the local public sector or LGBT equalities context, a generic Westernised name was used. Files containing this data, as well as the original audio files from LGBT Equality Forum meetings, the original responses from public sector organisations for the mapping exercise, and the SPSS file containing questionnaire data, were stored securely during and after the research. The data was maintained in multiple locations in case of accident – first, in a password-protected computer and/or adjacent locked filing cabinet in an office within the University of Brighton campus, and second, in a password-protected computer and/or locked box in my own place of residence. Only myself and my supervisors had access to the complete data.

As noted previously, the Hastings and Rother area suffers from a dearth of research on LGBT lives and experiences. However, as this chapter makes clear, the sole foregoing piece of research (Fairley & Nouidjem 2004) proved useful in developing this research and achieving its initial aims, as this older 'Go Hastings!' report enabled a context to be set and research questions to be formulated which addressed local public services' older policy promises and LGBT initiatives. Members of the LGBT Equalities Forum – especially LGBT community members - have also expressed a desire to have further research carried out in the future which will address the findings from this research project. Therefore, in order to contribute to longitudinal and historical studies in the future, we plan to archive the data collected through this phase of the research after 10 years. Upon completion of this PhD thesis, ownership of the data will pass to Dr Kath Browne. After 10 years, archiving of the data will be discussed with the local LGBT community. The data should be archived by University of Brighton researchers and ownership and maintenance after 10 years negotiated with LGBT communities. Archiving will only take place after consultation with local LGBT communities.

### **3.8 - Conclusion to Methodology and Methods**

This chapter has detailed the variety of data collection methods and analytic techniques deployed within a broader participatory action research methodological framework. The multiple aims of the LGBT Equalities in Hastings, Rother & East Sussex forum and the aims of my own thesis are addressed through these methods and techniques, allowing the participants of the research (including myself) to work simultaneously towards these multiple aims through approaching the research in different ways. The Participatory Action Research (PAR) framework allows for a broader engagement with a view of public sector LGBT equalities which situates 'equality' outside public sector institutions themselves,

through the incorporation of LGBT community group perspectives and aims, and LGBT community voices. In addition, this chapter has highlighted the necessarily messy and uncertain connections and divergences between the research performed through the LGBT Equalities Forum, and the elements of the research – particularly the recordings of the forum meetings themselves – which are more particular to my thesis.

## **Chapter 4 – Geographies in the Shadow of the ‘Gay Capital’**

### **4.1 – Introduction to Geographies in the Shadow of the ‘Gay Capital’**

In Chapter 2 I reviewed studies of sexual and gender identities from a geographic perspective, identifying a clear historical trend within which the urban was seen as the centre of LGBT lives and communities. While studies of rural LGBT lives remain in the minority, my review noted not only a growth in the number of such, but also an increasing awareness of the complex interactions of rurality, sexuality and gender identity which move beyond assumptions of rural environments as necessarily oppressive. I particularly noted the call of Gavin Brown (2008) to recognise LGBT lives and communities beyond the urban metropolis and gay and LGBT ‘hotspots’. Using the mixed-methods data gathered as part of this thesis and through the LGBT Equalities in Hastings, Rother and East Sussex project, I build on such important developments in geographies of sexualities in a number of key ways. First, I demonstrate the challenges my research offers to popular imaginaries of the rural as inherently hostile and intolerant to LGBT lives, and the urban as inherently friendly and tolerant. At the same time, I demonstrate that while the ‘urban/rural’ dynamic remains a common and important discursive framework for understanding and organising LGBT lives, analysis of the data surrounding public sector service provision for LGBT people in East Sussex complicates not only common assumptions of what urban and rural LGBT lives are like, but also any simple distinctions between urban and rural.

Holding these two critical perspectives in tension – the continued discursive force of the urban/rural binary and the recognition that such constructed boundaries are fluid and shifting – I then move on to reveal how my data indicates that specific urban and rural geographies operate relationally to construct one another, and to structure the ways in which LGBT lives are understood within public sector equalities work and by LGBT people

themselves per poststructural theories of space and place (Massey 1999; Valentine 2002a). However, at the same time I show that these relational constructions may make it harder for us to recognise and engage with LGBT lives focused in areas which do not fall comfortably into either 'rural' or 'urban', which are often elided from research or too quickly folded into broader urban/rural categories. I argue that while this dynamic clearly remains important, my data challenges its unquestioned dominance and suggests that other aspects of LGBT lives and communities could be explored by moving beyond it, for example by pointing to other geographic imaginaries (such as the 'gay capital' and the 'small town') as well as attending to the geographic specificities and complexities of the areas in question.

#### **4.2 – The 'Rural/Urban' Dynamic in the Geographies of LGBT Hastings, Rother and East Sussex**

Much of the foregoing geographic literature has engaged with sexuality (and, to a much lesser extent, gender identity) through the binary rubric of 'the urban' and 'the rural' (Annes and Redlin 2012; Browne 2011:17; Cody & Welch 1997; Gray 2009; Herring 2007; Homfray 2007; Kazyak 2011; Kramer 1995; Little 2007; Soderstrom 2010; Whittier 2012), with particular features of each seen to be of significance with regard to LGBT lives. In the following section, I explore how this urban/rural dynamic could be seen to operate within the LGBT Equalities for Hastings, Rother and East Sussex project, and demonstrate how this dynamic is complicated and challenged.

#### **4.2.1 – LGBT Life in Rural and Non-Urban East Sussex**

Rural space has long been coded as a space of sexual and gendered intolerance and potential risk and violence (Comerford et al. 2004; D'Augelli 2006; Doderer 2011:432; Gorman-Murray 2009:72; Gray 2009; Kazyak 2011:561; Kramer 1995; Lindhorst 1997:3; Little 2006:373; Little 2007; Philo 1992:202; Valentine and Skelton 2003:115). While this has already been challenged by some writers (Cody & Welch 1997; Gray 2009; Kazyak 2011; Smith and Holt 2004), my data on issues of LGBT equalities in the East Sussex area indicates rural and non-urban spaces which do not sit easily within these dangerous and intolerant rurals, nor the idyllic, Arcadian rurals of some LGBT imaginaries (Anlin 1989; Bell 2000; Bell & Valentine 1995a; Gorman-Murray 2011; Herring 2007; Kirkey & Forsyth 2001). Rather, rural and non-urban East Sussex is experienced in a variety of ways with regard to LGBT equalities, lives and communities. To begin, it is important to recognise that for local LGBT people, rural and non-urban East Sussex does not appear to represent an idyllic rural escape from a troubling urban environment. Respondents to the online questionnaire detailed considerable problems being LGBT in their local areas. One of the broadest questions asked to respondents was 'As an LGBT person, how easy is it for you to live in your local area?' Responses have been grouped into three categories – 'Easy', 'Neither easy nor difficult' and 'Difficult' – and these can be seen in Table 1. These respondents' answers appear to present a relatively positive picture – more than half found it easy to live in their local area as an LGBT person (58%, n. 53), while only 10 found it difficult (11%). Almost a third said it was neither easy nor difficult (30%, n. 28) and one person said they did not know (1%, n. 1).

**Table 1: As an LGBT person, how easy is it for you to live in your local area?**

	Number	Percent
Easy	53	57.6
Neither easy nor difficult	28	30.4
Difficult	10	10.9
Don't know	1	1.1
Total	92	100.0

While these findings help to reject the hypothesis of universally oppressive ruralities for LGBT people and communities, it is important to note that a considerable number of respondents – specifically responding as LGBT people – could not say they found living in their local area ‘easy’. Associated qualitative data gathered through a follow-up question also offers some important caveats. For instance, some respondents noted the importance of ‘passing’ as straight or cisgendered, as respondent #118 explains<sup>6</sup>:

- ***Easy provided I do not disclose my trans status and sexual orientation to anyone other than close friends. I don't feel it would be safe for me (or my loved ones) to be out, beyond that small trusted circle. (#118)***

Respondent #118 replied ‘Neither easy nor difficult’ to the question in Table 1 and indicates the importance of attending to the caveat of passing. When passing they find it ‘easy’ to live in the local area, but if they were to be ‘out’ as trans then they feel their safety would be compromised. ‘Neither easy nor difficult’, then, takes on more nuance than a position of

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<sup>6</sup> Quotes from the online questionnaire will be marked with the number of the associated respondent. These numbers are ascending in order according to the time and date of submission, after any invalid responses have been removed. These quotes are given as they were originally typed without any ‘cleaning up’ of grammar or spelling, except where obvious typos have been made or to clarify the local social or geographic context.



indifference or not feeling strongly either way. Instead respondent #118 has chosen this option as an expression of their careful everyday negotiations to pass as straight and cisgendered. Indeed, since they feel they could live an 'easy' life as an LGBT person so long as they were always passing successfully and limiting knowledge of their LGBT identities, we are called to consider how 'easy' the lives of other respondents truly were. In addition to the complications of in/visibility and passing, a degree of geographic specificity was raised by some respondents:

- ***I live in the countryside. LGBT issues are not discussed.*** (#130)
- ***Rural location and lack of local facilities, groups for LGBT make it difficult to meet people for support...*** (#29)

Here rurality and 'the countryside' are positioned as key factors in life as an LGBT person. These respondents do not raise issues of safety as did respondent #118, above. Instead they refer to the issues of invisibility (when 'LGBT issues are not discussed') and absence (due to 'lack of local facilities [and] groups for LGBT') noted in wider literature on rural LGBT lives. While the respondents' very existence as LGBT people contests assumptions of the literal absence of LGBT lives in rural areas, it seems clear that rural and non-urban East Sussex by no means offers an idyllic rural escape.

Despite this, and despite aforementioned assumptions of rural space as necessarily unsafe and intolerant of LGBT lives, respondents to the online questionnaire did describe rural and non-urban areas of East Sussex in terms which emphasised feelings of safety:

- ***Quiet and peaceful, no hassles at all.*** (#159; respondent lives in Lewes)
- ***Feel fairly safe in my immediate rural surroundings but less so in Hastings town centre, particularly in the evening.*** (#29; respondent lives in Rother)
- ***Bexhill is probably one of the safest towns in country to live in!*** (#42)

Far from seeing their more rural and non-urban locations as unsafe, these respondents in fact draw on the rural to emphasise their feelings of safety – the first respondent highlights that the ‘quiet and peaceful’ nature of the location is what makes it safe, while the second sets up a distinction between Hastings and rural Rother to code the latter as safer.

However, others suggested it may be the very lack of visible LGBT communities or spaces that is related to feelings of LGBT safety, so that in this sense rural LGBT invisibility is not necessarily or only connected to feelings of fear or oppression (though this possibility of course remains), but also to feelings of safety. This idea was proposed by James during one of the earlier meetings of the LGBT Equalities Forum:

***James – ‘Are people actually quite happy, quite cosy tucked away? I mean I have my suspicions, in one or two villages you know there’re couples tucked away and they’re fine. So they do not need [Hastings and Rother Rainbow Alliance].’***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, November 2010)

Here James uses discourse which suggests some rural LGBT people are safe in their lack of visibility. ‘Tucked away’ carries with it not only a sense of occlusion but also a certain ‘cosy’

level of protection. Far from feeling fear, these residents are imagined by James to be 'quite happy' and not in need of the support or community offered by the Hastings and Rother Rainbow Alliance. While it should be noted that such invisibility may still stem from oppressive ruralities and that it may not be chosen as the most desirable of options, these discussions build on Gray's invitation to reconsider how LGBT visibility and invisibility may operate differently in rural and urban settings (Gray 2009). Gray argues that a prioritised politics of LGBT visibility which seeks to ensure LGBT people are 'out and proud' is a particularly urban form of politics, which may not only be more difficult and politically unhelpful in rural areas, but which may also result in risk and danger (ibid). James describes a slightly different situation – the LGBT people he imagines are less visible because they do not experience LGBT-related issues which might cause them to seek support. In rural and non-urban areas safety does not necessarily lead to LGBT visibility, and LGBT invisibility may not be due to fear or danger. Indeed, in James' imagining it appears to be the very lack of rural danger or LGBT problems which leads to this form of invisibility. The 'mid-Southern' and 'Red State' rurals such as those of Kentucky discussed by Gray are not the rurals of East Sussex – while many discursive overlaps and linkages certainly occur, it is vitally important to attend to the geographic specificity of different rurals.

Crucially, the LGBT visibility James describes is not necessarily with regard to other people in the area, such as neighbours or other local residents. The context of James' comment as part of the LGBT Equalities Forum indicates that the part these 'couples tucked away' are invisible to public sector services and to LGBT community organisations such as HRRRA. This issue of 'queer visibility' is discussed by Tucker (2009) in the context of urban and rural South Africa. He describes queer visibility as 'a geographical concept that examines how queer groups are able to overcome the heteronormativity of particular urban spaces; the options that are available for them to do so; the perception of the decision to undertake certain visibilities by different members of their own community and those of others; and

the problems and possibilities of groups interacting based in large part on these very divergent visibilities' (Tucker 2009:3). Visibility is not a zero-sum game of universal visibility or universal invisibility, but instead requires that we consider 'who' is looking and what they would consider visibility to look like – within the context of East Sussex, we might ask how public sector services and organisations 'see' and recognise LGBT lives in rural and non-urban areas, where visibilities more closely associated with the city (such as large Pride events, gay villages and numerous LGBT professional and community organisations) may not not function (see also Gray 2009). Such geographic in/visibilities will necessarily have an impact on policymaking and public sector LGBT equalities initiatives, since policymakers will justify decisions through reference to LGBT people made 'visible' through data and through those LGBT community members who 'visibly' engage with services. It is important to note that these are both issues which implicate the LGBT Equalities Forum's research and the work of this thesis – since the online questionnaire was developed by public sector services in partnership with HRRRA, and circulated through their own channels, this clearly suggests that James' 'couples tucked away' may remain invisible in this research also. I reflect on which LGBT subjects were 'seen' and produced through the LGBT Equalities Forum in greater detail in Chapter 5 (regarding partnership working and engagement) and Chapter 6 (regarding the construction of 'equality').

With regard to some of the larger towns in the area, feelings of LGBT safety in Hastings were described by forum participants and questionnaire respondents in ways which highlight the importance of attending to fragmented local geographies. One distinction which was made repeatedly by respondents was between the 'Old Town' and the town centre. The Old Town was described as a space of relative safety and acceptance for LGBT people:

- *I feel very safe in my locale which incorporates Hastings Old Town, which is very gay friendly. I'm comfortable to be seen as part of a same sex couple locally. In other parts of Hastings and St Leonards, I would be more cautious.*(#108)
- *I work and socialise in Hastings Old Town and feel completely at ease there.* (#8)
- *we now live in the old town of hastings thank god, as for the rest of hastings not very gay friendly intimidation, rude comments.* (#10)

In these comments, the respondents describe the Old Town as notable in terms of LGBT safety and LGBT-friendliness, describing it as 'very gay friendly' and a place where you can 'feel completely at ease' – this seems to be experienced as a site not just of the absence of violence or abuse, but of active acceptance and belonging. What we can glean from these responses is that Hastings is understood to be internally differentiated in terms of LGBT safety and feelings of tolerance and belonging. However, these feelings do not extend uniformly across the town – the Old Town is constructed as distinct in this regard, and in opposition to other parts of the town. The town centre in particular was also distinguished from Hastings as a whole, and singled out as a site of potential fear and violence by a number of questionnaire respondents. For example, these respondents focused on not only the town centre of Hastings but also the issue of temporality as key to feelings of safety:

- *I wouldn't go down to the Centre of Hastings after dark, or use public transport late at night.* (#37)
- *Hastings town centre feels very unsafe at night because of drunkenness*

***and the high rates of physical assaults - I never go there. (#50)***

We can see that the internally fragmented geographies of cities, towns and rural spaces, as well as the effects of particular times, are constructed through reference to feelings of safety and tolerance for LGBT people in ways which complicate reductive assumptions of urban safety (Gorman-Murray 2009; Hanhardt 2013; Kennedy 2010:1074 and rural threat (Kramer 1995; Lindhorst 1997; D'Augelli 2006).

One crucial area of inquiry which has been poorly researched in rural and non-urban spaces is that of LGBT public sector service provision. Research on such services has tended to either note the absence of LGBT-specific or LGBT-friendly services in rural areas, or warn that they are often not experienced as LGBT-friendly (Bell and Valentine 1995a; Comerford et al 2004; Friedman 1997; Gray 2009; Kramer 1995; Lindhorst 1997; Little 2006; Smith 1997). This has been particularly the case in the UK, with the notable exception of Diane Richardson and Surya Monro's research into public sector LGBT equalities in Wales (Monro & Richardson 2012). This work offers a valuable addition to the literature by exploring rural LGBT equalities from a service-based institutional perspective, contesting easy assumptions of absent or unfriendly public sector services for LGBT people in rural Wales; my own research builds on this by exploring multi-agency partnership working involving a highly diverse set of partners (including service providers, community groups, activists and academics), as well as the experiences of LGBT people themselves within this geographically specific area. Examining public sector service provision for LGBT people in rural areas opens up a relatively unexplored aspect of the rural and offers fresh challenges to imaginaries of rural gendered and sexual intolerance.

The existence of the LGBT Equalities Forum for Hastings, Rother and East Sussex itself offers a new take on literature and popular assumptions which assert the absence of LGBT services in rural areas, or that such services must necessarily be of the most basic and general nature, seeking guidance from LGBT work in cities (Lindhorst 1997). As detailed in Chapter 3 Sections 3 and 4, the forum developed radical and highly engaged partnership research (see also McGlynn & Browne 2011; McGlynn 2012), involving public sector workers keen to stress their dedication to progressing LGBT equality in the local area<sup>7</sup>:

***Grace – ‘I can honestly say, this [new government guidance] is not being used, certainly in this area, as a way of going ‘OK so we don’t have to worry too much about that now.’ That’s not happening. That’s going to be a part of our ongoing work as part of [service name], and I’m sure it’ll be the same for other organisations too, because we are talking to each other about it.’***

***Karen – ‘From [service name] point of view, they’ve just launched [name of a new initiative] which is the most comprehensive tool for making sure organisations can evidence progress against their equality duties and it’s a pretty robust tool. I think the government’s saying one thing, but actually on the ground people aren’t taking the easy option.’***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, March 2011)

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<sup>7</sup> Quotes from meetings of the LGBT Equalities Forum label participants with pseudonyms to preserve anonymity wherever possible. Additional details which might identify participants (such as names of the organisations they represent) have been removed or made generic. See Chapter 3 Section 6 for further details.

These public sector workers emphasise the local geographies of their services – ‘in this area’ and ‘on the ground’ – and make a marked distinction between ‘the government’ and their own work (see Chapter 5 Section 1 for a detailed discussion of how such distinctions are related to the partnership work of the LGBT Equalities Form). Far from providing a bare minimum of LGBT equality through their services or allowing LGBT equality issues to slide into relative invisibility, Grace stresses that she is aware of the potential to ‘[not] have to worry too much about that now’, but both she and Karen state their commitment to not ‘taking the easy option’. At least at one discursive level then, these public sector workers position themselves and public sector workers ‘on the ground’ as committed to progressing public sector LGBT equalities in rural and non-urban East Sussex, beyond what would be required of them according to national government. As such, they challenge assumptions of rural hostility or indifference to LGBT equalities.

Unsurprisingly, the results of the online questionnaire demonstrated that LGBT people in East Sussex (but outside of Brighton) did have some poor experiences with public services and found some to be non LGBT-friendly – however the results also demonstrate that such experiences in fact appear to be in the minority. Questionnaire respondents were invited to rate the LGBT-friendliness of local public services on a Likert scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being the least LGBT friendly and 5 being the highest. As can be seen in Appendix F, respondents to this question were given a ‘Do not use this service’ option and those who selected this answer were removed from related analyses. Answers have been grouped into three categories – ‘Not LBGT Friendly’ (1 and 2), ‘Neither LGBT Friendly Nor LGBT Unfriendly’ (3) and ‘LGBT Friendly’ (4 and 5). Respondents could also give their response as ‘Unsure’. Table 2, shows the results for five public sector organisations which received a comparatively large number of responses, ordered according to ratings of LGBT friendliness. It reveals that, while there were significant numbers of respondents reporting poor LGBT friendliness, in fact considerably more respondents rated organisations as LGBT friendly than not LGBT



friendly. Sussex Police received the poorest results with regard to LGBT-friendliness with 16% (n. 11) of respondents to the question rating them as ‘Not LGBT friendly’; yet more than two thirds rated them as LGBT friendly (37%, n. 25). Local libraries, managed by the East Sussex County Council Library and Information Service, received the most positive results - the majority of respondents to the question rated their local library positively (58%, n. 40) and only a small number rated their library poorly (6%, n. 4) – and in fact no respondents rated their local library’s LGBT-friendliness at 1. Therefore the quantitative data gathered appears to refute uncritical claims that rural and non-urban services are always experienced to be unfriendly towards LGBT people – in fact, positive feelings of LGBT-friendliness in East Sussex appeared to be the norm.

**Table 2: How LGBT friendly are your local public sector services?**

<b>Service / LGBT Friendliness</b>	<b>LGBT Friendly</b>	<b>Neither Especially Friendly Nor Unfriendly</b>	<b>Not LGBT Friendly</b>	<b>Unsure</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Local Library</b>	57.9% (n. 40)	11.6% (n. 8)	5.8% (n. 4)	24.6% (n. 17)	100% (n. 69)
<b>Local GP</b>	51.1% (n. 48)	17.0% (n. 16)	11.7% (n. 11)	20.2% (n. 19)	100% (n. 94)
<b>Local Hospital</b>	45.1% (n. 37)	19.5% (n. 16)	12.2% (n. 10)	23.2% (n. 19)	100% (n. 82)
<b>Sussex Police</b>	37.3% (n. 25)	20.9% (n. 14)	16.4% (n. 11)	25.4% (n. 17)	100% (n. 67)
<b>Fire &amp; Rescue Service</b>	37.3% (n. 19)	9.8% (n. 5)	5.9% (n. 3)	47.1% (n. 24)	100% (n. 51)

Some respondents gave additional details regarding feelings of LGBT-friendliness amongst their local public sector services:

- ***As a member of a Hastings lesbian reading group I must commend Library Services. They have held LGBT functions at Lewes Library, the LGBT rep has made the effort to attend our little group and they do their best to ensure that the libraries stock an acceptable amount of lesbian and gay material. (#108)***

This respondent highlights the fact that the libraries' positive ratings with regard to feelings of LGBT-friendliness are not simply through chance, but through active engagement of the service and its staff. The respondent appears to value the level of engagement, diminutively referring to her 'little group' and praising the staff member who 'made the effort' to visit it, suggesting that this is seen as engagement above and beyond what might be expected based on assumptions of intolerant or absent rural services for LGBT people (Comerford et al 2004; Fenge & Jones 2012; Friedman 1997; Haag & Chang 1997; Kennedy 2010; Kirkey & Forsyth 2001; Lindhorst 1997; Smith 1997). Nor is the engagement here limited to one geographic area, as this respondent points out work in both Hastings and Lewes. Clearly well-regarded work to demonstrate LGBT-friendliness and engagement with local LGBT communities is not limited to cities but is also present in rural and non-urban areas of East Sussex.

Despite these good experiences, there remain some caveats. First, respondent #108 notes 'lesbian and gay literature' specifically, even though they previously used the term 'LGBT'. Therefore it seems that the library's literature is not necessarily perceived to feature bisexual or trans material – or material dealing with other aspects of sexual and gender identities – and instead is perceived to focus primarily on lesbian and gay material. We must therefore remain critical of claims to 'LGBT-friendliness' in public sector services in these areas – as other scholars and activists have noted, 'LGBT' may often serve as a gloss

for 'lesbian and gay' or even simply 'gay male', and what is considered LGBT-friendly for, say, a gay man, may not be considered so by a trans man or a bisexual woman (Monro 2005; Monro & Richardson 2010; Stryker 2007; Stone 2009). The second caveat is that Table 2 reveals that there were respondents who have had poor experiences, and the percentages of those who were 'unsure' about services' LGBT-friendliness were not insignificant, comprising at the least a fifth of the respondents for local GPs (20%, n. 19) and at the most almost a half for East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service (47%, n. 24)<sup>8</sup> – services in these areas are by no means experienced as universally positive.

This data reveals that conceptions of the rural remain important discursive categories, used by participants and respondents to understand LGBT lives. At the same time, however, the data also challenges popular geographic imaginaries and broader literatures of geographies of sexualities with regard to oppressive or intolerant ruralities for LGBT people. Here we can see that rural and non-urban East Sussex is no idyllic paradise, but neither is it a space of necessary or universal LGBT oppression. Finally, the discussions within this section have begun to suggest that an approach attentive to the specifics of local geographies (such as the internal geographies of towns such as Hastings) offers more detailed geographic exploration of sexualities and LGBT equalities beyond the urban/rural binary. I now draw on these key points to explore how the city of Brighton & Hove emerged within the data in order to shed new light on how the urban/rural binary operates across East Sussex.

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<sup>8</sup> While it should be reiterated that respondents who said they did not use these services were excluded from the analysis, with regard to some services (particularly the East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service), 'unsure' responses may be due to very brief or limited contact with the service, or because issues of LGBT identities and equalities were not felt to come up during this contact. However, the fact that other answers on the Likert scale were given by considerable numbers of respondents indicates that such issues can be and are perceived through contact with these services, and that 'LGBT-friendliness' (or lack thereof) can indeed be demonstrated by the services.

#### **4.2.2 – Brighton, the Gay Capital**

The city of Brighton & Hove is the closest city to these areas of wider East Sussex such as Hastings, Rother and Eastbourne, and questionnaire respondents and forum participants frequently referenced it with regard to issues of LGBT equality. This data, as with that regarding rural and non-urban East Sussex, taps into and yet complicates assumptions and imaginaries of what the urban means to LGBT lives and communities. Familiar discourses of the urban emerged with regard to LGBT people – such as regarding safety, social space and access to LGBT-friendly public services – and these were entwined with discourses of the rural. However Brighton emerges as a more than just another city – instead, the data reveals it to be a complicated imagined space in a variety of relationships with surrounding rural and non-urban East Sussex. Though respondents and forum participants alike often constructed rural versus urban comparisons and contrasts (through reference to local East Sussex geographies), the discourse used suggests that these relationships are not only a matter of binary comparison but of co-constitution, working to construct specific local ‘urbans’ and ‘rurals’. I reveal how Brighton as a city (though not ‘just’ a city) comes to feature in and construct rural and non-urban East Sussex (and vice versa) through considerations of sexuality, gender identity and local LGBT lives more broadly.

In many ways the data reveals that imaginaries of urban Brighton correspond with broader imaginaries of cities and urban space. With regard to geographic imaginaries of urban LGBT safety, for example, a number of responses to the questionnaire appear to posit Brighton as ‘naturally’ safe for LGBT people. Asked about feelings of safety, one respondent replied:

- ***‘Obviously, I have no problem being openly gay if I’m in Brighton. But, I would err on the right side of caution elsewhere in East Sussex.’*** (#108)

Respondent #108 appears to strongly associate the expectation of safety with Brighton, where they 'obviously' feel safe. This respondent then compares Brighton to 'elsewhere in East Sussex', positioning wider East Sussex as a place where 'caution' is necessary and therefore where 'being openly gay' could be risky or dangerous. This discursive technique demonstrates how the rural and the urban are in part constructed in relation to one another and through the lens of LGBT equality issues such as feelings of safety. However, such responses cannot be assumed to refer to Brighton only in its capacity as a city or an urban environment. While there is a dearth of academic writing about Brighton, Kath Browne, along with other authors, has written of its popular status of the 'gay capital' of the UK (Browne & Bakshi 2013; Browne & Lim 2010; Browne & McGlynn 2012), with 'a long history of sexual transgressions and [which] prides itself on 'leading the way' in terms of LGBT equalities agendas' (Browne & Bakshi 2013:16). It is this imaginary – the 'gay capital' – which seems to emerge from my data, and demands attention beyond the conflation of Brighton with the urban. Questionnaire responses with regard to safety suggest an imaginary specific to Brighton which may be why it is felt by respondent #108 to be 'obviously' safe. Other respondents linked this more clearly to LGBT identities in particular:

- ***'I live in Brighton where as a lesbian I feel safe.'*** (#123)

The specificity of feeling safe while 'being openly gay' (#108) or 'as a lesbian' (#123) appears to actively construct a particular imaginary of Brighton through feelings of safety for specifically for LGBT people. Another respondent developed this point by describing Brighton's apparent uniqueness:

- ***'Only in Brighton do I really relax and feel as though I have rights and that I'd be OK if something did kick-off.'* (#154)**

Brighton is coded as exceptional and separate from other spaces through the phrase 'only in Brighton', lending it a specific quality which, crucially, cannot be reduced to its urbanity – respondent #154 does not say 'only in cities' or 'only in Brighton or London', for example. Brighton is not simply a space of safety from sudden violence as implied by the phrase 'kick-off', but it is also the 'only' place respondent #154 feels that they 'have rights'. Therefore while its urbanity remains an important factor (as indicated through the repetition of broader imaginaries of urban LGBT safety), Brighton is not felt to be safe simply because it is urban or because it is a city – instead, the unique geographic and cultural specificity of Brighton, the 'gay capital', contributes to feelings of a space where LGBT people will 'obviously' be safe and, simultaneously, such feelings of LGBT safety work to construct this imaginary of Brighton.

However in spite of these foregoing respondents' confidence, other respondents contested these feelings of safety with regard to Brighton:

- ***Where I live, in Seaford, [I'm] unaware of any "hate crimes/queer bashing" but as there's precious little in the way of ANYTHING for the gay community in either Seaford/Eastbourne, you have to go further & expose yourself to possible dangers ie. Brighton.***(#17)

This respondent inverts standard tropes of LGBT safety, and indeed imaginaries of urban Brighton as the naturally-safe 'gay capital', to suggest that it is in fact the more rural areas of East Sussex which are experienced as safe and urban Brighton as dangerous. Respondent #17's experiences confirm foregoing research on Brighton such as the Count Me In Too project, which also suggests that local LGBT people remain fearful of experiencing violence and abuse (Browne & Lim 2008). Other data can be seen to explore these feelings of unsafety and danger in more detail, attending to Brighton's geographic specificities. The following excerpt reveals a discussion from a meeting of the LGBT Equalities Forum, in which forum participants discussed the findings from the online questionnaire which posited Brighton as a place of safety for LGBT people (see Chapter 3 Section 5.2 for details of this participatory analysis):

***Aaron – 'What's really interesting, looking at this in terms of someone who lives in Brighton, is that I don't agree with that. <laughs>'***

***Samuel – 'Levels of safeness?'***

***James – 'If you look at statistics there is more homophobic attacks in Brighton than there is in any other area.'***

***Aaron – 'Reported!'***

***James – 'Yeah, and I think that they've a better service anyway for reporting there. But whether it's something to do with people leaving here, if I go for a night out in Brighton I go to enjoy myself, and so I'll have a different take on what I see there. So I think there is something to do with that. It's like being on holiday.'***

*Aaron – ‘Yeah, yes, and I think it raises the grass is greener sort of thing as well. And it may well be they’re in one or two different bars, and yeah that is safer, but that’s not really Brighton, that’s one tiny part of St James Street and as soon as you go off that you’re in trouble.’*

LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, May 2012

Rather than a space of LGBT safety, these participants identify Brighton as a space of potential violence and danger through both ‘statistics’ and Aaron’s personal experience as a Brighton resident, challenging respondent #108’s previous assertion that Brighton is ‘obviously’ safe for LGBT people and developing respondent #17’s mention of ‘dangers’. In fact, as James believes, Brighton may be amongst the most unsafe places for LGBT people in terms of ‘homophobic attacks’, contesting both urban imaginaries and imaginaries of Brighton as the ‘gay capital’.

James and Aaron also offer further insight into understanding LGBT safety in Brighton as going beyond its urban nature, raising two other important elements which further complicate a reduction of LGBT safety to urban/rural – specifically, complexities of local geography and complexities of time. The former is evidenced through Aaron’s distinction between ‘one tiny part of St James Street’ (which along with Kemp Town is often considered to form the ‘gay village’ of Brighton) and what is ‘really Brighton’, with such a distinction serving to highlight problems with particular imaginaries of Brighton which construct the ‘gay capital’ as being both safe and incorporating all of Brighton. The latter is evidenced through James’ identification of social time in Brighton as ‘like being on holiday’, marking such time as outside of everyday experience and associated with the desire to ‘enjoy [one]self’. These assertions of Brighton’s complex local geographies and



temporalities echo the recent work of Kath Browne and Leela Bakshi (2013) and show how discourses of LGBT life in urban Brighton can challenge related geographic imaginaries of rural unsafety and violence towards LGBT people.

While questionnaire respondents were not specifically asked about Brighton-based services, some forum participants discussed their own experiences with services in Brighton as LGBT people. For example, here Julian – from a non-white ethnic background - describes meeting a registrar from the Hastings area:

*Julian – ‘You know we met some really good people, like we met the person who does civil partnerships for Hastings was there from the council, she was amazing, she came over and we actually found her really really good, better than the ones in Brighton and Hove I hasten to add! <general laughter> The registrar yeah, who was surprised I was English with my [sur]name – in Brighton and Hove that is, not here!’*

LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, March 2011

Julian met this person at a local community event organised by HRRRA, and he explicitly links the discussion to LGBT issues through reference to ‘civil partnerships’. In the registrar’s reaction to his non-traditionally English surname, Julian raises an important point regarding the intersectionality of LGBT lives – LGBT lives are not experienced as ‘only’ lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans. Other issues also come into play – here, issues of race and ethnicity. Underlying and sometimes explicit racism is noted to inflect perceptions of LGBT individuals and communities (Balsam et al 2011; Diaz et al 2001; Han 2007; Icard 1986; Smith 2007), with BME LGBT lives often erased or rendered less visible (Conerly 1996; Fukuyama &

Ferguson 2000). In Julian's story, it is in Hastings where his intersectional identity as a BME gay man is better respected. As noted in Chapter 1 Section 4.3, the Hastings area has a large and politically engaged BME community – recognising the specificity of such areas beyond the urban and the rural allows us to see that particular non-urban areas may actually be better equipped to deal with intersectional LGBT issues than supposedly more progressive cities.

Julian sets up a clear discursive tension between Brighton and Hastings, constructing the two spaces relationally through the discourse of LGBT equalities. Coding the positive experience with the Hastings service as unexpected through 'actually', Julian emphasises the positive nature of the encounter by citing a negative encounter with Brighton's counterpart service, simultaneously constructing and reversing the expectation that Brighton's services would be superior and Hastings' inferior. This discursive technique appears to rely on not only on Brighton as a city but on its status as the 'gay capital', highlighting the importance of attending to these specific geographic imaginaries which, while attached to the urban/rural binary, also go beyond them (see Ruiz 2010 for a brief discussion of Minneapolis and St Paul as the imagined 'gay capitals' of the American Midwest). Later in the same meeting, this technique emerged once more with regard to public sector work more generally, rather than a specific service, through a comparison of Brighton's city equality charter and the developing Hastings equality charter:

***Julian – ‘I think it’s mutually beneficial, the council rather than just launching this bit of paper that everyone signs and then gets a nice photograph in the paper, and then do nothing about it, like in Brighton, or we actually work together in the production of it like we do, and also in the presentation and we link it to other things that are happening.’***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, March 2011)

In this excerpt Julian appears to position LGBT work in Brighton as all talk but little action, as ‘nothing [is] done about it’ (see Chapter 5 Sections 2 and 3 for detailed discussions of how LGBT equalities work ‘gets done’ and does not ‘get done’ in wider East Sussex). Furthermore, he offers a distinction between the process of equalities work in Brighton – where ‘the council’ produces ‘this bit of paper that everyone signs’ – and what he codes as the more partnership-driven process in the Hastings area. Julian draws in the forum participants from various public sector organisations and the LGBT community through ‘we’, and emphasises that they ‘work together’ and ‘link it to other things’. This serves to geographically distance forum participants – public sector workers, community members and academics – from Brighton and situates them more fully in rural and non-urban East Sussex, despite the fact that a number of forum participants (including myself) live and/or work in Brighton as well as wider East Sussex. Through Julian’s geographic discourse, Brighton’s LGBT equalities work becomes highly visible and self-aggrandising thanks to a ‘nice photograph in the paper’; conversely, the same discourse works to portray work in Hastings (such as that undertaken by the forum participants present at the time of recording) as being more oriented towards partnership across services and local LGBT communities. The juxtaposition of ‘do[ing] nothing about it’ in Brighton and ‘link[ing] it to other things that are happening’ elsewhere in East Sussex constructs this as a more useful

and effective political process. Here Julian simultaneously deploys and problematizes assumptions of progressive LGBT politics occurring in urban areas, even in Britain's unofficial 'gay capital'. While this does not mean that the work in the Hastings area is unproblematically more progressive or effective, it calls into question the idea that this work always relies on urban areas for its impetus. At the same time, the geographic discourses used construct public sector workers and LGBT community activists in rural and non-urban areas as more effective or progressive than those in urban areas such as Brighton. Therefore we can see that geographies of the urban and the rural themselves can work to construct not only one another, but at the level of political discourse also what counts as good or progressive work with regard to LGBT equalities.

In this section I have revealed how the data of the LGBT Equalities Forum and the online questionnaire constructs Brighton not only as a city or urban space, but also as a 'gay capital' through imaginaries of LGBT safety. The data I have explored suggests that while imaginaries of the urban and rural remain important, there are other geographic imaginaries (such as those specific to Brighton) which construct issues of LGBT safety, thus complicating any easy urban/rural distinctions. Having developed the discursive force of these more local and specific imaginaries of Brighton within my data, I now return focus to the rest of East Sussex and those areas situated in what I describe as the 'shadow of the gay capital', through which I further problematise the rural/urban dynamic and explore how local geographic imaginaries emerged through the data and work to construct (while also being constructed by) LGBT lives.

#### **4.2.3 – The Shadow of the Gay Capital**

One of the clearest ways in which Brighton emerged in relation to surrounding rural and non-urban East Sussex was through forum participants' and questionnaire respondents' discussion of isolation and socialising with other LGBT people. Existing literature on LGBT lives and communities in rural areas points towards isolation as a key issue (Comerford et al. 2004; Friedman 1997; Kramer 1995; Smith 1997). Smith highlights the connected features of LGBT lives which are 'socially and geographically isolated' (Smith 1997:15), and indeed the 'social' element of isolation has been connected to a purported lack of LGBT communities in rural areas (Bell and Valentine 1995a; Kennedy 2010).

When asked about their experiences of isolation in the online questionnaire, 39% of those who responded to this question said that they never felt isolated (n. 47), 59% said that they sometimes or always felt isolated (n. 71), and a further 2% were unsure (n. 2). These figures are displayed in Table 3. The majority of respondents said that they did, at some time, feel isolated, which would appear to support literature surrounding rural LGBT isolation.

However, the quantitative data from the online questionnaire revealed that the geographic element of isolation appeared to be less important in the areas involved in the research – chi-square tests undertaken as part of the analysis found no statistical significance ( $p < 0.05$ ) when feelings of isolation were tested against the districts of East Sussex, nor when the districts were grouped (at some participants' request) into what participants labelled the 'more urban' areas (Hastings and Eastbourne) and the 'more rural' areas (Lewes, Rother and Wealden). What this suggests is that feelings of isolation were not clearly divided across districts or more present in the more sparsely populated areas of East Sussex – rather, participants appeared to be equally likely to feel isolated no matter which part of East Sussex they primarily lived in. This initial quantitative non-finding with regard to LGBT isolation in rural and non-urban East Sussex may at first appear to be plainly at odds with

foregoing literature on rural LGBT isolation – while isolation was indeed a concern for many questionnaire respondents, the particular rural imaginaries involving LGBT isolation could lead to the assumption that the more rural respondents would be more likely to experience isolation, and that those in the larger towns such as Hastings and Eastbourne would be less susceptible to feelings of isolation. This was proved not to be the case in my data, and such rural imaginaries should therefore not take attention away from LGBT lives and communities in such large towns.

**Table 3: Do you ever feel isolated?**

	Number	Percentage
Yes	71	59.2
No	47	39.2
Don't know	2	1.7
Total	120	100.0

The nature of the feelings of isolation emerged through the related qualitative data. When asked to describe their experiences of isolation in more detail, the most common responses related isolation specifically to a lack of LGBT socialising (n. 16) or simply not knowing any other LGBT people (n. 11). These respondents explained some particular geographical issues:

- *Live rurally, work long hours, not made any new friends in LGBT community since moving to latest location 8 years ago. Travel quite far to socialise with friends and further to see my immediate family. (#29)*
- *Main problem is not having many close friends within easy travelling distance. I'm trying to do something about that by getting involved in a*

*local community organisation but it will take time to build up new friendships to the point where I might feel able to confide in them. (#118)*

We can see that these responses link issues of LGBT socialising with their feelings of isolation, but while rurality is noted in the first response, this appears to be linked to another crucial geographic element – distance and the ability to travel. This is noted as the ‘main problem’ in the second response, where it is not the lack of socialising and community which is a problem per se, but the lack of ‘easy’ access to them. That rural LGBT people may travel – most commonly to urban spaces - to access LGBT communities and socialising is noted throughout geographic work on rural LGBT lives (Annes & Redlin 2012; Gray 2009; Kennedy 2010; Kramer 1995; Smith and Holt 2004; Taylor 2011b), and as Table 4 shows, when asked where they travelled to socialise with other LGBT people, urban spaces dominated.

**Table 4 - In the past year, have you ever gone away from where you live to socialise with LGBT people? (qualitative responses)**

<b>Place Travelled To</b>	<b>Number</b>
Brighton	24
London	21
Hastings	5
Eastbourne	5

This focus on urban areas for LGBT socialising was stated clearly by one particular respondent:

- ***If I wanted a gay scene Brighton and London are on my doorstep.***(#115)

Here Brighton and London, both cities, are posited as the sites of the gay scene, and the possibility that a scene might be present or accessible elsewhere in East Sussex appears not to be a consideration to this respondent (who primarily lives, works and socialises in Hastings). Additionally, the use of the phrase ‘on my doorstep’ is suggestive of both short distance and ease of access, as well as a level of near-domestic familiarity – only at the slightest remove from one’s residence. From positing ‘if I wanted a gay scene’, it seems that this respondent does not currently utilise gay scenes in Brighton or London, but nevertheless imagines them to be easily accessible should they be desired. Conversely other respondents, who say they **do** wish to access such areas for LGBT socialising, suggest that these are in fact not easily accessible:

- ***No clubs or events where we are able to socialise in Bexhill, Brighton too far to travel.***(#128)

This respondent offers an interesting counterpoint to respondent #115. Bexhill is geographically closer to Brighton than Hastings, and yet Hastings-based #115 perceives Brighton to be very close, while for Bexhill-based #128 it is ‘too far to travel’. Other respondents may shed some light on the differing perceptions of travelling to Brighton:

- ***Small circle of friends, none of whom are gay / bi males. Feels like nowhere to go. Heading to Brighton means having to catch last train***



*home at 2330, meaning nights out are of limited value to enjoy night life.*

*No local LGBT friendly venues to attend that I am aware of. (#96)*

- *I have got lots of straight mates from over the county, mainly old school and college friends, and also chat with people in local pub in Bexhill. However hard to meet new people or any gay peeps in this area. Brighton and London in-accessible as last trains out of them places are too early to return to Bexhill and Hastings(#42)*

Here issues of temporality and public transport become key. Relative physical distance is contextualised by access to transport. Both of these respondents highlight travel by train, but the nature of LGBT socialising in urban Brighton – which these respondents as well as respondent #128 perceive to revolve around night time, clubs and pubs – means that public transport cannot provide sufficient access to it due to the ‘last trains’. Imagined and material proximity to Brighton, therefore, must be understood in the light of actual modes of travel and associated temporalities – proximity to the ‘gay capital’ does not necessarily equate to access to LGBT socialising. It is also worth considering that public transport itself can be experienced as a space of risk and abuse, as another respondent pointed out:

- *Brighton - I was on a bus with my partner and a young woman made negative comments to my partner about being a lesbian as she had short hair. (#79)*

Indeed, in May 2012 – while the LGBT Equalities Forum was still running – local newspapers in East Sussex carried a news item concerning a violent homophobic attack which took place on a train between Hastings and Bexhill (Roberts 2012). Fear of experiencing violence based on one’s sexual and/or gender identity may impact on the ability or desire of LGBT people in rural and non-urban East Sussex to actually travel to the ‘gay capital’.

A further important dimension with regard to accessing LGBT socialising in Brighton regards issues of class and expense. Hastings and its surrounds, as well as some areas of Rother and Eastbourne, are noted as an area of particular social and economic deprivation (East Sussex County Council 2010). Yvette Taylor has pointed to these issues in other UK cities (Taylor 2011b), and some respondents also emphasised this element:

- ***I only live down the road from Brighton which is supposed to be more LGBT friendly, however due to financial commitments i couldn't afford train fare, to stay over and go out that evening. I could be looking at £100 which isn't viable for one night. (#49)***

Therefore as well as issues surrounding feelings of distance (travel by train from Hastings to Brighton can take around 1 hour 15 minutes, and travel to London at least 1 hour 30 minutes) and the problem of the ‘last train home’ which limits the potential to spend time in Brighton, LGBT people living in the shadow of the ‘gay capital’ must also contend with the potential cost of travel to and socialising in Brighton. Although some might feel that Brighton is easily accessible and on one’s ‘doorstep’, ready to fulfil East Sussex’s LGBT socialising needs, in fact Brighton – and the city more generally - is revealed to be by no means a panacea to feelings of isolation regarding LGBT socialising and community.

It seems clear that Brighton is perceived as offering desirable access to LGBT socialising and community by those in wider East Sussex. Describing LGBT communities in Manchester, Homfray suggests that while urban LGBT scenes and spaces are not understood to be synonymous with LGBT community, such spaces are considered to be some of the most important and visible sites of community (Homfray 2007:200). In this research, such feelings may have been further bolstered by the particular LGBT imaginaries attached to Brighton. For instance, in the following excerpt, Emily suggests that socialising with other LGBT people is made easier through access to LGBT-specific groups and activities:

***Emily – ‘I suppose that’s where you then get the groups of interest coming up, the LGBT sports groups... So if you’ve got an interest, I guess in Brighton it would be easier, you could have the gay archaeology group or the gay sewing group you know, all these different groups.’***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, June 2012)

Though Emily’s reference to ‘the gay archaeology group’ may be a humorous exaggeration, she nevertheless does envisage Brighton as being able to provide a wide variety of LGBT-related social activities, and if a particular social or interest group did not exist then ‘in Brighton it would be easier’ to create it. This imagining of Brighton has been noted by Kath Browne and Leela Bakshi (Browne & Bakshi 2013:69); according to this imaginary, Brighton is not just a city, but a place where potentially any LGBT-related interest group could emerge, and specifically as a place to ‘socialise’ rather than ‘work’. The connected imaginaries of the urban and the gay capital coalesce to construct Brighton as the most obvious and instinctive source of LGBT socialising. This in turn renders important spaces

beyond the gay capital less visible - Emily sets up a distinction between imaginaries of Brighton and the rest of East Sussex in the discussion, by saying it would be 'easier' to find an LGBT interest group in Brighton. Through this relational geographic construction, Brighton becomes the place to find or set up any kind of LGBT group and the rest of East Sussex becomes the place where this is difficult and such groups will be limited in nature. These imaginaries may even contribute to a vicious circle, whereby particular assumptions of what LGBT space looks like (here a combination of a metronormative 'scene' and the imagined ubiquity of LGBT groups in the 'gay capital') work to further marginalise non-urban LGBT spaces, rendering them less visible **because** urban LGBT space comes to be seen as the only form LGBT space can take. Metronormative understandings of LGBT space which present bars and gay villages as the most important sites of LGBT community and socialising not only elide the other spatialised forms of LGBT community taking place beyond the urban, but may in fact contribute to their relative invisibility (Gray 2009; Tucker 2009). Rather than offering an important site of LGBT community and socialising in East Sussex, then, imaginaries of the gay capital may be implicated in the perception of a dearth of such socialising across East Sussex's more rural areas, and may even be contributing to feelings of isolation for local LGBT people through the construction and promotion of particular geographic visibilities.

While the data gathered through the online questionnaire indicates that Brighton and London appeared to be the most popular choices for local LGBT people who travelled for LGBT socialising, Hastings was described by some respondents in ways which in fact emphasised a significant LGBT population and thriving community:

- ***The town is full of middle aged and aging gays and lesbians. You cannot help but meet them. Whilst there are no specific gay bars, the pubs are***

***almost all pretty gay friendly or hassle free... There is already a large and active lesbian scene, and gay men have no problem finding each other.***(#36)

This respondent refutes ideas that LGBT people and LGBT communities are not present outside cities, and clearly experiences not just an LGBT community but also a distinct 'active lesbian scene'. The 'scene' is most commonly used to refer to urban LGBT space (Homfray 2007:200; Smith & Holt 2004; Valentine and Skelton 2003), so this respondent's identification of a 'scene' without 'gay bars' calls into question our urban-inflected understandings of LGBT scenes and invites us to consider what gay and LGBT scenes, and LGBT spaces, might look like outside urban gay villages (Brown 2008:1224; Kirkey and Forsyth 2001:429-430) – for instance, when asked what kinds of places they socialised in, some respondents suggested a variety of LGBT socialising options:

- ***Own home, village events, homes of family members and other LGBT people*** (#58)
- ***At HRRRA events, in people's homes, in local restaurants and [the De La Warr Pavilion gallery].***(#106)
- ***I go to HRRRA events in the Hastings area and find them a great help.***(#168)

Socialising in the homes of other rural and non-urban LGBT people was a noted feature of Kirkey and Forsyth's research on suburban LGBT lives (Kirkey and Forsyth 2001; see also

Browne & Bakshi 2011). In this sense the home – far from being rendered simply as private - can also become a more public LGBT space and a site of LGBT socialising and community, while also retaining certain advantages of its simultaneous ‘privacy’. Similarly, while the Hastings and Rother Rainbow Alliance does not own or maintain any particular space, its events and gatherings can act to temporarily transform or label particular spaces as safe and welcoming for LGBT people. These forms of LGBT socialising beyond the urban echo Gill Valentine’s discussion of the production of LGBT/queer space through embodied queer presence (Valentine 2002b) - the lack of fixed spaces such as bars, clubs or community centres does not mean a lack of LGBT space as such space can be actively and temporally produced, and act as a reminder that not all LGBT spaces conform to the forms we may be accustomed to seeing in urban centres.

While isolation, travel and LGBT socialising and community emerged as key factors in LGBT life beyond the ‘gay capital’, discussions in meetings of the LGBT Equalities Forum explored more ways in which Brighton’s shadow can be seen to extend across public sector LGBT work in East Sussex. In an earlier meeting, for example, Julian raised the issue of funding for LGBT work and its centralisation in Brighton and its surrounds:

***Julian – ‘There are going to be other areas that are similar to yourselves, where you’re close to a big conurbation that get all the money, all the effort goes. And close by, this little LGBT community gets nothing. So there’s going to be areas like that where it’ll be really interesting what you’re doing, ‘cause you’re going to be leading in that area, and it’ll be good for you guys who’ve started that work, been pioneers in that work, to get some recognition actually as well.’***

LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, January 2011

Julian expresses a sentiment occasionally raised by other forum participants and members of East Sussex's LGBT communities – namely, that the Brighton area attracts resources and capacity at the expense of areas 'close by'. A strongly geographic discourse is threaded throughout this excerpt – Brighton becomes 'a big conurbation', emphasising its size and incorporating areas beyond the city itself, in contrast to the 'little LGBT community'. Brighton itself has a comparatively large LGBT community, but Julian elides this and situates community, with its attendant positive resonances of safety, belonging and authenticity (Homfray 2007) as well as political legitimacy (Monro 2007; Tett 2005), in the rural and non-urban areas of East Sussex. These areas are coded as unfairly neglected, receiving 'nothing' while Brighton receives 'all the money, all the effort'<sup>9</sup>. The dichotomy constructed by Julian suggests that Brighton is saturated with public sector resources and capacity for LGBT work, which are unified and limited through use of the definite article, and that it is due to this, rather than any other considerations involving public sector funding/capacity allocation, that other areas in East Sussex are comparatively deprived of it. Therefore the Brighton area emerges through this excerpt as an urban centre supposedly saturated with resources aimed at LGBT equalities and the cause of similar resources not being present in its rural and non-urban periphery – here the urban/rural centre/periphery dynamic is clearly constructed through LGBT equalities in local public services. While the geographies of the Brighton urban and the areas in its shadow can be used to lionise LGBT work in rural and non-urban areas of East Sussex, this can be at the expense of LGBT work in the 'gay capital', with Brighton supposedly receiving too much and with recognition of the rural implied to be tied to a shifting of LGBT-directed resources and capacity away from Brighton. Julian's excerpt reveals the complex effects of such geographic discourse – LGBT

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<sup>9</sup> This statement is likely to be challenged by LGBT activists and community groups in Brighton, where significant problems and concerns remain for LGBT people and communities (Browne 2007; Browne & Baksi 2013)

communities in rural and non-urban areas are valorised as ‘pioneers’ but in ways which almost fetishise their lack of resources as part of the reason for their success, while the urban is constructed as receiving too much in the way of resources despite ongoing issues for urban LGBT people. In a future meeting, Dom identified such problematic discursive constructions of Brighton and noted an additional way in which they could be deployed in the public sector:

***Dom – ‘Inevitably there’s a perception [in hospitals outside Brighton] that we don’t have any of ‘those people’ here because they’re all in Brighton, and then in Brighton there’s that sort of “Well it’s Brighton so there can’t be any of those sorts of issues”.’***

LGBT Equalities Forum Meeting, January 2012

Here Dom draws not only on Brighton as a city but on imaginaries of Brighton as the gay capital. He suggests that hospital workers believe LGBT people (‘those people’) are ‘all in Brighton’, demonstrating how the geographic imaginaries are a crucial mechanism for the production of Tucker’s ‘queer visibilities’ (Tucker 2009). Such imaginaries also serve to create a discursive separation and difference between ‘those people’ and an unspoken ‘us’. However it is worth noting that some of the areas referred to would certainly be almost as close to London as to Brighton – rather than simply an urban/rural distinction, it is the particular image of Brighton as the ‘gay capital’ which is being deployed here. Conversely Brighton is constructed as free from problems for LGBT people (‘there can’t be any of those sorts of issues’). This construction draws on widely-recognised tropes in geographies of sexualities, specifically the assumption of rural to urban migration by LGBT people (Annes



and Redlin 2012; Gorman-Murray 2007; Gray 2009; Herring 2007:344; Johnston and Longhurst 2009:105; Kramer 1995; Oswald 2002; Weston 1995) and the assumption of urban space as necessarily safe and welcoming for LGBT people (Annes and Redlin 2012; Bell and Valentine 1995a; Gorman-Murray 2009; Skeggs, Moran, Tyrer, and Binnie 2004; Smith and Holt 2004; Valentine and Skelton 2003). However, in Dom's excerpt the key consideration appears not to be the city per se – cities never being mentioned - but Brighton's own particular status through the repeated invocation of its name. Imaginaries of the urban here cannot be disentangled from the more specific imaginaries of Brighton as the gay capital, which in fact appear to emphasise the tropes of rural-urban LGBT migration and the urban as tolerant of LGBT people. The effect here is to elide rural and non-urban LGBT lives in East Sussex (through the expectation of LGBT rural-urban migration) **and** particular Brighton-based LGBT lives (by asserting the impossibility of LGBT lives which experience intolerance, discrimination and abuse). As with Julian's excerpt previously, we can see how public sector discourse surrounding the geographies of LGBT equalities and communities has complex effects. The rural/urban dynamic simultaneously constructs and is constructed by considerations of LGBT lives, but at the same time specific **local** imaginaries such as the 'gay capital' work to emphasise particular geographic imaginaries. These effects in turn discursively configure public sector LGBT work in fluid and shifting ways: as variously complete, saturated and/or unnecessary (in Brighton); or as absent, in need of resources or unnecessary (in rural and non-urban East Sussex).

#### **4.3 – Moving Beyond the Urban/Rural Binary**

In section 4.2, I have outlined a number of key issues with common deployments of the urban and the rural as categories of analysis with regard to LGBT lives and communities.

Without denying the continued discursive and political force of the urban and the rural, in

this final section I explore on the fluidity and slipperiness of such categories, and how this very slipperiness may impact on LGBT lives in particular areas, especially when such areas do not easily fit into either category. The data reveals how the urban/rural binary is complicated, broken down and blurred through discourses of public sector LGBT equalities. I also suggest other, alternative imaginaries which may have relevance to geographic explorations of LGBT lives and open up other geographies of sexualities which, as well as interacting with geographies of the urban and the rural, may better highlight areas relatively neglected in the literature so far.

#### **4.3.1 - The Slippery Boundaries of the Urban and the Rural**

While the above discussion of the urban and the rural, and the multifarious effects of urban/rural discourse, appears to map rather neatly onto the areas of Brighton and wider East Sussex, in fact the data reveals how such discourse exceeds such limits and is thus revealed to be considerably more complex. I now move on to explore such complexities, highlighting how discourses of the rural and the urban continue to have force even as they move uncertainly across discursive and geographic boundaries. The follow excerpt is taken from early in a meeting of the online questionnaire analysis group, in which Aaron quickly seizes on a geographic issue:

**Aaron – ‘What was the geographic spread, did we get rural Rother?’**

**<brief interruption>**

**Researcher 1 – ‘We’ve put the geographical areas into the local districts**

**basically, it’s a question of do you live in Brighton and Hove, Hastings, Lewes,**

**Rother, Wealden, Eastbourne, so it's kind of the local council districts we're interested in.'**

**Aaron – 'And did we manage to get all districts or was it largely Eastbourne and Hastings?'**

LGBT Equalities Forum Meeting, May 2012

The area of concern here is immediately focused on 'rural Rother' – Aaron's identification of this particular area suggests that it is considered the most important, as a 'rural' area, to gain knowledge of with regard to LGBT lives, communities and needs through the questionnaire. After the researcher has outlined the list of areas into which respondents were sorted Aaron then suggests an expectation of respondents hailing primarily from the Eastbourne and Hastings area. The discursive construction of this expectation through 'did we manage' seems to imply an element of failure in gathering most respondents from the Eastbourne and Hastings areas, particularly when 'rural Rother' as already been identified as the key area of concern. Aaron's framing of the 'geographic spread', therefore, suggests that knowledge of LGBT lives in Eastbourne and Hastings – the largest towns within the geographic remit of the online questionnaire – is considered less important than knowledge of 'rural Rother'. This is understandable as data on rural LGBT lives in the UK is indeed sparse, however the construction of equivalent data regarding Eastbourne and Hastings is somewhat more problematic – there is also very little data on LGBT lives in these areas, and as the findings of the online questionnaire demonstrated there remain real and pressing concerns for LGBT people in all areas of East Sussex (McGlynn 2012; see also section 2 of this chapter), not just those areas coded as 'rural'. Indeed as Gavin Brown has pointed out, there is in fact a notable dearth of research on LGBT lives in smaller cities

and large towns (Brown 2008) such as Eastbourne and Hastings – these are by no means areas which are ‘covered’ by extant research, and yet the interplay of geographic and sexualised discourse here works to gloss over them in favour of ‘rural’ areas. Such discourse distinguishes areas beyond the geopolitical limits of the city, framing some non-urban areas (which might include small cities, towns and suburban areas as well as ‘rural’ areas) as more in need of attention than others. This may result in an overestimation of the knowledge we have of areas like Hastings and Eastbourne, and an underestimation of the issues LGBT people and communities in these areas face. Uncritical use of rural/urban discourse may in fact contribute to the neglect – both by the academy and the public sector – of such areas, which do not fit neatly into imaginaries of the urban or the rural.

One of the key distinctions made in the discussion above appears to hinge on discursive constructions of the rural. LGBT lives and needs in Rother are coded as more in need of attention because of their connection with rurality, through assumptions of rural areas being devoid of LGBT communities and services and therefore as most in need – by way of contrast, Hastings and Eastbourne appear marked out because of their status as larger towns in East Sussex. Comments in a future meeting of the forum’s analysis group seem to explain how such distinctions are constructed through the discourse of public service provision. In the following excerpt, Emily is discussing the provision of services supporting LGBT people with mental health difficulties:

***Emily – ‘But maybe it would be interesting to see if some of them were rural and some of them were urban people. And maybe, I wouldn’t be surprised if it pointed to people in the urban area are getting more support, perhaps than living in the sticks.’***

LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, June 2012

Crucially, the data explored in these analysis group meetings specifically **excluded** respondents living, working and socialising primarily in Brighton & Hove, and yet the rural/urban binary is still the frame through which Emily views expectations of public sector service provision. In fact, based on Emily’s comments here, the analysis group moved on to agree that respondents experiences of mental health difficulties should be crosstabulated against a rural/urban category, through which both Hastings and Eastbourne (with Brighton still excluded) were to be coded as urban. James confirmed this when he followed up Emily’s suggestion:

***James – ‘It would be useful to get the rural sort of take on it. ‘Cause I think with a lot of the stuff, I think there are differences in how people respond in the urban areas as opposed to rural.’***

LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, June 2012

James’ comments here reinforce Emily’s discourse - through rural/urban discourse LGBT people in certain areas (such as Hastings and Eastbourne) are framed as being less in need of public sector support than other areas, despite the facts that Hastings and Eastbourne

are heavily under-researched and that their LGBT communities face considerable challenges. This clearly demonstrates that 'urban' is contextualised in various ways – while previously Brighton has been coded as urban against a rural East Sussex, here towns such as Hastings and Eastbourne become the urbans in contrast to which other areas of East Sussex are rural. Therefore public sector discourse surrounding the geographies of LGBT lives and needs highlights the complexity of urban/rural distinctions – far from being fixed or attached only to particular areas, the data points to multiple 'urbans' incorporating a variety of different geographies, imaginaries and population centres, and additionally can attach or detach to/from different areas in different contexts, hence Hastings being variously coded as both rural and urban in the data. The complexity here emerges through the fluidity and flexibility of rural/urban discourse, and the ability of the urban and the rural to adhere to the same area in different contexts. In some senses the ability of areas such as Hastings to be both urban **and** rural is reminiscent of the work of Andrew Gorman-Murray on the hybrid gay and lesbian geographies of Australia, with 'rural' Daylesford constructed through a melding of sexualised urban and rural imaginaries and materialities (in the form of transport links, services etc) (Gorman-Murray et al 2012). However, while Gorman-Murray's data clearly speaks to **simultaneous** urbanity and rurality in Daylesford, my data surrounding towns such as Hastings and Eastbourne is more suggestive of urbanity/rurality as distinct but mobile and unfixed, emerging in relation to and overlapping with other local geographies. In this way such areas are produced as urban, rural or an alternative geographic imaginary depending on the political, material and/or discursive context – and in the case of my research, LGBT equalities form a particularly strong context for the production of such spaces.

The effect of these mobile geographies is such that areas like Hastings are constructed as less in need than 'more rural' areas of public sector services and support for LGBT people, with the through the assumption that such services and support already exist in the 'more

urban' areas. Thus LGBT needs in Hastings are rendered less visible, occupying a shaky middle-ground between a 'more urban' Brighton and a 'more rural' East Sussex. When compared to Brighton, the urban/rural dynamic operates to construct urban Brighton as the place where LGBT people are, having migrated from rural East Sussex. When compared to 'rural Rother', the dynamic operates to construct LGBT Hastings as better known about and less in need than its rural neighbours – and these rural needs themselves appear to stem in part from sexualised and gendered imaginaries of the rural as oppressive and intolerant. Those areas such as Hastings and Eastbourne, which appear able to slip easily across urban and rural and yet not sit comfortably in either, may therefore be neglected when we operate within a deceptively simple urban/rural framework, which can simultaneously incorporate all areas and yet render invisible those which fall too easily within the nebulous overlap of the two.

Focusing on LGBT equalities in rural and non-urban public sector services opens up a further challenge to relying on geographies of urban versus rural. The provision of such services reveals alternative political and service-based boundaries and divisions, brought to the fore by the distances in wider East Sussex. Forum attendees who represented public sector organisations often commented on the difficulties their organisations faced when trying to work for LGBT equalities across their different geographical remits. Here Julian, for example, points out that his organisation covers three different local authorities:

*Julian – ‘The difficulty we’ve got of course is [your] organisations operate in East Sussex, whereas we operate in East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton & Hove. So the reason we struggle is we’ve got to try and get East Sussex, Brighton & Hove and somebody from West Sussex to attend as well.’*

LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, January 2011

Revealed through this excerpt is the fact that Julian’s organisation is not solely an urban or rural one, and nor does it deal with only urban or rural LGBT people and communities. With regard to the impact on LGBT engagement, Julian describes this as a ‘difficulty’ and a ‘struggle’. Additionally, Julian points to a further complicating factor – in terms of engagement, he suggests that his organisation would need to get ‘**somebody** from West Sussex’ (emphasis mine). The limitation of ‘somebody’ here highlights the potentially minimal nature of this public sector organisation’s engagement with LGBT communities in particular areas, since even getting ‘somebody’ from a particular area is a ‘struggle’ (see Chapter 5 for further discussion of public sector / LGBT community partnership and engagement) – indeed, the geographic spread is posited as ‘the reason’ for these problems. What this suggests is that public sector engagement with LGBT communities operates in ways beyond the dynamics of the urban and the rural, or at least in ways which immensely complicate them. In East Sussex, the physical distances and the differing political and legislative boundaries of various public sector organisations are vital to considerations of LGBT equalities and yet cannot be reduced to an urban/rural dynamic. In the excerpt above Julian describes travelling (as a public sector worker) for LGBT engagement events or meetings with public sector organisations; however issues of distance and travel also emerged through other parts of the data as a key issue for LGBT people accessing services.



Karen emphasised this in a later meeting, showing how public sector service provision for LGBT people in East Sussex escapes the boundaries of the urban and the rural:

***Karen – ‘In the havens and Lewes and Wealden area, which is the north of the county, it’s less of a clear picture... The main problem is that their main populations look in three different directions for their main healthcare provider. So Brighton, Tonbridge Wells or East Sussex.’***

LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, May 2011

Karen describes a broad swathe of East Sussex here, from ‘the havens’ (Peacehaven and Newhaven) on the south coast, the town of Lewes to the west and the district of Wealden to the north (see Figure 1 in Chapter 1). This indicates another alternative geographic framework to the urban/rural binary – that of access to services – revealed through the discourse of LGBT public service provision. The areas of service provision described points to LGBT people from these areas accessing services at a distance from their area of residence, as pointed out in other literature on rural and non-urban LGBT lives (Friedman 1997; Gray 2009; Smith 1997) – however, the data demonstrates that this is not solely a phenomenon with regard to service provision. Champion and Hugo have suggested that individuals increasingly move across urban and rural spaces for work, challenging easy labelling of some lives as ‘urban’ or ‘rural’ (Champion and Hugo 2004). Data gathered through the online questionnaire revealed this to indeed be the case for LGBT people in East Sussex, with less than half of respondents saying that they live in the same area as they work, volunteer or study (42.2%, n. 54). Perhaps crucially for LGBT people and LGBT communities, however, the data also reveals a great deal of travel not just for access to

services, but for the purposes of socialising with other LGBT people (see section 2.3 of this chapter), particularly travel to Brighton. While discussing how to address the various geographies of respondents to the online questionnaire during its development, Edward explained how he felt such movement operated in the Hastings and Bexhill areas of East Sussex regarding other communities:

***Edward – ‘What is interesting is that you find people who, you know they’ve all their life they’ve been in one place, but they have interests in issues that are affecting another part of a community, and that is really common for worship and... Well we have members of a community, living in Hastings but they worship, let’s say in the Muslim community in Bexhill. Not only that, but they have interests in Hastings, they don’t know much of what is going on in Bexhill.’***

LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, July 2011

Edward develops an image of residents of a particular area who, while in some senses fixed in one place for ‘all their life’, are at the same time attached through their membership in a community of ‘interests’ to a different place. However, in Edward’s construction this community’s awareness and interests are divided unevenly across these spaces, so that while they live in Hastings and worship in Bexhill, nevertheless ‘they have interests in Hastings [and] don’t know much of what is going on in Bexhill.’ If, as Edward suggested, we reflect on how LGBT communities themselves may operate in such geographically complex ways, we may consider how the supposedly urban LGBT communities of Brighton are in part composed of rural and non-urban LGBT people, and indeed the distinct LGBT communities of Hastings, Eastbourne and so forth. Oswald has pointed out that ‘moving to

the city does not require severing oneself forever from rural life' (Oswald 2002:323), but Edward's comment seems to offer an even stronger challenge to rural/urban distinctions placed on LGBT communities and lives – even temporary movements and migrations, such as for work, socialising, services and feelings of community, mean that the rural of East Sussex bleeds into the urban of Brighton, thwarting attempts to clearly distinguish between them. Similarly, Brighton's urbanity must also bleed into surrounding rural areas through the reverse flows of movement of LGBT bodies and communities, public sector services, and discourses of sexuality and gender identity. Edward's comment also raises a consideration of what the city of 'Brighton' is for those LGBT people in wider East Sussex. If such LGBT people only associate with Brighton in terms of their 'interests' there – such as LGBT groups or socialising – then their imaginary of Brighton may be remarkably different to the Brighton of, say, a straight person living in one of Brighton's outlying residential estates such as Moulsecoomb. If we are to take postmodern understandings of experienced and produced space seriously, Edward's comment must lead us to consider a variety of different 'Brightons' constructed in part through LGBT imaginaries of the urban and the rural.

Now I posit one other way in which the data offers different approaches to geographies of sexualities, beyond discussions of the rural and urban. While Brown has called for more research on 'ordinary cities' as a challenge to the metrocentricism in many geographic studies of LGBT lives and communities (Brown 2008), and there has been some engagement with alternative geographic imaginaries relating to LGBT lives (see for example Pierce 2010, Ruiz 2010 and Soderstrom 2010 on the 'flyover' American Midwest and the Twin Cities of St Paul and Minneapolis) this still appears to concentrate scholars' attention on urban environments, albeit a wider array of them. I take up this challenge in a broader sense, then, by suggesting other spaces and alternative geographic imaginaries which emerge through the data as also involved in the construction of LGBT lives. In particular,

both online questionnaire respondents and forum participants used the figure of the ‘small town’ to explain their experiences. Some scholars have described similar geographic areas and labelled them as ‘small towns’ in their research, but these areas tend to be folded into ruralities rather than explored in their own terms (Browne 2011; Johnston and Longhurst 2009; Kennedy 2010; Kirkey and Forsyth 2001; Smith and Holt 2004:6; Whittier 2012).

The ‘small town’ was used by questionnaire respondents to discuss particular experiences as LGBT people. One Hastings-based respondent deployed a small town imaginary when asked how easy it was to live in their area as an LGBT person:

- ***Most of my friends and colleagues are in London, where I lived for fifty eight years, or elsewhere. I've found it harder to integrate into small town life, especially gay life. (#99)***

Note that respondent #99 does not quite describe Hastings itself as a ‘small town’, but rather refers to ‘small town life’ – this is not a description of the area itself but a particular imaginary, which the respondent compares to life in the nearby metropolis of London.

Another respondent reflected on their feelings of safety in their immediate surroundings – the St Leonards area of Hastings:

- ***In my home, on the street, only in St Leonards, it's just the small town mentality, and they go out of their way to discover anything slightly different about other people. When anywhere else, London, Eastbourne, Brighton this does not happen. (#43)***

Here the St Leonards area is separated from the rest of Hastings – such experiences happen ‘**only** in St Leonards’ (emphasis mine) – and from nearby cities (London and Brighton) as well as Eastbourne, suggesting that the ‘small town’ is operating as the key geographic distinction here. Coupled with the identification of a distinct ‘small town mentality’, this suggests a particular geographic imaginary which cannot be reduced to the rural. Interestingly, while this excerpt uses the figure of the small town to compare Hastings to Eastbourne, when asked what would make their own life better as an LGBT person, one Eastbourne-based respondent replied:

- ***More LGBT venues / services in the small towns.*** (#54)

According to quantitative data gathered through the questionnaire this respondent lives, works and socialises primarily in Eastbourne, therefore as they were asked what would make their own life better it seems likely that they are including Eastbourne within the category of ‘small towns’. This is of particular interest since respondent #43 (above) has already linked Eastbourne with larger cities (*‘anywhere else, London, Eastbourne, Brighton this does not happen’*) through comparison with ‘small town’ St Leonards. Taken together, these responses suggest that the imagined ‘small town’ is no more a fixed category than the urban or the rural – as with other geographic imaginaries the ‘small town’ operates relationally and in part through reference to LGBT equalities. As with the foregoing comments with regard to Hastings, the specificity of this comment suggests that Eastbourne here cannot be simply folded into the rural or the urban, but is here constructed through an alternative and complex ‘small town’ geographic framework.

Elements of the discourses and imaginaries surrounding 'small town life' in the three foregoing excerpts are also present in popular imaginaries of rural areas – the nosy panopticon community (Kazyak 2011; Kennedy 2010; Kramer 1995; Little 2007; Oswald 2002), the lack of LGBT services and spaces (Bell and Valentine 1995a; Comerford et al 2004; Friedman 1997; Gray 2009; Kennedy 2010; Little 2006; Smith 1997; Taylor 2011b) and so on – however these imaginaries themselves are challenged through my research as well as other scholars who highlight, for example, a kind of deliberate and tolerant ignorance of LGBT identities in rural areas rather than universal knowledge of local people's activities (Comerford et al 2004; Kazyak 2011). Of particular note is that areas such as Hastings and Eastbourne were, as has been shown, discursively folded into the rural in the data, and yet crucially, no respondent or forum participant directly labelled Hastings as rural. Instead, it was produced as such relationally, through numerous discursive linkages and associations with LGBT geographic imaginaries including the urban, the rural, the 'Gay Capital' and the 'small town'. I have already suggested that since areas such as Hastings occupy a particularly slippery discursive nexus, coded variously as urban and rural in specific ways and with specific effects, these areas are consequently elided from academic, public sector and indeed popular awareness of LGBT lives and communities. That questionnaire respondents #54 and #99 (above) did not describe their experiences in terms of rurality despite comparisons with urban areas hints at limits to how these urban and rural slippages in areas such as Hastings can operate – Hastings cannot always fit within an urban/rural dynamic, and alternative geographic imaginaries, such as 'small town life', are consequently drawn upon. Consequently, I argue that through this data Hastings is perceived through a variety of different geographic imaginaries – including but not limited to the urban, the rural and the 'small town' – which are themselves partially constructed in terms of LGBT equalities and which are discursively deployed with particular political and material effects. The Hastings area can be urban; it can be rural; it can be neither; it can be

a small town; and it can likely be a number of other imagined spaces as well. Greater consideration of alternative geographies such as the town or the small town, beyond urban/rural binaries, may offer new conceptualisations of geographies, sexualities and gender identities, questioning assumptions associated with urban/rural in areas such as Hastings – again, this is not to reject effects and materialities framed around the urban and the rural, but to challenge the ways in which they may work to make those areas which slip across the two less visible.

#### **4.4 – Conclusion to Geographies in the Shadow of the ‘Gay Capital’**

This chapter has explored how the urban and the rural work to constructed, and in turn are constructed by, discourses of sexualities and gender identities, particularly within public sector work for LGBT equalities. Along with other geographers of sexualities I challenge imaginaries of the rural as unsafe, intolerant, isolating and void of LGBT lives or communities as well as imaginaries of the urban as safe, welcoming and the natural space of LGBT existence (Browne 2011; Comerford et al 2004; Gorman-Murray et al 2012; Gray 2009; Kazyak 2011; Kennedy 2010; Kirkey and Forsyth 2001; Skeggs et al 2004; Whittier 2012); however, my work also answers calls to question idyllic constructions of the rural as a space chosen in opposition to the city (Browne 2011; Taylor 2011b) – rural areas in my research are not spaces of universal oppression, conformity and fear nor of sexualised and gendered utopias, but emerge as highly specific, complicated and yet relatively unknown with regard to LGBT lives. Imaginaries of these rural and non-urban areas are constructed through – and in turn work to construct – sexual and gendered imaginaries of LGBT lives and public sector LGBT equalities, and through an oppositional urban/rural dynamic.

At the same time, though, I show how the data gathered through the LGBT Equalities Forum for Hastings, Rother and East Sussex complicates easy definitions of urban and rural through discursive slippages and the impact of specific geographic imaginaries such as the 'gay capital'. The work of LGBT Equalities for Hastings, Rother and East Sussex demonstrates how the urban and the rural are not fixed, but instead bleed into one another through the discourses of LGBT equalities work, and through embodied movement, community identifications and public sector service provision. My research takes up the challenge of Larry Knopp (Knopp 2007) by exploring the messy and slippery effects of such geographies – in this case with regard to areas such as Hastings and Eastbourne, through which the urban and the rural appear to flow in complicated ways with both 'urban' and 'rural' able to adhere to the same area in different discursive contexts. This can work to elide such areas from research and broader geographic considerations of LGBT lives, as intimated by Gavin Brown (2008).

Finally I suggest looking at alternative geographic imaginaries such as the 'small town', not as an improvement on urban/rural dynamics which, as my research demonstrates, remain vital and important despite some suggestions of their growing irrelevance (Champion and Hugo 2004; Halfacree 1993; Lacour and Puissant 2007; Marsden et al. 1993; Mayerfield Bell et al 2010; Woods 2012). Instead, I posit such alternatives as pathways to critically engage with a wider variety of spaces, arguing that they may function where urban and rural discourses break down and render these spaces less visible. While Champion and Hugo suggest that 'There is no longer any clear dividing line between town and countryside for individual settlements or their inhabitants' (Champion and Hugo 2004:3), my research instead suggests that there are in fact many such lines, and that they are constantly being drawn and redrawn through discourses of LGBT equalities. This points to the importance of greater attention paid to such distinctions, including their messy and fluid complexities.



## **Chapter 5 – The Hybrid Possibilities of Partnership Work for LGBT Equalities in East Sussex**

### **5.1 – Introduction to The Hybrid Possibilities of Partnership Work for LGBT Equalities in East Sussex**

Partnership working has been a key feature of the research detailed in this thesis, not just in terms of its development through the LGBT Equalities Forum for Hastings, Rother and East Sussex itself (see Chapter 3 Section 3), but also with regard to the actual discussions taking part within these meetings, as these often reflected on this and other partnerships. In this chapter I highlight some of these discussions - in examining discourses of partnership which emerged through the LGBT Equalities Forum, I draw on poststructural understandings of the state as not fixed or unified but rather fluid and internally contested, with shifting and blurred boundaries and performed through the everyday practices (as discussed in Chapter 2 Section 5.5). I show how spaces of partnership work such as the forum demonstrate not only blurring but, advancing on the work of Sarah Whatmore (2002), hybridisations between the state/public sector, and LGBT community groups and communities. Crucially, I argue that these kinds of sectoral hybridisations are not limited to the actual spaces of partnership themselves, but in fact point to how public sector organisations as well as LGBT community groups are already made hybrid through the everyday, re-iterated institutional performances of their members and workers. In these discussions I reverse the general focus of the literature surrounding partnership working and hybridity introduced in Chapter 2 Section 5.5, by concentrating primarily (though not exclusively) on hybridities of the state and public sector rather than communities and community groups.

In discussing the work of LGBT Equalities in Hastings, Rother and East Sussex, I also demonstrate how data gathered through the project reveals important and troubling features of this kind of partnership work, particularly with regard to the contemporaneous discourses and political projects of 'austerity' and the 'Big Society'. These features ward off any potential suggestion that the hybridisations identified are only theoretical interest or that they are simply another recognition of the state as a poststructural phenomenon. By exploring this partnership work and the research and discourses which emerged as part of it, I show that the institutionalised 'managing' of LGBT equalities work in the public sector is key to this kind of work – in particular, through the metaphoric 'firewalls' (Cooper 2006) and 'brick walls' (Ahmed 2012) identified by Davina Cooper and Sara Ahmed, respectively. My research shows that the complex hybridisations of the state, local LGBT communities and LGBT community groups are themselves heavily implicated in such problematic issues, with implications for research on partnership working and LGBT community engagement. Many scholars have written of the numerous problematic manifestations of hybridised community organisations through partnership with state and public sector bodies (Alcock 2010; Andrucki & Elder 2007; Billis 2010a; Billis 2010b; Butt 2001; Byrne 2001; Carr 2012; Clarke & Glendinning 2012; Coote 2011; Craig & Taylor 2012; Dillon & Fanning 2011, Evans 2011; Featherstone et al 2012; Howard & Taylor 2010; Hutchinson & Cairns 2010; Kisby 2010; Mayo & Taylor 2001; McCabe 2010; Milbourne & Cushman 2013; Seddon et al 2004; Skelcher 2012; Tett 2005; Williams 2012), and while similar problems can be seen emerging through the forum – and indeed were extensively discussed within the forum itself - the effects of the converse and consequent hybridisation of public sector organisations have been little explored. Through detailed analysis of three years of LGBT Equalities Forum meetings I outline issues surrounding complex dis/identifications within forum meetings, the perception and production of institutional hierarchies, and discourses of evidence and validity. I also argue that attending to the hybrid possibilities of spaces of partnership – and

particularly those surrounding public sector organisations - points to potentially progressive ways in which LGBT equalities could be enacted through East Sussex's public sector and LGBT communities.

## **5.2 – The Hybrid Spaces and Subjects of Partnership Work**

The partnership working processes of the LGBT Equalities Forum for Hastings, Rother and East Sussex, captured in my data, can be shown to construct particular subjects and erect boundaries between groups, organisations and sectors as well as between state and society. These constructions perform specific purposes, such as deploying a separate local LGBT community as a source of legitimacy for public sector bodies; dis/associating public sector organisations and workers with un/popular government practices; dis/associating public sector workers with un/popular organisational practices; and de/valuing particular individuals as the 'same old faces'. However, as will quickly become apparent, this kind of boundary-setting through partnership work itself reveals such boundaries to be fluid and porous. The concept of partnership working itself posits a distinction between the public sector and the community, which is most commonly made alongside a state/society divide (Butt 2001; Byrne 2001; Cooper 2002; Craig & Taylor 2012; Glasman 2010; Haugh 2011; Kisby 2010; Smith 2010; see Chapter 2 Sections 5.2 and 5.3). Recorded meetings of the LGBT Equalities Forum reveal how the practices and discourses of partnership work are keenly connected to identifications, disidentifications, and issues of representation with regard to the state, the local public sector and local LGBT communities. They also show how participants used the metaphor of 'hats' as a key aspect of partnership work, to signify representation or identity within the partnership process. However, these dis/identifications prove to be contested regularly throughout the three years of forum meetings, and in this section I show how the forum's partnership work itself actually

complicates easy identifications or boundary-making practices and reveals divides between the state, public sector, LGBT communities and 'society' to be uneasy and artificial (Andrucki & Elder 2007; Browne & Bakshi 2012; Cooper 2002; Cooper 2006; Cooper & Monro 2003; Painter 2000; Painter 2006), as well as demonstrating hybridities, through the very processes of their construction.

One of the clearest 'boundaries' which emerged in the LGBT Equalities Forum was between the public sector and the local community. In forum meetings it was common to make clear distinctions between 'the community' and 'services' or 'organisations':

***Karen – 'Can I just say, we've come round to a discussion now which is all focused on the services, and nothing to do with the communities. And this whole group started engaging communities from a community engagement event which was the biggest sort of LGBT group that we had in Hastings for a long time at least. And I would hate to lose the focus of the community and the ownership of the community.'***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, March 2011)

Writers on partnership work have noted that public sector organisations regularly identify and construct 'the community' (Craig & Taylor 2012; Tett 2005), with this community often being treated as homogenous. In this quote, Karen – speaking as a representative of a local public sector organisation – raises concerns over a focus on 'services' as opposed to 'communities'. The partnership work involved here is coded as a balancing act between these two (supposedly) distinct entities, and not only are 'communities' homogenised, but in fact public sector 'services' are too. Therefore these supposedly discrete, homogenised

entities are constructed as such through the very processes and discourses of partnership work. This idea of a balance needing to be reached, and reference to the 'focus of the community' and 'ownership of the community' then can be seen as ascribing coherent goals or agendas to the 'community', an idea which emerged more fully in other meetings:

***Michael – 'If this is going to be a community-driven agenda now... is the role of E&D<sup>10</sup> leads within Trusts, who are also trying to advance the same agenda, if you're then going to be pitted up against this now. The two are being pitted [against each other], the organisation versus the community.'***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, November 2010)

Here Michael describes a clear distinction between the two, 'the organisation versus the community', using this idea of a contestation between the two to code them as separate. He also constructs a unified 'community-driven agenda', suggesting an unproblematic and unfractured local community. However, he also makes an interesting discursive manoeuvre when referring to equality and diversity workers ('E&D leads') in public sector organisations – here specifically local NHS trusts. Again constructing a single 'agenda' on behalf of the local community, Michael then suggests that these workers have the 'same agenda', in spite of the proposed conflict between the organisations the workers are attached to and local communities. This leads to a further consideration of how partnership working constructs 'communities' in ways with particular effects. Here particular individuals or roles are coded as being 'on the same side' as local communities, working towards the same goals. Discussion of a singular 'community' with a clear and singular 'agenda' here appears

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<sup>10</sup> Short for 'equality and diversity' – this 'professional' acronym was often used by forum attendees representing public sector organisations.

to lend these public sector roles a particular sense of legitimacy and alignment with prescribed LGBT community goals, thus validating actions taken (Homfray 2007; Monro 2007; Tett 2005). At the same time, in deploying the figure of the 'E&D leads' with the 'same agenda' working within a purported oppositional public sector/community framework, Michael raises the issue of an internally fragmented and contested public sector, elements of which share the aims of a local community rather than other and presumably different organisational aims – this emerges through the very discourse used to construct a singular 'community' sector.

Equality/diversity workers emerged as key figures in these kind of discursive entanglements, which can be seen to contest ideas of public sector organisations as unified and coherent while suggesting interpenetration with local communities. In one meeting Aisha, herself with an equality and diversity remit for an East Sussex public sector organisation, engaged in more detail with these kinds of discursive identifications and subjectifications when describing how she felt she faced problems in her organisation:

***Aisha – 'If they don't think they've got a problem, they ain't going to do anything about it. I think we're all sitting here, people like us are sitting here because we do want to get underneath the surface. And we do want to expose some of the actual experiences of people from their point of contact and stuff.'***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, March 2011)

Aisha makes a number of discursive subjectifications here while identifying herself in multiple ways, and it is worth exploring these in some detail. Perhaps most obviously, Aisha makes distinctions between her place in her organisation and her organisation more

generally. Juxtaposing ‘what **I’m** saying’ and ‘if **they** don’t think **they’ve** got a problem’, she separates herself from what she posits as the more problematic elements of her organisation’s workings, despite her sitting on the LGBT Equalities Forum as a representative of it. Aisha also aligns herself with others sitting on the forum - ‘**we’re** all sitting here, **people like us** are sitting here because **we do want to get underneath the surface**’. In her capacity as a representative of the organisation, then, Aisha simultaneously distances herself from it and aligns herself with other forum participants – including representatives of other public sector organisations, LGBT community groups, activists and academics. Using this identification with those involved in the partnership process – coded as those who want ‘to get underneath the surface’ of LGBT equalities – Aisha unites the forum participants as positively working for LGBT equalities, through their very engagement with partnership work which is why they are ‘sitting here’. Partnership here becomes a space locating progressive work, which works to distinguish participants from any potentially negative associations with their organisations regarding LGBT equalities, with whom they at other times – or even simultaneously, as neither Aisha nor other public sector representative actively voiced that they had ‘stopped’ representing at any point in the forum meetings – appear to fully identify.

As well as negotiating their identifications with local public sector organisations, public sector workers also used partnership processes and discourse to negotiate their relationship with the state, and particularly in terms of the ‘government’:

***Grace – ‘The government point of view is you don’t need equality schemes anymore. You publish the data and the public will tell you whether you do or not.’***

*James – ‘Absolutely rubbish.’*

*Grace – ‘I know, but that’s what we now have to respond to.’*

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, November 2011)

In this excerpt from a forum discussion about the government guidance regarding the Equality Act 2010, which specifies actions towards proving compliance which public sector bodies need (or do not need) to take, Grace negotiates her position, as well as that of her organisation, by identifying these new approaches to LGBT equalities as ‘the government point of view’, positing a distinction between the state as performed and expressed at a national and a more local level. Additionally, while use of the ‘we’ in ‘that’s what **we** have to respond to now’ appears to carry with it a level of ambiguity – for example, it could refer to ‘we’ as in Grace’s organisation, ‘we’ as in the LGBT Equalities Forum, or even ‘we’ as in society in general - this should not be read as only unintelligible. Instead such ambiguity performs a number of distinct functions within the discourse of partnership. By suggesting that ‘we have to respond to’ these changes, Grace emphasises togetherness with the multiple forum participants, including other public sector organisations and LGBT community groups; meanwhile the ambiguity removes responsibility for the implementation of these changes from any one group or organisation. Here, therefore, we can see how partnership spaces such as the LGBT Equalities Forum result in multiple, complex effects emerging through messy subjectifications such as ‘we’ and ‘you’, specifically emerging due to the practices and discussions of partnership as part of the LGBT Equalities Forum. First, they discursively align participants with perceived progressive action and simultaneously disassociate them from perceived negative action; second, these alignments reveal fragmentation in the construction of the state through a proposed



oppositional dynamic between the national 'government' and a local public sector; and third, they act to discursively unite forum participants across sectors and backgrounds, in opposition to a 'government point of view'. It is this third point which I expand on in the rest of this section.

The excerpts and discussions above show that these constructed boundaries and identities are always contingent on the context of their deployment, messy, and inherently unstable – indeed they are revealed to be so through the very discursive acts and partnership processes involved in their construction. Partnership work and discourse is heavily implicated in the simultaneous construction and the contestation of these boundaries and identifications. An even more intriguing finding, however, is that this kind of partnership work not only demonstrated a messy, fragmented and internally-conflicted state performing multiply through public sector representatives, but also public sector representatives actively identifying or aligning themselves with constructed LGBT community agendas and community groups in the local area. I suggest that the concept of 'hybridity' (see Chapter 2 Section 5.5) offers a particularly useful way of exploring and understanding these dis/identifications. In Chapter 4 Section 3.1 I noted Andrew Gorman-Murray's use of the concept to highlight ways in which geographic imaginaries of 'the urban' and 'the rural' could coalesce; a broader engagement, however, can be seen in the work of Sarah Whatmore (2002). Literature surrounding state and public sector partnerships with voluntary sector or community organisations tends to perceive of only the spaces of the partnership work themselves as being hybridised (Billis 2010a; Gutierrez, Baquenado-Lopez & Tejeda 1999; Seddon et al 2004; Skelcher 2012). Building on Whatmore's expansive geographic conception of hybridity, I suggest that the kinds of multiple dis/identifications enacted by forum participants point to more than the LGBT Equalities Forum being a space hybridised from public sector organisations and local LGBT communities and community groups. The discussions of LGBT Equalities Forum participants

like Aisha strongly suggest that state and public sector institutions themselves are also hybrids constituted through complex and interpenetrating links across supposedly bounded public, voluntary and community sectors and spaces (Valentine 2000:151-152). Crucially, I argue that partnership work such as the LGBT Equalities Forum is not merely a catalyst for this hybridity (as implied by assertions that organisational hybridity is on the increase due to an increase in public sector partnership work), but rather reveals that state and public sector institutions (as well as community and voluntary groups) **are already hybridised**.

That is, the discourses and performances of public sector workers within partnership spaces reveal how hybridity is **already present** in the public sector even prior to or outside the spaces of community partnership work. Rather than entirely constituting this hybridity, spaces of partnership work such as the LGBT Equalities Forum can bring the pre-existing hybrid nature of the state, the public sector and LGBT communities and community groups into the discursive foreground, due to the particular discussions and practices taking place.

To highlight this hybridity in detail, in the rest of this section I explore the metaphor of 'hats', frequently used in the data as well as in other recorded partnership processes to denote associations, representation and identities (see for example Browne & Bakshi 2012; Mayo & Taylor 2001). Multiple hats were described by representatives across sectors:

***Aisha – 'My other hat is organising the local strategic partnership.'***

(LGBT Equalities Forum myself, March 2011)

***Researcher 1 – 'Mary doesn't want to attend this.'***

***James – 'She doesn't?'***

***Researcher 1 – ‘No. I can kind of see why, I think she finds it difficult with her multiple hats and stuff.’***

***James – ‘Yes, she’s got lots going on.’***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, June 2012)

As can be seen in these excerpts, forum participants – by June 2012 this included myself as Researcher 1 – used hats to signify responsibilities, roles and organisations. While the imagery involved in describing one’s role through the use of hats can be seen as signifying boundaries, the very practice of identifying a ‘hat’ leads us to consider the transience of such boundaries in the forms of other ‘hats’ and even states of ‘hatlessness’. Forum participants such as Mary indicate especially how hats reveal the identifying, boundary-making practices already described to be multiple, fluid and shifting. Throughout forum meetings Mary described multiple ‘hats’ reflecting her role as an equalities manager for a local public sector organisation; as a committee member representing the Hastings and Rother Rainbow Alliance; and as an openly lesbian woman living in East Sussex and a member of local LGBT communities. Mary therefore reveals how this form of boundary-making partnership practice in fact allows for multiple performed selves to exist through one person, even simultaneously:

***Mary - ‘Can I just say to confuse things, that if nobody else from HRRRA turns up I will have that hat on as well.’***

***Researcher 1 – ‘OK. Two hats. Two complimentary hats.’***

***Graham - <laughter>***

***Mary – ‘I hope somebody else will, ‘cause I don’t like being two-hatted.’***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, September 2011)

If we view the state and the public sector through a poststructuralist lens, and thus performed through the re-iterated and everyday actions of public sector workers such as Aisha and Mary, then their multiply-hatted performances within the LGBT Equalities Forum bring issues of hybridity to the fore. Mary’s ability to ‘have that hat on **as well**’ offers an interesting visual depiction of this hybridity. Wearing two hats simultaneously, with one signifying the public sector organisation she works for and the other the LGBT community organisation it is partnered with through the forum, Mary sees herself not as switching from one position to the other but as occupying two positions at the same time and making her performance as part of the forum necessarily a hybrid one. This hybridity is emphasised by the fact that the use of hats to signify representation within partnership meetings was not always successful – therefore it was not always possible for forum members to erase their other potential hats from their discourse or practice, as these could still be ‘seen’ and addressed by other forum members. The hybrid positions occupied by forum members was therefore not just a matter of their own performances, but also how these performances were perceived by others. Graham describes failed attempts to construct boundaries and define singular hat use in two separate meetings:

***Graham – ‘But can I just say, sorry Lara, I’m not HRRRA. You always look to me, but Mary is more, [she’s] on the committee.’***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, November 2010)

***Graham – ‘As I report back each time... here I’m a gay man but I don’t wear a gay hat when I come here. I’m here as the chairman of [local community consultation forum].’***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, July 2011)

Graham is a member of the Hastings and Rother Rainbow Alliance and has sat on the committee in the past, though at the time of these meetings he had stepped down. At the beginning of LGBT Equalities Forum meetings, when participants announced their name and which groups or organisations they were representing, he would clearly state that he wore a ‘hat’ signifying a local consultation forum. Despite this, and as indicated in the two previous quotes from 2010 and 2011, throughout the years of recorded forum meetings Graham was repeatedly identified by others as a representative of HRRRA or asked to speak on their behalf, or on behalf of the local LGBT community, even though other members such as Mary were present. These discursive boundary-making practices were thus contested and failed regularly throughout the years of this partnership work, revealing the instabilities of such boundaries but also how efforts to ward off hybrid identifications through the ‘hat’ metaphor could fail despite repeated efforts.

Howard and Taylor have suggested that in times of stress or when conflict emerges, public sector workers in partnership spaces will, despite these shifting identifications, resort to a ‘real’ institutional identity (Howard & Taylor 2010:184-185), as opposed to others which are imagined to be only convenient and temporary facades. This research suggests not only that this is not the case but that even these supposedly ‘real’ identities are multiple and contested, and demonstrate overlapping and hybridised positions with community

partners and in opposition to various public sector institutions, including their own (Cooper 2002:241). Indeed, the very attempts to assert 'real' identities within meetings in fact revealed their inconsistencies, and years-long failures at policing such distinctions were evident. These dis/identifications not only challenged these distinctions, however, but also demonstrate how spaces of partnership work can both produce hybridities across public sector and LGBT communities and community groups, and reveal the pre-existing hybrid natures of these various sectors. This does not mean that all sectoral boundaries are lost or unimportant. In the following section I go on to explain how the boundary-making discourses through which such hybridities emerge can also work to produce particular social and material effects, with implications for partnership work between LGBT communities and public sector organisations.

### **5.3 – Troubling Dis/Identifications in Spaces of Partnership Work**

Partnership working between public sector organisations and local communities and community organisations has increased over the past decade, with writers linking this to the 1997-2010 New Labour government's Third Way approach (Billis 2010a:7; Browne & Bakshi 2013:116; Richardson & Monro 2012:99) and subsequently the 'austerity' and 'Big Society' political projects which emerged from the post-2010 Conservative / Liberal Democrat coalition government (Hutchinson & Cairns 2010; Featherstone et al 2012; Milbourne & Cushman 2013; Skelcher 2012). The focus has tended to remain on the effects of this kind of partnership work on the voluntary and community organisations, with academics and activists noting a number of problematic effects for 'hybridised' partnered communities emerging such as limited resources (Alcock 2010; Coote 2011; Craig & Taylor 2002:138; Dillon & Fanning 2011:8; Evans 2011; Mayo & Taylor 2001:50; Tett 2005:8), increased pressure in terms of time and capacity (McCabe 2010; Tett 2005), fear of

speaking out against statutory partners (Billis 2010a; Hutchinson & Cairns 2010: 143; Milbourne & Cushman 2013: 21), weakened or co-opted community agendas (Andrucki & Elder 2007; Billis 2010a; Chaney 2012; Tett 2005), the exclusion of a community or area's most vulnerable or marginalised people (Balloch & Taylor 2001:2; Craig & Taylor 2002:142; Dillon & Fanning 2011:132-135; Evans 2011:167; Haugh 2011:97; Rylie et al 2010; Taylor 2011a:262; Tett 2005:2-3) and a shift in responsibility for previously statutory duties (Coote 2011:82; Evans 2011:166; Haugh 2011; Herbert 2005; Grimshaw & Rubery 2012:109; Kisby 2010:486; McCabe 2010:5-8; Smith 2011; Stott 2011; Williams 2012:126) – the latter of which I examine in more detail in Chapter 6. In this section I reverse this focus to highlight how hybridisations of state and public sector organisations, revealed through the doing of partnership work with local LGBT communities and community groups, can result both in 'troubling' ways of 'managing' LGBT equalities and in potentially progressive ways of enacting them. Crucially, it is often the very identifications and disidentifications through which hybridities emerge which are implicated in generating these effects, while at the same time revealing their in own inconsistencies. Therefore I use the word 'troubling' in the title of this section advisedly, to refer not only to the potentially problematic ways in which LGBT equalities can be enacted or deferred, but to highlight the ways in which discourses emerging in spaces of partnership work can produce complicated and messy confluences of identities and subjectivities.

### **5.3.1 – Community Voices, Old and New**

Particular subjectifications emerged through the LGBT Equalities Forum for Hastings, Rother and East Sussex which acted to construct members of LGBT communities and community groups in specific and potentially problematic ways. Individuals from rural and non-urban East Sussex representing LGBT communities and community groups were

constructed as the ‘same old faces’ in ways which variously coded engaged LGBT individuals as not sufficiently ‘representative’ of local LGBT communities or as too invested in supposedly personal agendas – a feature of partnership work noted by other scholars (Carr 2012). Discussing the importance of increased community engagement in an early meeting, Julian argued:

***Julian - ‘It’s all about hearing new voices rather than get the same old, same old community gatekeepers or whatever you want to call them come and just banging on about their own issues.’***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, November 2010)

Research on partnership work clearly indicates the importance of key, engaged individuals (Browne & Bakshi, 2012; Cooper & Monro, 2003; Hutchinson & Cairns 2010; McNulty, Richardson & Monro, 2010; Richardson & Monro, 2013), yet Julian’s quote here demonstrates that individual LGBT community and community group representatives could be denigrated as the ‘same old, same old’, and the issues they raised individualised as ‘their own issues’ and thus presumably not those of the community they are acting as ‘gatekeepers’ to. These ‘old’ voices are compared to supposedly important ‘new voices’. The actual content of these new voices is not explored – rather they are coded as important **because** they are new, whereas even if the ‘same old’ voices raise concerns these are discursively dismissed, along with the speakers’ time, energy and commitment to partnership work (Tett 2005). Community participants with histories of engagement with public sector work highlighted just this feature of partnership work:



*James – ‘I find myself coming away from meetings having gone through, rehashed the same thing over and over and over again and you say to yourself well this could be more easily done, kept on the agenda, people need to be applying this legislation to their practice. And it’s, well, it doesn’t happen.’*

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, June 2012)

James puts particular emphasis here on the repetitious nature of his engagement with local public sector organisations – he has ‘rehashed the same thing over and over and over again’, signifying the length of time he has been involved in such work. But despite this extensive involvement over time, James perceives that his concerns have not been addressed; his suggestions about how things ‘could be more easily done’ not taken on board; his voice heard, but not **listened** to. Therefore James offers an important critique of Julian’s suggestion of finding ‘new voices’ - this move feels reminiscent of Cooper and Monro’s formulation of public sector institutions avoiding issues potentially damaging to their performance as ‘LGBT-friendly’ or engaged in progressive LGBT equalities work through a ‘will not to know’ (Cooper & Monro 2003:243; Cooper 2006). Techniques of state and public sector governance as means of self-care include managing their access to knowledges which may compel them to act in particular ways or damage particular institutional performances. Here, local LGBT partnership discourses surrounding the importance of ‘new voices’ work to avoid the ‘old’ voices, voices which proclaim long-standing and unanswered concerns. In another meeting, Graham noted that this was leading to community organisations actively seeking ‘new faces’ who would be able to put forward the same arguments which were currently not being addressed:

***Graham – ‘There’s a few of us that do a lot, and they always see us at meetings! Get somebody else to do it, ‘cause there’s always going to be somebody around that table who’s saying “Oh bloody Graham again”. So you’ve got to get someone else, who’s got no axe to grind, except that they understand where you’re coming from.’***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, January 2011)

By recognising and attempting to negotiate the perceived need for ‘new faces’, LGBT community organisations such as HRRRA take on the extra work required to find ‘someone else’ with ‘no axe to grind’, which may be particularly difficult in rural and non-urban areas such as East Sussex (with relatively sparse LGBT populations) and which also erases any problems which the ‘old’ faces were raising. This also risks losing the expertise and energy of long-term advocates and activists from community organisations, vital to performing the high quality work needed for partnership working (Tett 2005; Hutchinson & Cairns 2010:142). Attending to the complex hybridities of partnership working is important if we are to understand how LGBT equalities work can be firewalled as well as progressed – while some argue that community organisations are silenced through their partnership with public sector organisations (Hutchinson & Cairns 2010:143; Milbourne & Cushman 2013:21), East Sussex community organisations such as HRRRA seem able to speak up and challenge, but this does not necessarily translate into action. This could be viewed through the lens of Anne Phillips’ work on the ‘politics of ideas’ (here Graham’s attempts to articulate LGBT issues to public sector partners via various ‘meetings’) versus a ‘politics of presence’ (the possible need for a critical mass of LGBT people in such partnership work to push the politics beyond the failure of public sector institutions to engage with the issues Graham raises) (Phillips 1995). Similarly, while others have pointed out that partnership and

engagement work with LGBT communities can involve the loudest community voices dominating (Richardson & Monro 2012:101-102), my research offers an important addendum to this, in that even these 'loudest voices' do not necessarily get listened to and dismissing them as the 'loudest' or 'same old faces' dismisses experience, skill and capacity, the absence or lack of which has already been identified as a problem, while simultaneously constructing the problems they raise as only their personal concerns when in fact their concerns may never be addressed. Spaces for 'speaking up' can be spaces for shutting work down if the speech is only heard but not listened to. Within the context of internally conflicted institutions rather than partnership work, Ahmed describes such processes as 'institutional tiredness' (Ahmed 2012:63), through which institutions resist constantly repeated voices detailing inequalities – and yet the repetition occurs precisely because the voices are not listened to in the first place. Her formulation feels apt here too – within spaces of partnership work, public sector organisations (as performed through individual workers and the processes of partnership working) 'tire' of listening to the same issues being raised, and yet the issues are raised because they are not being addressed. Thus 'the voice' rather than 'the issue the voice raises' becomes problematised in a way similar to Ahmed's figure of the 'feminist killjoy' (Ahmed 2010) – here the 'killjoy' is the LGBT community partner raising issues which partner institutions desire 'not to know' (Cooper & Monro 2003). Note that I am referring to institutions as sprawling and complex entities here and not suggesting a deliberate dismissal of LGBT issues by individual public sector partners, who, as Richardson and Monro have pointed out, work within a series of institutional demands, imperatives and restraints (Richardson & Monro 2012:129).

At the same time, Graham's agendas are not universal agendas for the local LGBT community and will always be personal to some extent, and therefore it would be impossible to source a 'new face' who precisely shared Graham's positions. The suggestion that he needs to find someone with 'no axe to grind' points to a paradox in which LGBT

community activists' agendas can be dismissed as entirely personal and unrepresentative (thus recognising the fragmentary and contested nature of local LGBT communities), while demands for impersonal community representativeness simultaneously imply an imagined universal LGBT community agenda and erase the many inequalities, differences and contestations within such communities. Interestingly, Graham also reveals how these discourses appear only to impact on community partners – he notes that 'there's always going to be **somebody** around that table' (emphasis mine) objecting to his agendas, suggesting that individual agendas also emerge from public sector workers. However the demand for universal representativeness and dismissing of the 'same old faces' seems not to apply to public sector partners (Browne & Bakshi 2013:122; Craig & Taylor 2002:140). In keeping with the aims of this chapter, I reflect such issues back onto the public sector partners to explore how the hybridities of partnership working reveal both problems and possibilities. In the following section I show how attending to hybridities of the LGBT Equalities Forum reveals that public sector institutions are themselves fragmented and contested, but that potentially progressive work for LGBT equalities can emerge through it.

### **5.3.2 – The Perceived Institutional Hierarchies of Public Sector Organisations**

Discourses emerging through the local partnership work of the LGBT Equalities Forum both re/produce and yet also contest hierarchies within public sector institutions, particularly through reference to senior or high-level public sector workers in contrast to lower or middle-tier workers. These hierarchies could work to posit aims for public sector LGBT equalities work, and to manage action from the public sector regarding LGBT equalities, as well as to manage expectations of such action. However, the data also reveals important challenges to such perceived hierarchies, and consequently more complex public sector institutions through which LGBT equalities are implemented at a local level. Writing on

partnership work has identified 'bottom-up' engagement and empowerment as central to the theories and politics underlying partnership and the current Big Society agenda (Alcock 2010; Evans 2011; Glasman & Norman 2012; Stott 2011; Williams 2012); conversely, the perceived importance of key 'top-level' figures acknowledging and championing partnership work promoting equalities (including LGBT equalities) within public sector organisations has also been noted (Ahmed 2012:59; Browne et al., 2012; Chaney 2012; Cooper 1994; Cooper & Monro 2003; McNulty et al 2010; Richardson & Monro 2013). This bottom-level / top-level dynamic also played out within data gathered from meetings of the LGBT Equalities Forum. Forum participants identified a barrier in bringing LGBT equalities work to the attention of those at a 'higher level' of public sector organisations:

***Graham – 'We have lots of dealings with <organisation name> and it's OK to a certain level, but after that it's a no go area.'***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, January 2011)

***Graham – 'We find in the voluntary sector people we meet on an everyday basis... the junior, more junior, there's no problem with them, but when it gets higher level that's where the problem can come.'***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, July 2011)

Graham imagines a 'certain level' at which engagement with public sector organisations is halted, and in the second quote constructs a hierarchy of levels including 'junior, more junior' and 'higher level' where the 'problem' resides. This is a perceived institutional

hierarchy, distinct from though inextricably entwined with the variety of social, legal and bureaucratic effects which define and thus produce roles and responsibilities throughout public sector organisations. Of course this is not to say that such hierarchies do not produce social and material effects - Graham, for example, clearly links this perceived hierarchy to the limitations of LGBT community engagement and partnership with public sector organisations. It is important to note that this hierarchy also reveals perceived possibilities and positive outcomes, since Graham identifies 'no problem' with 'junior' workers. However, within the context of the LGBT Equalities Forum this more positive note to these organisational hierarchies tended to be brushed aside, and concerns with the 'high level' end of the hierarchies came to the fore. This could be most keenly observed during discussions in which 'high level' workers were framed as having a tremendous amount of power to influence social or organisational change:

***Aisha – 'And if you're doing an E&D role like I am, my job is actually not to change the whole world. I can't do that, I'm not a director or assistant director or whatever.'***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, March 2011)

In this quote Aisha ascribes the power 'to change the whole world' to higher tier workers in her organisation. Contrasting her own role with the roles of 'directors' and 'assistant directors', Aisha discursively links her inability to 'change the whole world' to not being a director, suggesting that such power is only available in those roles. Therefore the re/production of this hierarchy within this setting provides a discursive reason for any perceived lack or failure to enact LGBT equalities through the public sector – this 'high level'

is simultaneously inaccessible and yet the only place from which dramatic change can stem. Moving down this hierarchy, top-level power is compared by Aisha with a comparatively powerless group of mid-level public sector workers, particularly those with an equalities remit. Later in this discussion, after Julian (also a public sector worker) reasserted the importance of public sector institutions working to support the aims of local LGBT communities, Aisha and Lara developed this public sector hierarchy of power further, questioning the role of mid- and low-level workers in partnership work such as that of the LGBT Equalities Forum:

*Aisha – ‘OK Julian, but if you take that, then I’m not the person that should be sitting here.’*

*Lara – ‘No me neither.’*

*Aisha – ‘Because I can’t change any of that. You need to have all of those service heads sitting here, not me. I cannot actually do any of that.’*

*Lara – ‘It’s not us. We can’t do anything.’*

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, March 2011)

Aisha and Lara dismiss their own ability to effect change and point to top levels of their organisations as the places where the important changes can actually be made. While Aisha previously assigned great power to top-level public sector workers in her organisation, here Lara conversely states ‘It’s not us. **We can’t do anything**’ (emphasis mine). Equalities workers such as Lara and Aisha are framed as powerless to effect change and therefore are not the correct people to be ‘sitting here’ at a meeting of the LGBT Equalities Forum,

engaged in partnership work. It is this constructed hierarchy, then, which works to manage expectations of some public sector workers' abilities to enact LGBT equalities. Therefore we can surmise that top-level disengagement from LGBT partnership work is perceived as particularly problematic because only they are imagined to have the power to implement desired changes. Such imaginings materially impacted on the partnership work of the forum itself, for example surrounding the planning of a launch event for the LGBT Equalities Forum's own research:

***Lara – 'I think we've got to get them to come.'***

***James – 'Especially on a weekend!' <laughter>***

***Lara – 'And it's going to be difficult one, we're not going to get high level to come.'***

***Grace – 'It'll be the likes of us to come at the weekend!'***

***Lara – 'Yeah. You're going to get the ones that do the community work, not the higher up.'***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, July 2011)

Building on Aisha's construction of powerful high level workers who are the only ones able to enact change, in this discussion forum participants stressed the importance of getting 'them' (within the context of this discussion these were constructed as 'high level' public sector representatives) to attend the forum's event. The difficulty of securing such attendance at a weekend fed into further negotiations surrounding how to secure attendance from local LGBT communities – it was felt that while LGBT community members



would attend an event at a weekend, they would not attend a mid-week event. Forum participants viewed this as a difficult balance between ensuring the participation of local LGBT people and high level public sector workers. Partnership work for progressing public sector LGBT equalities can therefore be seen to be heavily impacted by imaginings of powerful top-level public sector workers who, if only they could be reached and engaged in partnership work, would implement LGBT equality. The efforts of the equality workers who actually took part in the LGBT Equalities Forum were conversely devalued. The perceived hierarchies and the self-positioning of forum participants as part of them were re/produced through the 'doing' of LGBT equalities work, deployed as part of this work, and perceived as institutional firewalls (Cooper 2012) or 'brick walls' (Ahmed 2012) which limited possibilities for progressive LGBT equalities. However, while there were clearly material effects stemming from these hierarchies, the firewalls in place were neither fixed nor impassable – they did not shut down progressive LGBT equalities work altogether.

Given that public sector representatives sitting on the LGBT Equalities Forum for Hastings, Rother and East Sussex were overwhelmingly mid-level workers, usually with an equalities remit, one might question the utility of continuing such modes of partnership work – after all, if only high-level and not mid-level workers can effect meaningful change, are partnership forums like the LGBT Equalities Forum merely talking shops through which no change will actually occur? Over the forum's timespan participants repeatedly reflected on this question, but in the forum's final meeting in August 2012 James confronted the forum's historic focus on accessing high-level workers:

***James – 'All these things have been raised, and they've been raised with the important people, the strategic people, and it just bothers me that important issues like what we're talking about are not actually filtering through. And part***

***of me thinks is that fundamental to good service is that people actually working in the front line, in the sharp end, ought to be up to speed with what the needs of the LGB and T community are.'***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, August 2012)

While in this meeting James continued to construct high-level workers as 'important' and suggests that the problem is still with LGBT equalities issues 'not actually filtering through' to them, he also asserted the importance of workers 'in the front line'. Indeed, moving away from his initial statement, James proceeds to construct front-line workers as 'fundamental to good service' which suggests a shift away from concentrating on accessing high-level workers as the key to progressing LGBT equalities. This shift in fact culminates from a number of discussions throughout the LGBT Equalities Forum in which mid- and low-level public sector workers were positioned as doing significant work. Data from forum meetings reveals that despite suggestions that workers such as Lara and Aisha 'can't do anything', there were numerous examples in the LGBT Equalities Forum meetings of them pushing forward initiatives considered important in implementing LGBT equalities:

***James – 'I think <organisation name> is blessed in a way, in that Mary is kind of senior in the management structure and she's got a keen eye to it, and that's a good example, I think, of how an organisation is meeting the needs of LGBT people.'***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, June 2012)

***James – ‘Grace’s been extensively involved in consultation; I’ve never met anyone so extensively involved in LGBT consultation, absolutely. She’s beavering away. Nobody else is doing anything quite like her.’***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, January 2011)

Mary’s work in her organisation has led to it being considered an excellent example of how to meet ‘the needs of LGBT people’ – indeed, her organisation was the most well-regarded organisation in terms of LGBT-friendliness in the LGBT Equalities online questionnaire. Meanwhile James describes Grace’s work as positively ground-breaking – ‘nobody else is doing anything quite like her’. Far from being powerless, then, mid-level public sector workers can be seen to work to further LGBT equalities. Similarly, while Lara said that she ‘can’t do anything’ above, in recorded meetings of the LGBT Equalities Forum James described her using her position in her organisation to bypass senior figures and push forward desired initiatives – specifically, the raising of a rainbow flag over a public authority building:

***James – ‘<authority name> did it this year. And we had to push to do it. An interesting development in [this authority] is the politicians hadn’t agreed it. It was [Lara’s] decision, “We’ll tell them afterwards!” <laughter> Which I think was a brave decision! There’s no going back now though.’***

***Researcher 1 – ‘Well that’s it, if they don’t do it next year everyone’ll go <dramatic gasp!>’ <general laughter>***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, June 2012)

Raising a rainbow flag in this way was considered an important and 'brave' act, and it is clear from James' comments that it is Lara herself who is considered by LGBT community members to be key in pushing forward what they perceive to be important - and over the heads of the 'politicians'. This discussion offers an interesting and important challenge to discourses of the clear public sector hierarchies formerly referenced by Aisha, as well as the constructed powerful top-level workers. Firstly, James raises an additional factor which complicates the imagined vertical hierarchy - 'politicians' who are not themselves employees of the public sector, and who are here proposed as the relevant gatekeepers of public sector actions instead of high level public sector workers (see Monro 2010:1000; Richardson & Monro 2012:165-171). In addition, James suggests not only resistance to such hierarchies but the ability of Lara to circumvent them, making the decision to fly the rainbow flag and then 'tell[ing] them afterwards'. This points to the state, performatively constituted through workers such as Lara and those others involved in the raising of the rainbow flag, as internally contested, but also hybridised with LGBT communities and community groups as suggested by James' use of 'we had to push to do it', indicating that the 'we' were felt to be part of the process of raising the flag while 'politicians' were not. But while James' discourse implies an opposition to 'them', the 'them' here is not a unified state or the local authority in question- this discussion rather suggests ways in which the state and public sector organisations are actively mobilised through the performances of mid- and low-level workers to engage in LGBT equalities work in spite of perceived hierarchies of power, and in ways which demonstrate the hybridities of public sector organisations and LGBT community groups. As Cooper has argued, what is perceived as resistance to power is itself an expression of power (Cooper 1995:11-12) - we can therefore understand this less as a situation of 'resistance within' and more one in which the state is performed in multiple and often conflicting ways through the everyday actions

of its workers, as well as those hybridised with it through the possibilities of partnership work. As well as being complicit in the production of these perceived vertical public sector hierarchies, then, LGBT equalities work can also contest them.

While mid-level workers are denigrated as lacking power at times, it seems clear that they can and do work to push forward key initiatives while building trust and good will with local LGBT communities. This includes taking part in partnership work such as the LGBT Equalities Forum's PAR projects. The voices of mid-level workers are not entirely absent from research on public sector equalities work (see Cooper 1994; Carabine & Monro 2004; Browne 2012; Ahmed 2012), and Miller and Rose have pointed out the often overlooked importance of such 'small figures, with their own aspirations as well as those foisted upon them, together with their little instruments' in re/producing states and associated public sectors (Miller & Rose 2008:5). My research builds on this literature by highlighting the potentially important roles they play in partnership work aimed at progressive public sector LGBT equalities, which may in fact go beyond the vaunted abilities of senior leaders and productive alliances with whom may be considerably easier to achieve. It also asserts, contra Miller and Rose (*ibid.*), that this is not a matter of such workers' 'own aspirations' at odds with 'those foisted upon them', but a more complicated entanglement of various hybrid positions and subjectivities emerging and performed through mid-level public sector workers. At the same time, the everyday performances of the state and the public sector through workers such as those attending the LGBT Equalities Forum highlights the multifarious nature of the poststructural state, which can enact potentially progressive LGBT equalities not as a matter of resistance but of fragmented state power hybridised with that of local LGBT communities and community groups.

### **5.3.3 – Evidence and the ‘Will Not/To Know’**

At the same time as partnership work between the public sector and local communities has become prominent, the perceived need for public sector work to be led by ‘evidence’ has become clearer (Browne et al 2012:207; Clarke & Glendinning 2002:41; Haynes 2001:270). Browne, Bakshi and Lim put it bluntly – ‘service providers need statistical evidence’ (Browne et al 2012:217). This feature of contemporary public sector work also emerges clearly from this research – indeed, this was one of the reasons behind the design of the LGBT Equalities Forum’s own research projects. However, I demonstrate that the production of such evidence in spaces of partnership such as the LGBT Equalities Forum is tied closely to problematic distinctions drawn between the state, public sector organisations, LGBT communities and LGBT community groups. I also show how resulting discourses surrounding evidence can stonewall public sector engagements with LGBT needs – specifically, I examine what is said to count as appropriate or valid evidence, particularly with regard to discursive dis/identifications already detailed in this chapter such as perceived organisational hierarchies and geographic imaginings of ‘the local’. I also explore ways in which discussions of evidence and the validity of data foreground the complicated, porous and often hybrid nature of public sector and LGBT community engagements in partnership work. Finally, I show how not only the evidence produced through partnership work such as the LGBT Equalities Forum, but also the processes and discussions behind such hybrid modes of evidence production, can enact progressive possibilities for LGBT equalities work.

Representatives from public sector organisations were clear about the perceived need for evidence in order to produce identifiable ‘problems’ in the first place, without which work to engage in LGBT equalities issues cannot take place:

***Researcher 1 – ‘It’s weird because it almost sounds like communities, a community group such as HRRA has to prove that there’s a need to get the funding to meet that need.’***

***Jamie and James – ‘Yes.’***

***Lara – ‘But we have to, that’s how we do it.’***

***Grace – ‘Absolutely everything has to be evidence based.’***

***Lara – ‘We can’t do a project without proving there’s a need now. I can’t apply for money anywhere.’***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, August 2012)

The focus on proving that there is a need by providing evidence here is perceived by both community (James and Jamie) and public sector (Grace and Lara) representatives.

Interestingly, Lara also positions herself as having to demonstrate ‘need’, suggesting that the situation is more complex than my original comment in the excerpt suggests. Lara does not question that particular needs in local LGBT communities exist – instead, just like James and Jamie, she sees herself as also having to ‘prove’ this to other areas of the state, setting up a metaphorical distance between her and these other areas through ‘anywhere’. Rather than simply functioning as part of a unified state institution to which separate LGBT community groups must apply for funding, then, Lara’s use of ‘we’ implies state actors performing to one another for various purposes, and in fact Lara’s position as a petitioner for funding, as well as her apparent acceptance that such needs exist despite not having been ‘proved’, appears close to that of James and Jamie.

However, through response to my original quote as Researcher 1 in the meeting, it also seems clear that Jamie and James feel that it is down to community groups like HRRAs to provide the appropriate evidence. Anything which is not currently constructed as a 'need' through the complex and contested processes of a fragmented public sector necessarily will not be tackled. Therefore if there is an LGBT need which communities or community groups such as HRRAs have identified, but which public services have not identified, it seems down to the community to formally 'prove' the need using particular forms of evidence. This seems to point to a vicious circle for LGBT communities and community groups who wish to have particular needs or issues tackled - because there is no evidence, no resources will be released to meet the needs, and because there are no resources no work can be undertaken to provide evidence. Making LGBT communities responsible for the provision of evidence could therefore be seen as a technique of governance through which the state, here performed through public sector organisations, works to delimit its own responsibilities while retaining elements of control over supposedly devolved responsibilities (Cooper & Monro 2003; Cooper 2006; Milbourne & Cushman 2013:20).

However, it is not only the case that evidence must be provided in order for LGBT needs and issues to be addressed through the public sector. In their work on LGBT community / public sector partnership work in Brighton, Browne, Bakshi and Lim highlight the fact that evidence must take specific forms in order to be judged valid by public sector gatekeepers (Browne et al 2012). This desire for specific forms of data was also clear in my own research, but the ways in which data was imagined as valid or appropriate emerged from a variety of often inconsistent or contested discursive shifts involving social and geographic framings. For example, in a meeting in May 2012, Aaron, representing an NHS organisation, noted two ways in which the data produced through the LGBT Equalities Questionnaire could be considered more acceptable by his organisation. This meeting centred around discussion of data which had at this stage had already been gathered through the questionnaire. First,



Aaron notes the perceived importance of comparable data, particularly between LGBT and non-LGBT populations:

***Aaron – ‘It would be nice if we could have some harmonisation between the categorisation and how things are diagnosed more medically and what the responses are here, so we’re not comparing apples and pears at the end of it. So we can see this is the underlying population in East Sussex, and then this is what LGBT people experience.’***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, May 2012)

Here data produced is considered more valid if there is ‘harmonisation’ between data already gathered in Aaron’s organisation, particularly in terms of it being ‘medically’ comparable and in being able to compare the ‘underlying population’ with ‘LGBT people’. This would appear to bear out the idea that the particular cultures of different public sector organisations can work to delimit ‘more valid’ types of data, which should conform to organisationally-specific forms in order to be judged valid. Later in the May 2012 meeting, Aaron suggests that an additional type of data could be considered particularly desirable in demonstrating validity:

***Aaron – ‘What helps is to have East Sussex information and not to rely on something which you can say oh ‘cause it’s London or Manchester that produced it, whatever, to have something local.’***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, May 2012)

Geographic imaginaries of the 'local' here emerge as an additional validating factor.

Scholars have written about the tendency of government and public sector organisations to articulate simplistic discourses of 'the local' as something unified and coherent and not subject to internal inequalities or conflict, neglecting the effects of globalisation and the complex spatialities of social processes (Featherstone et al 2012:178; Goodwin & Painter 1996:636-637; Painter et al 2011). Here Aaron appears to draw on such a simplified discourse of the local, while simultaneously pointing towards its perceived power to validate evidence. While local research may be able to offer a more nuanced look at area-specific LGBT issues, this neglects not only the divisions and conflicts within local communities (not to mention questions of who, what and where constitutes 'the local'), but also the fact that there may be a great deal of excellent foregoing research in other areas which may highlight similar needs. However, discussions within the LGBT Equalities Forum also reveal that, paradoxically, local research itself may be dismissed in favour of competing 'local' research:

***Lara – 'We even tried to show them what's in their local area, you know how many, what the population is in their local area. What is suspected in different, you know, nationalities, all that sort of stuff in the area. But what I'm saying is they still will go back to that wonderful census.'***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, November 2010)

While the census produces local results (and could thus in some ways be considered 'local research'), for Lara's organisation it is seen to occupy a superior level of validity or

importance by her organisation compared to the other local evidence she has put forward. This indicates that some forms of 'local research' are considered more valid than other by public sector organisations, with the implication that some work may be stonewalled if it is not perceived to meet a sufficient level of validity. With regard to sexualities and gender identities, this seems particularly important because the 2011 census did not ask questions or produce data regarding sexualities or gender identities – and yet Lara still suggests that it is the census which her organisation 'will go back to'. Multiple and conflicting geographic imaginaries can therefore be seen to impact on the evidencing of public sector LGBT equalities work. In this quote Lara also synthesises discourses of evidence and validity with the perceived institutional hierarchies previously explored in Section 3.2 of this chapter, suggesting that 'they' operate as a means of firewalling LGBT equalities work through validating only particular forms of evidence. The variable de/valuation of both local and national forms of evidence suggest that both public sector workers and LGBT community groups may struggle to manage the variable expectations of fragmented public sector organisations. In a later meeting Aisha developed this synthesis of discourses of valid evidence and of perceived institutional hierarchies:

***Aisha – 'What's important is that we think about who will be getting those messages. 'Cause if it's just us, it will be preaching to the people that are on board already. I want people like my chief exec, the head of policy, you know those people in the room, to listen to this and say OK these are our services they're talking about, this research is concrete, it's been done with people on the ground.'***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, March 2011)

Aisha describes her organisation in a hierarchical manner, where senior leaders understand that partnership work is addressing 'our services'. The 'people on the ground' refers to local LGBT communities and individuals and appears to once again draw on a fetishized understanding of the local as constructing a particular form of validity, while the partnership process of research is again separated through use of the word 'they' and an emphasis on the fact that the research was done 'with' [ie. not 'by'] the 'people on the ground'. Aisha herself, along with the other public sector representatives in the forum, is identified as someone 'on board already' – in other words, Aisha positions herself as not the person who has to be 'convinced' by the data. Spaces of partnership work are therefore constructed by Aisha as interposing spaces through which services and communities are separated, but which are nevertheless also separate from 'our services' and 'the people in the ground'. The validating statement that 'this research is concrete' is backed up through the connection to 'the people on the ground'. This recognition of the importance and validity of embedded 'ground'-level knowledge and expertise is intimately connected with partnership work, but as Mayo and Taylor have argued, within most partnership frameworks it can only be recognised as valid knowledge from 'above', eg. from public service representatives (Mayo & Taylor 2001). In fact Aisha links this validating power to high level public sector workers such as the 'chief exec' or 'head of policy', drawing on the discourses identified above in Section 3.2 and indicating how such discourses can operate in multiple ways through partnership work. This suggests an element of greater complexity to the critique made by Mayo and Taylor – it may not actually be the public sector workers actually engaged in the partnership work who must validate any data or evidence, or at least their acceptance of its validity is contingent on how other workers, higher up the hierarchy, perceive it. As Richardson and Monro have noted, it is vital to bear in mind the social and institutional constraints which public sector workers with an equalities remit must operate within, in terms of capacity, resources and institutional character (Richardson

& Monro 2012:129). Spaces of partnership work can therefore be seen to reveal that issues of demonstrating 'validity' are complicated by the kinds of multiple dis/identifications which emerged in Section 3.1 and Section 3.2 of this chapter. Public sector representatives engaged in partnership work and present in such spaces are therefore not simply gatekeepers to whom validity must be proven. They can be seen as occupying this role but at the same time are themselves positioned similarly to LGBT community representatives trying to demonstrate 'need'. Partnership work functions not as an interposing space between a distinct public sector and LGBT community, therefore, but as a space through which the overlaps and porosity of the two are revealed through the very discourses which attempt to separate them.

This 'will not to know' and the institutional managing of LGBT equalities work theorised by Cooper and Monro appears to emerge elsewhere in discussions surrounding evidence within the data. However, self-identified public sector representatives in the LGBT Equalities Forum challenged proposed demands for more or 'more valid' evidence, belying the idea of a unified organisational act. For example, in the following excerpt Julian, representing a public sector organisation, compares research and the need for evidence of local LGBT need to Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) mental health research:

***Julian - 'We've talked about BME mental health and LGBT mental health. We've had 30 years of research and academia around BME mental health prevalence, but very little action. And actually the last thing we want to be doing is more of this stuff in Hastings. 'Cause I guess that experiences here are going to be the same, at best, or worse than the findings in Brighton & Hove, so why spend another 2 years and a lot of money and time doing that? When actually we should be looking at service improvements and experience improvements.'***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, March 2011)

Here Julian's comparison raises crucial issues with gathering 'evidence'. With regard to BME mental health there has been '30 years of research and academia' with 'very little action'. Julian questions the desire to perform a piece of local research, or indeed any further research at all. His comments reveal that despite a very large accumulation of evidence, 'action' still may not be taken to address the problems so evidenced. This raises an important challenge to discourses of evidence and the perceived hierarchies (with powerful high level public sector workers) which can operate in tandem with them – even if the 'right evidence' is given to the 'right people', Julian suggests that 'action' may still not be taken to further LGBT equalities. Sarah Ahmed has described the multiple ways in which 'action' can be stymied at an institutional level, so that 'a policy decision when made by the right people, in the right place using the right words can still not be recognised by those within an institution as a commitment' (Ahmed 2012:126) – Julian suggests that 'using the right evidence' can be an important additional to the construction and implementation of policy decisions, but which also will not necessarily result in progressive action and which may in fact operate to delay or displace such action (see McMillin 2012). To develop his criticisms, Julian deploys a discursive strategy which draws on geographic imaginaries of nearby Brighton & Hove (see Chapter 4 Section 2.2). As the so-called 'gay capital' of the UK (Browne & Bakshi, 2011; Browne & Lim, 2010), the implication is that problems identified in research on LGBT Brighton will be equally or even more acute elsewhere. Following Julian's argument, since research on LGBT lives and needs has already been undertaken in Brighton in the form of the Count Me In Too project (Browne 2007), further research in East Sussex is unnecessary. While Julian did deploy a relatively simplistic 'local' geographic framing which erased differences and inequalities across East Sussex, this was precisely in order to stymie evidence-based firewalls operating across public sector organisations which demand more or more specific evidence.

Julian aimed to use his argument to bypass a perceived burden on local LGBT communities to provide evidence, challenging the 'will not to know' by building on near-local evidence inflected with specific geographic imaginaries, highlighting that local geographies of sexualities and gender identities are of importance when considering evidence provision for public sector LGBT equalities. In Julian's discussion of BME mental health research, it is worth considering that Julian is himself a BME man working for an organisation with a mental health remit, and also identifies as a gay man and is thus also part of East Sussex's LGBT communities. Therefore his challenge to the evidence-based firewall he perceives draws out the multiple intersections which are part of the hybrid possibilities emerging through but also extending beyond spaces of partnership work. This research highlights multiple ways in which public sector organisations in East Sussex are revealed to be internally contested and hybridised across sectors and beyond sectors through the complex negotiations involved in their accessing/producing/validating knowledge. Through a poststructural concept of the state and public sector institutions as fluid and multiply-performed through embodied LGBT-identified actors such as Julian and Mary, as well as non-LGBT actors such as Lara, we can understand public sector organisations to be **already** hybrid and capable of performing in ways which contest evidence-based firewalls which emerge through other state and institutional performances. The hybridities uncovered and emerging through partnership work in turn expand our understandings of the institutional 'will not to know' as formulated by Cooper and Monro - the multiply-identifying participants in the forum, especially those involved in the development of the forum's Participatory Action Research projects, had a very clear 'will **to** know' and could perform at odds with the public sector organisations they represented and in hybrid alignments with local LGBT communities, even while remaining complicit in aspects of organisational governance. The 'will to knowledge' then is performed in multiple contested ways and hybridised through the context, development, implementation, analysis and dissemination

of the forum's research projects. Understanding such hybridities also opens up new ways of engaging with Anne Phillips 'politics of presence' (Phillips 1995) alluded to in Section 3.2 of this chapter. Rather than relying on a critical mass of LGBT community partners involved in public sector work for LGBT equalities and hoping that their voices will eventually be heard, a politics of (LGBT) presence can instead be understood to extend beyond these spaces of partnership and include those, such as Julian and Mary, working within public sector organisations.

Finally, the production of evidence is of course not just the province of local LGBT communities or cross-sectoral partnership working – here I show how evidence and statistics provided **by** public sector organisations to LGBT communities, as well as other public sector organisations involved in LGBT equalities work, can raise 'firewalls' (Cooper 2006), retarding engagement with LGBT equalities and warding off challenges which may be potentially damaging to the organisation's performances of LGBT equality. For example, the following discussion refers to the evidence base for new hate crime reporting procedures in East Sussex, and the team which coordinates the multi-agency system:

***James – 'The other thing is, the current system is unable to produce statistics.***

***It's not. You ask them and they say "Ah, we haven't got them".'***

***Lara – 'Well I've just asked... for it and I had an inspector actually email me and said "Are you happy with the hate crime?" And I said that actually I would like to have the data for the last quarter of what areas have been reported, what the numbers are. And I'm still waiting now. I've had nothing... [My manager] said that even at their thematic meetings, the bigger ones, they haven't had statistics for some time, or they'll give them statistics as they have in the past,***



***they'll hand it out in the meeting. And it's not good enough because they haven't had a chance to look at it.'***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, August 2012)

Here James and Lara describe ways in which organisations can set up 'firewalls' to manage the release of data and statistics. Techniques of governance here include saying that the system cannot get the statistics; not getting back to people who ask for them; and giving statistics 'in the meeting' without time for analysis. These techniques mean that 'evidence' here functions not as a means of identifying need, but of managing local work on LGBT hate crime and abuse – numerous discussions within the LGBT Equalities Forum suggested wide-ranging concerns with the hate crime reporting service and the troubling lack of clarity surrounding its functions. It is clear from this excerpt, as well as the wider discussion from which it is taken, that in this case the firewall functioned in a similar way for both LGBT communities and public sector workers like Lara. Forum participants appeared united in anger and frustration with this situation:

***Researcher 1 – 'Now we were hearing that because it's multi agency reporting, correct me if I'm wrong, but because it's multi agency reporting the statistics are not considered comparable across agencies?'***

***Grace – 'Yes there's always that problem.'***

***Graham – 'That's what they keep telling us.'***

*Lara – ‘There are statistics, because originally it was a high risk and now it’s gone to medium because they didn’t have many people doing the high risk. It’s like fighting with the tide about it... I can’t understand that at all.’*

*Grace – ‘God I’m getting so frustrated just sitting here!’*

*<general laughter>*

*James – ‘I know!’*

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, August 2012)

Graham and James, both representing local community groups, express their agreement with the problems Grace identifies (‘That’s what they keep telling us’) and also her personal feelings emerging from the situation (‘I’m getting so frustrated just sitting here!’). Within the space of partnership work, discursive links occur which draw connections between the positions of self-identified public sector and community representatives – indeed, they appear to occupy similar political as well as emotional positions in opposition to a separate public sector agency (the local hate crime reporting service). Therefore the ‘firewall’ generated through data and evidence here actually works to reveal the contestations and instabilities of the local public sector and the operation of institutional power throughout it, but also reveals the LGBT Equalities Forum to be a space of hybridisation where participants construct discursive links between their political and affective positions with regard to public sector LGBT equalities. Grace emphasises the importance of the space of the LGBT Equalities Forum drawing out this hybridisation – she is getting frustrated ‘just sitting here’ – but these hybridities emerging through this partnership work are clearly not limited to the space of forum itself, but are also taking place within the everyday working spaces of workers like Lara and Grace, and are constructed through feelings of ‘frustration’

and opposition to particular state manifestations regarding local public sector LGBT equalities work.

#### **5.4 – Conclusion to The Hybrid Possibilities of Partnership Work for LGBT Equalities in East Sussex**

This chapter suggests an important revision to literature on hybridities emerging from public sector / community partnership work, as well as geographies of LGBT equalities. Much of this literature focuses on how community and voluntary organisations are made complicit and hybrid with the state through partnership with it (Andrucki & Elder 2007; Billis 2010a; Brandsen, van de Donk & Putters 2005; Gutierrez, Baquenado-Lopez & Tejada 1999; Howard & Taylor 2010; Hutchinson & Cairns 2010; Seddon et al 2004). Through the data gathered from the LGBT Equalities Forum, it is clear that public sector organisations are also hybridised through the multiple, shifting dis/identifications of their workers who enact and embody the organisations on a day to day basis.

Hybrid identifications of public sector workers are not limited to the actual spaces of partnership either – that is, for example, the bimonthly meetings of the LGBT Equalities forum or the events it organised. This is a common assumption in literature surrounding this kind of partnership work, and here perhaps a more nuanced geographic understanding of space could be used to augment this literature. Public sector workers could be seen to identify with local LGBT communities and community groups, disidentify with or critique their respective public sector organisations, and engage in work for local LGBT equalities which was perceived as ‘above and beyond the call of duty’. The LGBT Equalities Forum was therefore not only a physical but also an imagined space, with the connections and shared experiences of this space extending beyond the walls of meeting rooms and event halls,

and back into the buildings and spaces of the local public sector organisations. This would appear to belie the assumption of otherwise 'pure' sectors free from hybridity (Andrucki & Elder 2007; Billis 2010a; Billis 2010b; Brandsen, van de Donk & Putters 2005; Gutierrez, Baquenado-Lopez & Tejada 1999; Hutchinson & Cairns 2010; Seddon et al 2004; Skelcher 2012), with hybridity consequently being limited to partnership spaces such as the LGBT Equalities Forum. Instead, if we accept poststructural understandings of the state (Brown 1995: 174; Browne & Bakshi 2013: 108; Cooper 1994; Cooper 1995; Cooper & Monro 2003: 240; Mitchell 1991; Painter 2000: 361; Painter 2006; Passoth & Rowland 2010: 825-826; Sorensen 2004: 167; Smith 2009: 100-101) as fluid, incoherent and internally contested, with ambiguous and porous boundaries, and (most importantly) performed through 'countless day-to-day practices in a specific context' (Skelcher 2012), then the multiple and contested discursive dis/identifications detailed above suggest that public sector organisations **are already hybridised**. Spaces of partnership work such as the LGBT Equalities Forum may therefore re/produce hybridities or draw attention to them, but they cannot be said to entirely produce them ex nihilo. In turn, such hybridities can be seen to challenge discourses of partnership working as necessarily problematic or co-optive (Seddon et al 2004) with regard to LGBT communities and community groups, and to reveal new possibilities emerging from discourses of perceived institutional hierarchies and evidence-based firewalls. Understanding hybridity to extend beyond a fixed partnership working space reveals the productive potential of hybridised and multiply-performed public sector organisations.

## **Chapter 6 – The Duties and Subjects of LGBT Equalities**

### **6.1 – Introduction to The Duties and Subjects of LGBT Equalities**

In this final analysis chapter, my intention is to explore how concepts of LGBT ‘equality’, particularly with regard to sexualities and gender identities, were constructed and deployed through the discussions and partnership research of the LGBT Equalities Forum for Hastings, Rother and East Sussex. In doing this I aim to tackle a surprising gap in the overlapping academic literatures which engage with LGBT equalities. As shown in Chapter 2 Sections 4.1 and 4.5, studies of LGBT equalities have tended to rest on ‘equality’ as a given without exploring its discursive character (see Monro 2010; Richardson 2005); conversely, normative constructions and deployments of ‘equality’ are explored in some detail through wider literatures surrounding LGBT politics and sexual citizenship (see Duggan 1994; Duggan 2003; Spade 2011; Stychin 2000; Stychin 2003). However I also demonstrated that this literature rarely engages with how ‘equality’ emerges through the embodied performances and discourses of state and public sector actors (for some notable exceptions see Cooper 2004 and Monro 2005). Furthermore, as Lawrence Knopp has pointed out, most LGBT equality-based politics is seen to operate in cities and urban areas (Knopp 1998). In this chapter I address these gaps, adding to the growing literature surrounding geographies of sexualities by situating this work on LGBT equalities in rural and non-urban East Sussex, as well as research which examines the contemporary UK political climate of ‘austerity’ and the Big Society – scholars engaging with the Big Society have tended to do so through the lens of wealth and class rather than sexualities and gender identities (see Bednarek 2011; Chaney 2012; Lister 2011; North 2011). This chapter then builds on disparate but connected and overlapping literatures, drawing them together to highlight and engage with current gaps in knowledge regarding public sector LGBT equalities in an era of austerity.

In the first part of the chapter I explore discursive deployments of 'equality' regarding the public sector, which were developed by members of the LGBT Equalities Forum as well as some respondents to the online questionnaire. I connect these constructions of equality to broader literatures surrounding equality in the current political climate, and to the Equality Act 2010. This Act (passed under New Labour but implemented under the Liberal Democrat / Conservative coalition government) sought to unify foregoing equalities-related legislation in the UK, and crucially introduced three 'equality duties' for most public sector bodies which for the purposes of this thesis I label duties A, B and C respectively:

- Equality Duty A: the duty to 'eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act' (Crown 2010: 149:1a);
- Equality Duty B: the duty to 'advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it' (Crown 2010: 149:1b);
- Equality Duty C: the duty to 'foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it' (Crown 2010: 149:1c).

As Conley notes, this approach which gives public sector bodies actively duties to fulfil presents an unusual shift away from the framework of individual citizens claiming their rights which usually characterises LGBT-related equalities legislation (Conley 2012). Using data gathered from the LGBT Equalities Forum and the online questionnaire, I demonstrate that the most common constructions of 'equality' map comparatively easily onto Equality Duties A and B, and are grounded in the theory and discourse of political liberalism. The duty to 'foster good relations' per Duty C, however, emerged as an area of some confusion

– I argue that this duty can suggest more expansive and inclusive constructions of ‘equality’, implicating a wider variety of subjects into LGBT equalities as a political project and challenging the liberal underpinnings of public sector LGBT equalities work in the UK as well as critiques of equality which align it with a politics of assimilation. Following on from this, I devote the second part of this chapter to exploring the subjects of equality as constructed through the LGBT Equalities Forum and with reference to the era of ‘austerity’ and the ‘Big Society’ within which the forum operated. While highlighting problematic subjectifications which connect equality to neoliberal modes of responsibility to the self and to the state via discourses of citizenship, I also demonstrate that multiple and slippery discourses of equality can offer progressive potentials when incorporating the wider array of subjects implied by Equality Duty C, as demonstrated by the work and the discourses of the LGBT Equalities Forum for Hastings, Rother and East Sussex. Rather than aiming to unearth or theorise a ‘true’ form of equality, then, I suggest that the very problematic fluidity of the term identified by scholars (Baker et al 2009; Beteille 1986; Daniel 1997:11; Hajdin 2001; Wilson 1993:171-172) means it can also be used productively – and indeed was being used productively (building on my work in Chapter 5 on the productive possibilities of partnership hybridities) through the LGBT Equalities Forum. The insights regarding the construction and deployment of equality within this diverse partnership context can be seen to challenge assumptions of public sector LGBT equalities as relating only or primarily to a politics of liberal assimilation (Blasius 2001:7; Duggan 2003; Richardson 2005; Robinson 2012; Stychin 2003; Warner 1993; Wilson 1997). In this way I also suggest a way beyond the politics of strategic equality essentialism (see Chapter 2 Section 2.2) through which we might imagine an ‘essential’ equality to work with (strategically), as my research clearly refutes the idea of an ‘essential’ or true equality, and instead engages with precisely its lack of any essential character as being key to its progressive political utility.

## **6.2 – Discursive Constructions of ‘Equality’ Through the LGBT Equalities Forum for Hastings, Rother and East Sussex**

Throughout the three years of forum meetings, ‘equality’ was understandably a subject raised regularly by forum participants, not only in terms of attempting to explain or define equality, but also through everyday language and discussions of the forum’s processes. Here I show how these discourses of equality emerging from the forum and its research can be seen to connect to Equality Duty A through associations with ‘discrimination’, and Equality Duty B through ‘equality of opportunity’. These constructions of equality (as a matter of discrimination or opportunity) were common and appeared relatively unproblematic for those invoking or discussing them. I then reveal how equality discourses connected to Equality Duty C also emerged, but in more complex and contested ways. Forum members and questionnaire participants – who were asked their opinions on the Equality Act 2010 and its associated public sector equality duties – regularly connected LGBT equality with ‘discrimination’. This was not simply a matter of association – rather, some forum members actively defined equality in these terms:

***Karen – ‘Equality is about eliminating discrimination of every type.’***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, September 2011)

Karen’s short statement here makes equality synonymous with eliminating discrimination – in her view that is what equality ‘is about’. This statement came at the end of a wider forum discussion surrounding other ways in which LGBT equalities could be explored, particularly surrounding the ‘foster good relations’ wording of Equality Duty C. Therefore it



seems important that Karen should round off this discussion by drawing it back to a construction of equality as a matter of eliminating discrimination – while her reference to ‘of every type’ appears to connect with the discussion surrounding ‘fostering good relations’ from the foregoing discussion, she appears to reassert the primacy of equality as a matter of discrimination by drawing ‘every type’ under its aegis. Other public sector workers pointed to the importance of ‘discrimination’ as a defining element of equality through their discussions of their roles as public sector equality professionals. In the following excerpt, Julian and Lara explore how ‘equality’ constructs their roles, and vice versa:

***Julian – ‘My job is as an E&D advisor, manager, whatever. And... if you’ve got some kind of role, the role is actually advising of the risk of not doing it because the way court cases work is, as a public sector body we have to prove we haven’t discriminated against...’***

***Lara – ‘The local council is a totally different [equalities worker] role. I can advise, I can say this is your legal duty, if not this is discrimination.’***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, March 2011)

In this excerpt, Julian and Lara both connect identifying discrimination as key to their role as public sector equalities workers. Interestingly, Lara attempts to distinguish between Julian’s role and her own role within a local authority – however, her response replicates much of Julian’s discourse surrounding ‘advising’, legality (‘court cases’ vs ‘legal duty’) and, crucially, pointing out ‘discrimination’ as key to the role of public sector workers with equalities responsibilities. Karen’s open construction, as well as the institutional discourse

deployed by Julian and Lara, points to a significant discursive connection and blurring between LGBT 'equality' and 'discrimination' within public sector LGBT equalities work.

Not only LGBT Equalities Forum participants, but also local LGBT respondents to the online questionnaire appeared to deploy discourses of 'discrimination' as well as 'equality of opportunity' with regard to public sector LGBT equalities work. When asked whether legislation such as the Equality Act 2010 and its associated public sector equality duties (which had already been listed for respondents) were felt to be important, respondents frequently answered with reference to 'discrimination':

- ***Yes, I think it is important to prescribe in law that people should not be discriminated against on the grounds of sexuality. (#36)***
- ***I think the legislation is important for me. Even though it has helped the human rights of for example trans people, there is still a long way to go. I don't think equality exists currently, but moreover I think the application of the legislation is the issue and how it can be applied to challenge existing institutional discrimination. (#139)***

Both respondent #36 and respondent #139 focused on 'discrimination' as the key element which the Equality Act 2010 should tackle. The data gathered through the LGBT Equalities Forum indicates strongly that there is an important discursive blurring between 'equality' and 'discrimination', strengthened through professionalised public sector roles through which the practice of equality is a matter of eliminating discrimination. These discourses appear to map easily onto Equality Duty A, the public sector equality duty to 'eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation'.

Equality Duty B refers to advancing 'equality of opportunity' for LGBT people. While this particular phrasing was used less consistently by forum participants and questionnaire respondents than 'discrimination', some did still refer to it. This respondent, for example, answers to explain what they feel the Equality Act 2010 is for:

- ***Promote equality of opportunity for all and value the diverse nature of our society. (#66)***

Here it is this 'equality of opportunity' which takes centre stage, rather than 'discrimination' which goes unmentioned. However it was more common within the data for the idea of 'promoting' or 'advancing' equality and 'discrimination' to be deployed in discursive tandem in the construction of LGBT equalities:

***Julian – 'We've stepped forward massively in promoting equality which is our basic duty, and challenging discrimination, and now let's work with you to see what across the board are your main priorities.'***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, March 2011)

The subjectivities deployed by Julian here point to a particular construction of public sector LGBT equalities which draw on the Equality Act 2010. The 'we'/'you' distinction sets up a separate public sector organisation (or public sector more generally), while the 'you' posits a distinct LGBT community. 'Promoting equality' and 'challenging discrimination' are put forward as 'our' duties, while a presumably different set of 'main priorities' are ascribed to

the LGBT community. Together with his discursive drawing of these two activities into the public sector sphere, Julian also appears to draw on the discourse of the Equality Act through reference to the ‘duties’ as well as sharing the language of ‘promoting equality’ (Equality Duty B) and ‘discrimination’ (Equality Duty C). This makes it all the more interesting that Julian notably does **not** reference Equality Duty C, the duty to ‘foster good relations’. This peculiar absence could also be seen when questionnaire respondents drew on the discourses of the public sector equality duties – for example this respondent, when asked whether the Equality Act 2010 and its associated duties were important, replied:

- ***To protect against discrimination and promote equality.*** (#29)

Once again we see discursive links to Equality Duties A and B respectively, but the language of Equality Duty C is not drawn upon. Amongst both forum participants and questionnaire respondents, then, we can see that while Equality Duties A and (to a lesser extent) B appear to have broad discursive currency to the point where they can be deployed side-by-side as the ‘duties’ of the public sector – this is perhaps unsurprising given the broadly liberal underpinnings of equality as understood in both the US and UK today (Cooper 2004:69; Duggan 1994; Duggan 2003; Brown 2009:1499; Lister 2011:6; Monro 2005:74-79; Richardson 2005; Spade 2011) and the fact that discrimination and equality of opportunity have been central concepts within liberal theorisation of equality (Dworkin 1981b; Douglas & Devins 1998; Oomen 2002:46; Van Dyke 1990:35). However Equality Duty C’s mandate to ‘foster good relations’ seems to have less traction. This can be seen through findings from the forum’s online questionnaire, which asked respondents whether they felt local public sector organisations were meeting each of the three equality duties. These findings are

shown in Table 5. While all three duties returned ‘Don’t Know’ answers most strongly, public sector equality duty A regarding discrimination, harassment and victimisation was felt to be upheld by almost a third of respondents to the question (32%, n. 29); B regarding the promotion of equality of opportunity felt to be upheld by 19% (n. 17); and C regarding fostering good relations felt to be upheld by only 15% (n. 13) of respondents to this question. This suggests that public sector organisations are seen to face particular problems in demonstrating compliance with Equality Duty C, and/or that they lack understanding of what ‘fostering good relations’ might mean in the first place, a contention supported by the rest of the Mapping Exercise (see McGlynn & Browne 2011).

**Table 5 - In general, do you think your local public services are upholding the third duty<sup>11</sup> of the Equality Act with regard to LGBT people?**

<b>Equality Duty / Being Upheld</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don’t Know</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Duty A</b>	31.5% (n. 29)	19.6% (n. 18)	48.9% (n. 45)	100% (n. 92)
<b>Duty B</b>	18.7% (n. 17)	29.7% (n. 27)	51.6% (n. 47)	100% (n. 91)
<b>Duty C</b>	14.6% (n. 13)	32.6% (n. 29)	52.8% (n. 47)	100% (n. 89)

One of the most in-depth discussions of Equality Duty C within the LGBT Equalities Forum took place during the analysis of data gathered for one of the forum’s Participatory Action Research initiatives. Developing a Mapping Exercise (see McGlynn & Browne 2011) to explore how local East Sussex public sector organisations were meeting their equality duties for LGBT people, forum participants discussed the evidence provided regarding meeting Equality Duty C. One responding organisation had listed their annual participation in the Brighton Pride parade as evidence of fostering good relations between LGBT people and non-LGBT people:

<sup>11</sup> In the online questionnaire this was explicitly linked to Equality Duty C, and respondents were given a brief outline of what this duty referred to. See Appendix F for details.

***Graham – ‘You could say that it’s all anonymous isn’t it? I mean it’s people, strangers meeting other strangers. It’s not fostering, is it? Well, one day, a few hours a year.’***

***Researcher 1 – ‘I don’t think so.’***

***James – ‘No.’***

***Karen – ‘I think it suggests that the organisations don’t understand what that means. That it is good relations within different groups.’***

***Researcher 1 – ‘That is what we’ve tried to draw out of that.’***

***Graham – ‘Yeah.’***

***James – ‘And not just you going along and talking to one particular group.’***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, September 2011)

Forum participants raised a series of crucial elements to public sector engagement with Equality Duty C through this discussion. First, Graham focuses on the term ‘fostering’ and draws on the temporality of ‘one day, a few hours a year’ to suggest that ‘fostering’ requires a greater level of engagement than annual events. Next, Karen builds on Graham’s critique and suggests that ‘organisations don’t understand what that means’, pointing to a level of confusion amongst public sector organisations. James finishes by elaborating on the subjectivities involved in the evidence provided and the other participants’ discussion. He refers to the public sector organisation in question through ‘you’ and constructs this form of LGBT equalities work ‘talking to one particular group’. James critiques the

organisation's participation as part of the Brighton Pride parade, seeing this instead as a distinct public sector organisation arriving to 'talk to' LGBT people – a one-off engagement rather than developing relationships. This also serves to highlight a further confusion in this approach to Equality Duty C – should the focus be on the 'you' (ie. the public sector organisation) or, as Karen suggests, between 'different groups' presumably not necessarily including the public sector organisation itself?

The complexity of these discourses suggests a way in which 'fostering good relations' does not necessarily involve a public sector organisation as one of the key subjects, eg. those between whom good relations should be fostered. Rather, the duty may be construed such that the organisation is responsible for relationship between LGBT and non-LGBT people – indeed, this seems much closer to the original language of the Equality Act. Through this formulation, a public sector organisation's participation in Brighton Pride would then focus less on the organisation itself but on its performance in generating good feeling and understanding between the various groups present, such as LGBT and non-LGBT people.

Another example of meeting Equality Duty C was raised during a different forum meeting:

***Mary – 'A good example you could use is our human library that we had.'***

***Lara – 'Yeah that was really good!'***

***Mary – 'Two gay men participating in that, and a trans woman as well. The idea is, if I haven't told you about the human library already, is we borrow a person and you have a chat, 20 minutes in the library, someone you might not have met in your everyday life, we have all sorts of people taking part.'***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, July 2011)

The local libraries' initiative of the 'human library' was well received by forum participants. Rather than taking part in an event, here the public service organised an event specifically to facilitate discussions between different groups, 'someone you might not have met in your everyday life'. The service 'borrows' an individual but does not direct the event, as suggested through the informality of 'you have a chat', and as such this example of meeting Equality Duty C appears less as public sector engagement with LGBT people, and more as organising a space for LGBT and non-LGBT people to develop relationships and understanding.

It is understandable that such public sector engagements with the 'equality' implied through the discourses of Equality Duty C might be viewed as relating primarily to public sector organisations themselves. Literature on public sector equalities work suggests that 'business' and 'efficiency' cases for equality are common (Annesley & Gains 2013; Carabine & Monro 2004; Colgan et al 2009; Colling & Dickens 1998; Connell 2006; Dickens 1994; Duggan 2003), with equality viewed as something of benefit to the organisation itself rather than a wider relation with society. Indeed, the liberal underpinnings of LGBT equalities in the UK, particularly through constructions of a public/private divide, would imply that as a matter of changing individual minds and wider (primarily heterosexual) societal understandings of LGBT lives, Equality Duty C could be seen as escaping the bounds of public sector organisations. When asked about how local public sector services were meeting Equality Duty C, some respondents to the online questionnaire questioned whether the public sector should be responsible for such work at all:

- ***I'm not sure what they are doing or what they would be expected to do. It actually seems like a strange duty to give a local authority. (#36)***



Respondent #36 suggests a considerable amount of confusion, not only 'not sure' what action is being taken to meet Equality Duty C, but also 'not sure' what **kind** of action would be required. This confusion is cemented by referring to the duty itself as 'strange'. Other respondents expressed less confusion and more outright opposition to the idea that 'fostering good relations' might be the responsibility of public sector organisations:

- ***I don't think it is their duty. LGBT equality will only come from participation from society as a whole. (#108)***
- ***I don't know the act inside out but I think this is for people to do themselves - within families, friendship circles, communities - and services are just part of that. (#92)***

Both of these respondents construct LGBT people as more responsible for fostering these kinds of good relations between groups than public sector organisations. Respondent #108 discusses this at the level of 'society as a whole', while respondent #98 uses a more local scale of 'families, friendship circles, communities', but at both scales it is LGBT people (constructed as discursively distinct from the public sector by these respondents) who must foster their own good relations with non-LGBT people. It may be the unfamiliar presence of an apparent mandate to generate *societal* change for LGBT equalities within a *legislative* equalities framework which gives this duty the appearance of being 'strange', and which causes confusion on the part of both public services and questionnaire respondents regarding the public sector's ability to demonstrate compliance.

The deployment of these discursive boundaries around the public sector, and the construction of responsibility for fostering good relations as adhering primarily to LGBT

people, sits at odds with a widespread recognition throughout the data that it is precisely LGBT relations with non-LGBT people, particularly in terms of a wider heteronormative society, which underpins issues of discrimination and equality of opportunity. This has been understood as a matter of the ‘stigmatisation’ of minority groups (in this case LGB and/or T people) by majority groups (straight and/or cisgendered people) through pre-existing attitudes and conceptions (Cain 1991; Herek & Capitanio 1996; Herek 2004; Luhtanen 2008; Preston et al 2004), though it could also be understood as operating between one ‘minority’ group and another, such as lesbians/gay men and bisexuals (Barker et al 2012; Heath 2005; Hemmings 2002; Richardson & Monro 2012). For example, in a meeting in November 2011, James set out what he saw as an obstacle to promoting LGBT equalities work through the public sector:

***James – ‘As I was journeying through that question there, the things that were coming up for me was how are we going to get this operational? And I saw a huge void within the community about all of this, ‘cause my responses were that the culture in our area doesn’t support LGBT and T in general.’***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, November 2011)

James engages with the processes and implementation of public sector policy by questioning how to get LGBT equalities work ‘operational’; he links this directly to ‘a huge void’, strongly emphasising a perceived lack of ‘support’ for LGBT people. However, this is not linked to the public sector organisations, but rather to ‘the community’ and ‘the culture in our area’. The void, then, suggests that what is missing in implementing public sector LGBT equalities work exists outside the perceived boundaries of the public sector, and

inside 'the community'. This idea was developed by one of the online questionnaire respondents, who pointed to the role of public sector services in tackling these wider societal antipathies and normativities:

- ***At least we now have legislation to challenge any discriminatory treatment, if we have the energy and support to take up a case. But I think service providers in this area need much more training on understanding how homophobic/lesbophobic attitudes are part of the wider structure of heterosexism (which also affects heterosexual people, especially young people). Some of us also are disabled, and/or affected by racism and sexism, ageism, and attitudes in the mental health service, and in most religions. (#40)***

Respondent #40 makes distinction between tackling 'discrimination' (coded as having been achieved, though with the qualification of LGBT people's capacity and resources) and a 'wider structure of heterosexism' (coded as not achieved). In this sense tackling discrimination at an individual level, per Equality Duty A, could be seen as of less immediate importance to these individual LGBT lives than tackling these wider structures, and yet scholars have noted that it is precisely these wider structures that equality frameworks based on liberal subjectivities have the most difficulty in tackling (Ball 2003; Beteille 1986; Fraser 2001; Oomen 2002; Phillips 1987:15-16). Conversely, Herek and Capitanio suggest that it is precisely the 'fostering good relations' of Equality Duty C which could be most effective in tackling homo-/bi-/trans-phobia stemming from stigmatisation, by encouraging positive interpersonal contact between LGBT and non-LGBT people (Herek

& Capitanio 1996)<sup>12</sup> such as via the ‘human library’ described by Mary earlier in this section. ‘Fostering good relations’ therefore becomes a tool to combat wider societal homophobia, biphobia and transphobia in ways which exceed the possibilities of an approach based on more individualised, pathologised understandings of homophobic discrimination (Herek 2004). Respondent #40 connects this kind of broader societal change directly with public sector workers, positing that they **should** be involved in it. She also expands the problems of societal heterosexism to include heterosexual people, pointing to an expanded array of subjects potentially implicated within public sector LGBT equalities.

Based on this data gathered, it appears that in many ways the discourses emerging from the forum and its research align with wider literatures on LGBT equalities – individualised discourses of discrimination and equality of opportunity, connected with liberal theoretical underpinnings (see Chapter 2 Sections 4.1-4.3) and duties A and B of the Equality Act 2010, were some of the most frequent ways of constructing public sector LGBT equalities.

However, key breaks with the literature also emerged, particularly with regard to public sector LGBT equalities as performed through ‘fostering good relations’. While forum members and questionnaire respondents revealed confusion not only surrounding how to implement this mode of equality, as well as questioning whether this exceeded the constructed boundaries of a discursively distinct public sector, it has also become clear that wider structural issues throughout UK society are also considered vitally important to the provision of public sector LGBT equalities, and may in fact be considered foundational to the more frequently deployed constructions of equality – this is not only an academic or activist understanding, but something recognised and promoted by a broader array of LGBT people in East Sussex. These insights challenge not only preconceived limits of the public sector (building on the hybrid possibilities of partnership discussed in chapter 5), but also

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<sup>12</sup> While this thesis broadly engages with ‘LGBT’ as a cohesive whole due to its construction as such within the data, it is certainly also worth considering that transphobia amongst **cisgendered LGB people** could be tackled in a similar way.

scholarship which connects LGBT equalities to a politics of liberal assimilation through which only particular LGBT subjectivities – responsible, productive and healthy – receive validation and acceptance (Duggan 2003; Richardson 2005; Robinson 2012; Stychin 2003). In the following section, I expand on this point by outlining the various subjectivities of public sector LGBT equalities work, highlighting problematic evocations of equality in the era of ‘austerity’ and the ‘Big Society’ and within a broader framework of neoliberal governmentality, but also ways in which the discursive negotiations of ‘equality’ emerging from the data can point towards progressive and inclusive modes of LGBT equality.

### **6.3 – The Subjects of Public Sector LGBT Equalities**

In the previous section, I demonstrated that some of the apparent confusion surrounding Equality Duty C – the duty to ‘foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it’ (Crown 2010:149:1c) – was based on a constructed distinction between the public sector and LGBT people or communities with regard to the ‘responsibility’ for fostering these relations. Building on the work of other scholars, I argue that this idea of ‘responsibility’ was key to how equality is seen to adhere to subjects (Coote 2011; Edwards 2012; Evans 2011; Glasman 2010; Haugh 2011; Kisby 2010; McCabe 2010; Smith 2011; Stott 2011; Williams 2012) during the time of the LGBT Equalities Forum for Hastings, Rother and East Sussex, particularly through the noted discursive separation between the state/public sector and LGBT individuals and communities. I then suggest ways in which the data, through the discourses surrounding Equality Duty C, challenges the neo/liberal subjectivities involved in constructing LGBT equalities (see Chapter 2 Section 4.6) by recognising a wider, more complicated and shifting array of ‘responsible’ subjects beyond easy divisions between public sector and LGBT individuals/communities.

### **6.3.1 – The Subjects of LGBT Equalities Under Austerity and the Big Society**

The UK's Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government came into power in 2010 soon after the start of the LGBT Equalities Forum's meetings. In their campaigning in the run up to the election as well as in the months following it, the Conservative Party under leader David Cameron promoted a vision of the UK as a 'Big Society'. At the same time, in the wake of the 2008 global economic crash, the Coalition also drew on a discourse of 'austerity' for the nation, realised most notably through a programme of cuts to public sector organisations such as those involved in the LGBT Equalities Forum. Finally, in tandem with the Big Society and austerity, the Coalition government as of late 2010 began to implement the legislation passed in the Equality Act 2010. Scholars from a variety of disciplines have attempted to unpick the political and ideological underpinnings of the Big Society and austerity, as well as to explore their impacts on local communities (Bednarek 2011; Corbett & Walker 2013; Diamond 2011; Lister 2011; North 2011), but this work has not engaged with the simultaneous implementation of the Equality Act 2010.

Scholarship surrounding the Big Society and austerity frequently posits them as connected, part of a wider political project of devolving public sector responsibility for the provision of services onto local voluntary sector and community groups. The commissioning of public sector services out to local LGBT community groups such as the Hastings and Rother Rainbow Alliance was discussed through the forum:

***Tricia – 'I think we've got to get much smarter at if we're going to a point where it's about setting equality objectives, about doing that with the communities together across the piece. And realising that people are multifaceted and don't***

***slot into our nice categories. I think a lot of it will be about that work being commissioned out to the voluntary sector, the third sector.'***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, November 2010)

However, while the commissioning of public sector services out to local voluntary and community groups was clearly a phenomenon occurring in East Sussex during the time of the LGBT Equalities forum, commissioning was not the only way in which 'responsibility' was seen to adhere to local communities – exploring the simultaneous implementation of the Equality Act 2010 with regard to the Big Society and austerity reveals important ways in which LGBT equality itself is discursively produced as the responsibility of LGBT people and communities.

While the Equality Act 2010 offers public sector institutions a legislative framework of particular rights and responsibilities with regard to equality for LGBT people, members of the LGBT Equalities Forum discussed national guidance documentation in several meetings and shared some of the documents referred to. This most recent government guidance was perceived to result in a marked shift as to how public sector organisations are to engage in equalities work - specifically, forum members suggested that the responsibility for developing public sector LGBT equalities work and being accountable for it has been shifted onto local LGBT communities. This was summed up by Grace in one meeting:

***Grace – 'Well in a way it's a bit of semantics I suppose. But the idea of the current government is that local authorities – and other public organisations – should look at the information they're getting from the public about what their priorities are, set targets, therefore, to achieve those priorities... We would take***

*the research and say well what LGBT older and disabled people are saying to <service name> is... So we would need to set some targets about achieving that. And that's a bit different from having a kind of a scheme, of the old sort. Basically. And then you have to publish your data to show whether or not you've made any progress towards them. So it still is like having overarching kind of guidelines of what you're going to do next, and then demonstrating whether you've done it or now. So it's not like having individual policies about things really.'*

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, September 2011)

In describing this guidance outlining how the Equality Act 2010 is to be implemented in the time of the Big Society and austerity, Grace makes clear discursive distinctions between a variety of subjects – the ‘current government’, ‘local authorities’ and ‘the public’, coded as separate and with distinct and unified ‘priorities’. Grace’s construction of the relationship between ‘the public’ (as well as more specific groups such as ‘LGBT older and disabled people’) and her public sector organisation positions the former in an active position, so that they are ‘saying [things] to’ her organisation; conversely her organisation is constructed in a more passive relationship which is ‘getting’ information from the public. Here LGBT communities and community groups are not providing commissioned services per the most common literature surrounding communities and the Big Society, but rather are actively providing information to the public sector to inform their equalities target setting. The overlap with existing literature here centres not around the provision of services, therefore, but the discursive and indeed legislative production of LGBT individuals and communities as more responsible for public sector LGBT equalities work. In the following forum meeting, this key issue of ‘responsibility’ was fleshed out in greater detail



with regard to this new mode of doing public sector LGBT equalities:

*Researcher 2 – ‘But say your data was really skewed and really awful, if nobody picked it up from the community who else would tell you it was awful?’*

*Aisha – ‘But if it’s our workforce data, yeah no, I could tell you that ours is awful  
<general laughter> No it’s completely awful.’*

*Researcher 2 – ‘So I guess for the LGBT community in the area, they’re the ones who’re going to have to assess that data and say that’s not OK, you need to fix it according to the legislation.’*

*Grace – ‘I think the roles of groups like HRRRA have become much more important. And that’s the government initiative, they’re reducing the responsibilities on the public sector.’*

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, November 2011)

Grace describes the changing dynamic in terms of local LGBT community groups (such as HRRRA, the Hastings and Rother Rainbow Alliance), who have ‘much more important’ roles, and the public sector, for whom the government is ‘reducing responsibilities’ – indeed these ‘responsibilities’ here are key to the distinct discursive separation made between these various subjects (‘groups like HRRRA’, ‘the government’ and ‘the public sector’) implicated within public sector LGBT equalities work. Paradoxically, the very subjectifications which work to construct these separations at the same time draw LGBT groups such as HRRRA into the governance of the state and the public sector through the discursive shifting of ‘responsibilities’. However, these perceived responsibilities were

constructed in various ways throughout the lifespan of the forum, particularly through the more positive-sounding discourse of ‘opportunity’:

***Michael – ‘That’s going to have a real unique opportunity of being the main watchdog in the next 18 months. So if we don’t support or encourage people to join the LINK [NHS Local Involvement Network], then that’s a big missed opportunity.’***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, May 2011)

***Grace – ‘I know it must be very frustrating that you’ve had all these conversations before.’***

***James – ‘Yeah, it goes on forever!’***

***Grace – ‘But I think there’s an opportunity because it’s all changing. Bung it in the pot now.’***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, August 2012)

Both Michael and Grace, representing public sector organisations, emphasise not only opportunity, but the importance of this particular temporal moment through Michael’s highlighting of ‘the next 18 months’, Lara’s assertion that ‘this is their time’ and Grace’s advice to ‘bung it in the pot now’. The restructuring of the public sector under the auspices of the Big Society and austerity is evoked as a time when ‘it’s all changing’. While we can see that these utterances took place more than a year apart, they still construct a sense of

urgency in grasping something perceived to be offered by the partnership-led framework of the Coalition's approach to the public sector, and particularly public sector LGBT equalities. Although the discourse here appears positive through use of the word 'opportunity', in fact it also works to reinforce the sense of responsibility attaching to LGBT people for these public sector equalities – Grace's imperative is for LGBT community group representatives such as James to 'bung it in the pot', so that it is LGBT people who must take action.

I locate these discourses of active LGBT communities and responsibility for public sector LGBT equalities within a broader framework of neoliberalism. As noted in Chapter 2 Section 5.4, writers exploring the Big Society and austerity in the UK have noted connections between discourses of neoliberal 'responsibility' and 'active citizens' engaged with state and public sector institutions (Coote 2011; Edwards 2012; Evans 2011; Glasman 2010; Haugh 2011; Kisby 2010; McCabe 2010; Seddon et al 2004; Smith 2011; Stott 2011; Williams 2012), but primarily in terms of service provision; writers on sexual citizenship and LGBT politics have pointed to ways in which individual LGBT (though predominantly lesbian and gay) subjects are increasingly constructed through political discourse as 'responsible', mostly in terms of financial security and through discourses of homonormative assimilation (Adam 2005; Bell 1995; Duggan 2003; Robinson 2012; Stychin 2003; Spade 2011). Through the discourses emerging from the LGBT Equalities Forum, it would appear that public sector LGBT equalities (as enacted in an era of 'austerity' and the Big Society) can also be seen as a key area through which LGBT people are to be constructed as 'active' and 'responsible' citizens. Additionally, while this research on responsible neoliberal subjectivities has concentrated on the individual citizen, this data points to ways in which being 'active' and 'responsible' adhere also to LGBT **communities** and community groups such as HARRA.

LGBT community representatives participating in the LGBT Equalities Forum expressed concern about the apparent LGBT community-aimed shift in responsibility portrayed by this new approach to implementing LGBT equalities legislation. Later in the November 2011 meeting – in which many of these issues came to a head – James (representing HRRRA) raised a strong objection to the approach and openly contested the foregoing discourses of LGBT community responsibility:

***James – ‘The responsibility is for the organisations. ‘Cause I don’t like the idea of you saying it’s for us to keep them on their track.’***

***Grace – ‘No’***

***Researcher 1 – ‘No, no, I certainly agree that that’s an issue’***

***James – ‘It’s that they ought to know what they’re doing.’***

***Grace – ‘But that’s the problem is James, that’s’***

***Researcher 2 – ‘That’s the legislation’***

***Grace – ‘That’s the government point of view’***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, November 2011)

James here raises an objection to this model of partnership as a representative of local LGBT communities. He engages directly with the discourse of ‘responsibility’ as a key concern, and more crucially where that responsibility is seen to be located. Rather than that LGBT communities should now be responsible for 'keep[ing] [public services] on track' - instead he wants them to 'know what they're doing'. James’ challenge here relates to the

neoliberal subjectivity of the responsible LGBT citizen as described by Duggan (2003), Stychin (2003) and others, however he broadens their powerful critiques to engage with this emerging construct of the responsible LGBT **community** as well as the individual LGBT citizen. In this way James' words bring together the critiques of Duggan, Stychin and others with the work of Nikolas Rose, who has argued that it is through communities that individual citizens are produced (Rose 1996). The data gathered through the LGBT Equalities Forum for Hastings, Rother and East Sussex lends support to this idea, but also puts forward the importance of geographically specific LGBT communities (imagined as bounded and unified) not only as the productive force behind desired neoliberal citizens but as themselves the subjects of 'responsibility' discourse developed through public sector LGBT equalities.

James' open and direct resistance to this attempt at interpellating local LGBT communities as 'responsible' for public sector LGBT equalities offers a firm challenge to assumptions of LGBT community engagement with state or public sector equalities work as a matter of simple assimilation or complicity. Crucial to this research, and highlighting the strength of his critique, James notes that the academic researchers in the LGBT Equalities Forum (myself included as Researcher 1) are also implicated in these problematic discourses of responsibility for public sector LGBT equalities. James' resistance manifests through the discursive subjects of 'you' (the academic researchers), 'us' (local LGBT communities) and 'them' (public sector organisations) – while I have shown that such subjectifications can be complicit in producing problematic discourses of responsibility, here James deploys them as a means of resistance to these discourses.

In Chapter 5 I discussed ways in which local LGBT communities and public sector organisations can be seen as hybridised, with some public sector representatives adopting and performing the positions of LGBT communities in opposition to other aspects of their

respective organisations or the public sector or state more generally. I develop this argument here by noting that it was not only LGBT community representatives, but also public sector organisational representatives who challenged these discourses of active LGBT communities with increased responsibility for public sector equalities. In this excerpt, Karen emphasises the importance of recognising how public sector organisations are also responsible for equalities work within the framework of the Big Society:

***Researcher 2- 'So what's the difference then?'***

***Grace – 'You don't have a specific duty to have an equality scheme'***

***Researcher 2 – 'OK'***

***Grace – 'Or to carry out equality impact assessments'***

***Karen – 'And you don't have to do an annual report, so you don't have to report in any terms that anyone would understand about how you demonstrated it, but you can publish the data. So you could publish a big Excel spreadsheet of figures and not interpret it.'***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, November 2011)

Karen and Grace both perceive the guidance here as a matter of negatives, repeating what they, as public sector representatives, 'don't' have to do. The only thing which must be done is publishing the data. However Karen views this not as a useful feature at all, but rather as a tool of obfuscation via the bare minimum of compliance – describing the possibility of a 'big Excel spreadsheet of figures' suggests a rather technocratic, managerialistic document which would need to be 'interpreted' to be of use. Since, as

already noted, such data would be expected to be given to local LGBT communities for their assessment, the lack of interpretation could then prove extremely problematic in any use of the data to hold public services to account. Karen's hypothetical here – 'So you could publish a big Excel spreadsheet of figures and not interpret it' – appears to be deployed to reinforce a view of public sector organisations as still being 'responsible' for vital elements of this new public sector LGBT equalities framework, or at least the importance of considering **how** they are responsible. Karen's hypothetical was challenged by Aisha, representing another public sector organisation:

*Aisha - 'We have understood from that that if you put something on a website it can't be buried in a spreadsheet, it has to be clear. But it does largely specify that you've got to publish datasets like the equality breakdown of your workforce. And it doesn't go a hell of a lot further than that, the rest of it is up to you. So I **COULD** publish stuff about, you know, equality data on people using certain services, but I don't think that there is the law, the requirement there for us to do that.'*

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, November 2011)

Aisha's comments demonstrate that her organisation **could** interpret the guidance in a manner which maximises the utility of the published data for local LGBT communities. Aisha repeatedly codes herself as part of her organisation through the use of 'we', but also identifies herself as occupying a critical role in the publication of this kind of data – 'I **COULD** publish stuff about, you know, equality data on people using certain services' (emphasis mine). State and public sector organisations are complex and contested bodies,

and do not perform coherently (Cooper & Monro 2003; Mitchell 1991; Painter 2000; Smith 2009; Sorensen 2004). By coding herself through these paradoxical subjectivities, simultaneously as part of and distinct from her organisation, Aisha reminds us of the multiple possibilities for resistance or performative reiterations of this kind of government guidance on LGBT equalities in favour of what we might consider a more progressive politics (Cooper 1994). This relates to builds on the hybrid possibilities of partnership work which I explored in Chapter 5, so that here we see how partnership hybridities mesh with the slippery discourses of LGBT equalities to challenge assumptions of public sector LGBT equalities as a normalising or assimilative force. Some members also emphasised a distinction between the wording of the Equality Act and associated government guidance, and the 'spirit' of the legislation as they saw it:

***Karen – ‘It’s the interpretation of the law that’s changed, I think, isn’t it? The law itself stands as it passed in 2010 but the interpretation of the law is what’s changed.’***

***Researcher 2 – ‘But what’s interesting is that the interpretation of the law has changed but what you’re telling us is actually you’re implementing the spirit of the law?’***

***Karen – ‘How it was intended!’***

***Grace – ‘Because the law is still the law, that’s the thing, and it could get tested through judicial reviews and all sorts of things, but the law is still the law, and it’s the government interpretation of the law, which translates into their guidance and saying what is a specific duty, has changed.’***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, November 2011)



Here Karen initially posits the Equality Act as something which ‘stands as it passed’ – fixed and unchanged – which Grace supports in her assurance that ‘the law is still the law’. Grace sets this in clear contrast with ‘government guidance’ which is changeable and a matter of ‘interpretation’. But by stating that public sector workers at this meeting of the LGBT Equalities Forum are attempting to implement the law (in the form of the public sector duties of the Equality Act) ‘how it was intended’, Karen in fact reveals the discursive flexibility and slipperiness underlying the duties of the Equality Act. Karen makes a claim for a clear intent lying behind the Act, and posits her understanding of this as the correct ‘interpretation’ of the Act over the government’s guidance. This idea of the ‘spirit’ of the legislation - an unwritten ‘true’ intent lying behind it - reveals the additional layer of discursive flexibility with regard to the meaning - and the meaning of implementation - of equality within the public sector, since public sector workers, particularly those with an explicit ‘Equalities’ or ‘Equality and Diversity’ role, are here shown to work to perform alternative meanings of ‘equality’, and indeed assert them as the true ‘intent’, resisting guidance documentation from a (supposedly) higher tier of government which would code their organisations as less responsible for LGBT equalities. Finally, perhaps one of the key ways in which the diverse array of forum members exhibited resistance to these discourses of responsibility **together** came through their reaction to the ‘government’, which as shown above was regularly coded as a discursively separate subject from local public sector organisations as well as LGBT communities. Katie suggested the reasoning behind the government’s proposed guidance on public sector LGBT equalities work:

*Katie – ‘I guess the proposal is that they will be more accountable because there’ll be, I guess, less bureaucracy...’*

*<general laughter>*

*Katie – ‘The idea though, that is the idea.’*

*Karen – ‘Yeah, that’s the government marketing it.’*

*Katie – ‘Yeah!’*

*Graham – ‘Yes!’*

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, September 2011)

The spontaneous laughter from many other forum members when Katie puts forth the government’s position suggests a general and crucially **shared** feeling of disbelief or ridicule for it, and both those wearing public sector (Katie) and LGBT community (Graham) ‘hats’ (see Chapter 5 Section 1) were warm and immediate in their agreement with Karen when she dismissed the government’s position as ‘marketing’. Resistance to the problematics of LGBT community ‘responsibility’ for public sector LGBT equalities work therefore comes from distinct community and public sector subjectivities, but also from the more hybridised positions of partnership working exhibited through the shared affective response in this excerpt.

This section has suggested important additions to the literature surrounding the Big Society and the political climate of ‘austerity’ in the UK under the Coalition government, positing that in addition to the issues raised by a number of writers (Carr 2012; Clarke & Glendinning 2012; Coote 2011; Craig & Taylor 2012; Dillon & Fanning 2011; Edwards 2012; Evans 2011; Featherstone et al 2012; Haugh 2011; Howard & Taylor 2010; Hutchinson & Cairns 2010; Milbourne & Cushman 2013; Skelcher 2012; Stott 2011; Williams 2012), the simultaneous implementation of the Equality Act 2010 points to potentially problematic impacts on LGBT lives and communities in terms of ‘equality’. The resultant various

subjectifications emerging through public sector LGBT equalities are key to the shifting discourses of neoliberal responsibility which can be constructed through such equalities. However, these same subjectifications also demonstrate the potential for resistance to neoliberal figures of responsible, active LGBT citizens (Adam 2005; Cooper 2004; Duggan 1994; Duggan 2003; Spade 2011; Stychin 2000; Stychin 2003), not just through LGBT communities but through public sector equality workers as well as through the hybridised positions produced and unearthed by partnership working. In the final section of this chapter, I draw together discourses surrounding Equality Duty C and responsible subjects of public sector LGBT equalities, demonstrating how these point to new ways of imagining these equalities which challenge assumptions of state-based equality projects as necessarily assimilative or complicit in problematic normativities.

### **6.3.2 – Public Sector LGBT Equalities Beyond the Public Sector**

The various subjectifications emerging through public sector LGBT equalities work often constructed boundaries between sectors (both in terms of constructing problematic ‘responsible’ neoliberal LGBT subjects as well as in terms of resisting these interpellations). However forum participants and questionnaire respondents could be seen to challenge the construction of these subjects too, through alternative discourses of public sector LGBT equalities work which potentially reframe issues of neoliberal ‘responsibility’. Throughout the qualitative recordings of the LGBT Equalities Forum meetings, as well as responses to the online questionnaire, phrases such as ‘wider society’, ‘the wider community’ or ‘the broader community’, as well as references to ‘the mainstream’, were extremely common. Particularly with regard to the LGBT Equalities Questionnaire, it was noted that a number of respondents responded emphatically to some questions by emphasising a degree of ‘sameness’ with wider society, downplaying or disavowing issues of difference. For instance,

when asked about how best public services could engage with them as LGBT people, these respondents replied:

- ***I don't want to be engaged with as a special interest group. I want to be engaged with as part of any general process of engaging with the public.***  
(#143)
- ***It depends on the issue, but I would want to be engaged with in the same way as anyone else - I don't need a special method.*** (#172)
- ***I do not feel I should have any special treatment.*** (#109)

All three of these respondents used the word 'special' to construct a distinct form of attendance to being LGBT by the public sector, as opposed to 'the public' or 'the same way as anyone else' – dismissing the idea that there may indeed be specific needs or methods which actually do adhere more to LGBT people than non-LGBT people. In other areas of the questionnaire, the need for LGBT people to actively 'integrate' with 'non-LGBT society' was stressed:

- ***It's important to support and integrate LGBT people with non-LGBT society so that they are not marginalised and to stop prejudices in non-LGBT people.*** (#4)

Here 'society' is coded as being inherently 'non-LGBT' as opposed to 'straight', suggesting a neutral space devoid of sexualities or gender identities. Similarly, during the LGBT Equalities Forum, one member described an incident which seemed to establish a baseline to which sexual identity was an add-on:

***Graham – 'It's a very simple phrase somebody said to me, when they described something about this disabled man, I'm a man who happens to be disabled, I'm a man who happens to be gay, that's, you don't put the other thing in first.'***

(LGBT Equalities Forum meeting, September 2011)

Graham draws on discourses of liberalism by asserting identities such as 'disabled' and 'gay' as additions to a core identity which should be given primacy (Days 1998; Lynch et al 2009; Phillips 1989; Van Dyke 1990). Graham appears to assert a liberal subject according to which lives are identical within the public sphere until coincidental factors such as 'happening' to be disabled or 'happening' to be gay complicate things, though ironically this subject is here constructed as a gendered 'man'<sup>13</sup>. What this demonstrates is that in the data gathered through the LGBT Equalities Forum, ideas of normality or being 'the same' or part of a general public body were expressed through reference to public sector LGBT equalities and in direct opposition to separate or 'special' treatment as LGBT people, in ways which drew on the discourses of liberalism and which can appear to express the hetero- and homo-normativities and problematic imperatives for 'assimilation' suggested by critics of LGBT equality projects (Cooper 2004; Duggan 1994; Duggan 2003; Richardson 2005; Robinson 2012; Spade 2011; Stychin 2000; Stychin 2003). Conversely however, many

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<sup>13</sup> Note that Graham does not identify as a trans-man, which would inflect this statement with a different kind of discursive force.

forum attendees and questionnaire respondents directly connected issues of LGBT equality to living in a society geared towards heterosexuality, or unspoken assumptions of heterosexuality:

- ***Being gay is in itself an isolating condition because life is geared towards heterosexuality and family*** (#56)
- ***[I would like] a positive response without heterosexual assumptions, many professionals do not have the training.*** (#28)
- ***I feel demoralised and as if I am not normal. I am hurt by the fact that I will never lead the average normal life eg. I will never have a white wedding*** (#135)

These respondents identify a sense of living in a world or society in which they are Other and heterosexuality and heterosexuals are the norm. Note that this sense is linked to specific issues of relevance to public sector service provision – feelings of isolation, experiences using public services and experiences of homophobic hate crime, respectively. Therefore issues of heteronormativity and the Othering of LGBT lives are experienced not in a nebulous or general sense but as connected to incidents and issues in their everyday lives, including in relation to state and public sector LGBT equalities.

While some forum members and respondents couched their discussions in terms of living in a ‘heterosexual world’ or dealing with assumptions of heterosexuality, some did specifically use words such as ‘heteronormativity’ and ‘heterosexism’ in their answers – these are not just academic terms, but ones used to understand and describe ‘everyday’

LGBT experiences. Respondents to the LGBT Equalities Questionnaire were asked what barriers they felt they faced, as LGBT people, when accessing local public services:

- ***The thoughtless heteronormativity of society at large. I am a small, white-haired elderly woman - probably the very last person anyone would expect to be a lesbian - so the burden of constantly coming out and challenging that assumption can be rather wearing. (#58)***

This respondent notes that 'heteronormativity of society at large' is a barrier to using public services, constructing an important discursive link between 'society' and the 'public sector' asked about in the question she responds to. By raising issues of 'society at large' as a specific public sector barrier, she demonstrates that the public sector is not necessarily seen as insulated from 'society' per classic liberal state/society dynamics (Allum 1995; Baker 2009; Evans 1996; Fraser 2001; Flinders 2006; Hay & Lister 2006: 5; Migdal 2001; Mitchell 1991; Painter 2000:362; Passoth & Rowland 2010; Rhodes 1998; Smith 2009; Sorensen 2004: 3). Rather, the need to 'come out' and deal with 'assumptions' is constructed as a feature of 'society at large' which is diffused through public sector services, implicating them as hybridised with rather than separate to 'society'. This respondent's revelation forces reconsiderations of the limits and boundaries of public sector LGBT equalities work – challenging state/society dynamics which code these as separate, she points out that public sector equalities are necessarily produced through 'equalities' in the rest of society and therefore implies a legitimate, even essential engagement by public sector organisations with these wider LGBT equalities. The suggested nature of such engagements was discussed by another respondent, who also drew on connected ideas of

heteronormativity and 'attitudes' to legislation when asked about the usefulness of the Equality Act 2010:

- ***At least we now have legislation to challenge any discriminatory treatment, if we have the energy and support to take up a case. But I think service providers in this area need much more training on understanding how homophobic/lesbophobic attitudes are part of the wider structure of heterosexism (which also affects heterosexual people, especially young people).*** (#40)

Again, through these discussions surrounding heterosexism and heteronormativity, ideas such as 'life itself' and 'society at large' are directly connected to problems using public services – because such services are also part of 'society at large' and not separate from it, they replicate societal problems of heterosexual assumptions and LGBT Othering. This point is developed through the connection to staff training and development - actively changing the beliefs or attitudes of staff is here coded as within the remit of the public sector. By constructing heterosexism and heteronormativity, through the concept of 'assumptions', as a problem for public service provision, the respondents once more suggest that public services could, even should, become involved in challenging 'social' and 'cultural' concepts such as assumptions of heterosexuality or images of what an LGBT person looks like – this in turn challenges what might be thought of as the proper limits of public sector equalities work as explored through the previous discussion of Equality Duty C (fostering good relations), eg. as not engaged in changing people's minds. Taking scholarly work on the diffuse, internally-contested and hybridised state into consideration (Cooper



1994; Cooper 1995; Kantola 2006:125-6; Marinetto 2007:29; Mitchell 1991; Painter 2006; Passoth & Rowland 2010; Rose 1996:43; Stychin 2003:8), the data emerging from the LGBT Equalities Forum suggests alternative LGBT equality projects which resist and contest neat state/society divisions revolving around individual, responsible citizens and which posit the public sector as necessarily separate from 'society'. If it is indeed wider societal change which is felt to bring about LGBT equality, with existing legislation and policy initiatives being only a stopgap solution, then the aims of public sector organisations to make their own services more equal for LGBT people could be better met by tackling LGBT equality through broader social change and the active reduction of LGBT stigma (Herek 2004) - and crucially, Equality Duty C can be read precisely as responding to this suggestion.

#### **6.4 – Conclusion to The Duties and Subjects of LGBT Equalities**

Through alternative readings of 'equality' with regard to the public sector which recognise the impact of societal normativities on public sector service provision, as well as the understanding that public sector organisations (as well as the state) are hybridised with the diffuse heteronormativities of 'wider society', I argue that issues of neoliberal 'responsibility' can be reworked in ways which draw upon a much wider array of subjects – the discussions above indicate that 'responsibility' does not only problematically adhere to LGBT individuals and communities, nor to specific public sector organisations, but to society as a whole. This in turn points to new possibilities for public sector equalities work as suggested by the discussions surrounding Equality Duty C in the LGBT Equalities Forum, through which 'equality' is constructed not as a matter of discrimination and equality of opportunity, but as engaging with and tackling wider stigmatising assumptions and societal norms surrounding sexualities and gender identities. Finally, by recognising the hybridities of society and public sector through LGBT lives, LGBT people in East Sussex constructed a

more radical vision of public sector LGBT equalities which contests the assumption that equality is necessarily a matter of neo/liberal assimilation – these respondents deployed public sector LGBT equalities specifically as a challenge to heteronorms and assimilation. As Brown reminds us, if complicity with supposedly normative institutions encourages us to see that which is supposedly transgressive as normative, then we must also understand that that which is supposedly normative can also be transgressive or radical (Brown 2009:1500). These discourses challenge the presumed neo/liberal underpinnings of ‘equality’ as well as the problematic subjectifications of ‘responsible’ LGBT individuals and communities through the Big Society agenda as implemented in tandem with the Equality Act 2010.

## **Chapter 7 – Conclusion**

### **7.1 – Introduction to Thesis Conclusion**

In Chapter 1 Section 3, I introduced the four overlapping aims through which I would develop key contributions to the literature surrounding LGBT lives and equalities in rural and non-urban areas of the UK, and enable me to answer the research question – ‘How are public sector LGBT equalities produced and implemented in rural and non-urban East Sussex?’. Each of these aims drew on a variety of interdisciplinary literatures. In the rest of this chapter I show how the research and data emerging from the LGBT Equalities Forum for Hastings, Rother and East Sussex as explored in this thesis builds on these literatures and identifies and tackles gaps in them. I also point to interesting directions for future research surrounding geographies of LGBT equalities, before concluding the thesis by summarising and reiterating this work’s unique contribution to knowledge.

### **7.2 – Meeting the Thesis Aims**

The first aim of the thesis – to ‘examine public sector equalities policies and initiatives for LGBT people in Hastings and Rother’, reflects the relative paucity of knowledge surrounding the processes of public sector LGBT equalities work, specifically in these areas of East Sussex. A variety of modes of partnership work have emerged important techniques of public sector governance through which ‘equality’ for LGBT people is to be developed, and the LGBT Equalities Forum for Hastings, Rother and East Sussex represented a key means through which local public sector as well as voluntary and community organisations were attempting to develop equalities work in the local area.

Problematic manifestations of community/public sector partnership have been widely raised (Alcock 2010; Andrucki & Elder 2007; Billis 2010a; Billis 2010b; Butt 2001; Byrne 2001; Carr 2012; Clarke & Glendinning 2012; Coote 2011; Craig & Taylor 2012; Dillon & Fanning 2011, Evans 2011; Featherstone et al 2012; Howard & Taylor 2010; Hutchinson & Cairns 2010; Kisby 2010; Mayo & Taylor 2001; McCabe 2010; Milbourne & Cushman 2013; Skelcher 2012; Tett 2005; Williams 2012), but these primarily focused on issues of complicity for community organisations. In chapter 5 I reversed this focus by exploring complicities/hybridities of public sector organisations and representatives through the processes of this kind of partnership work, challenging the assumption that the hybridities of partnership working are 'one-way'. Complex dis/identifications on the part of forum participants, constructed institutional hierarchies and discourses of evidence could be seen to produce institutional 'firewalls' (Cooper 2006; Ahmed 2012) which closed down or rechanneled public sector equalities work; however attending to the hybrid possibilities of spaces of partnership revealed potentially progressive ways in which LGBT equalities could be enacted through East Sussex's public sector and LGBT community organisations, particularly via the embedded and everyday performances of 'mid-level' public sector workers such as those participating in the forum. My work also develops spatial understandings of public sector hybridities – contra assumptions made in literature on partnership work (Andrucki & Elder 2007; Billis 2010a; Billis 2010b; Brandsen, van de Donk & Putters 2005; Gutierrez, Baquenado-Lopez & Tejada 1999; Hutchinson & Cairns 2010; Seddon et al 2004; Skelcher 2012), hybrid processes and performances were not limited to the physical spaces of partnership work (eg. the bimonthly meetings of the LGBT Equalities forum or the events it organised). The political and affective connections and shared experiences revealed and produced through this space extended beyond the walls of meeting rooms and event halls, and back into the buildings and spaces of the local public sector organisations – as Valentine

argues, 'spaces' stretch beyond what is perceived as their material embodiment (such as the forum meeting room) and into other spaces (Valentine 2002b:151-152).

Recognising this kind of LGBT equalities initiative as hybrid challenges discourses of partnership working as necessarily problematic or co-optive with regard to LGBT communities and community groups, and points to the material and institutional complexities of public sector LGBT equalities work in rural and non-urban East Sussex. These findings on the hybrid possibilities of partnership work augment foregoing queer studies of hybridity, demonstrating that institutional and organisational dis/identifications, as well as cultural and racial identifications (Carrillo 2002; Munoz 1999; Tongson 2011), can be revealed and produced in concert with sexualities and gender identities. In addition, the complex practices of 'doing' LGBT equalities work and the shifting dis/identifications explored in Chapters 5 and 6 lend further credence to critiques of the unitary state outlined in Chapter 2 Sections 5.1-2. My work demonstrates how the state is constantly being re/constituted in multiple and contested ways through everyday, micro-scale actions (Laclau & Mouffe 1985; Painter 2006; Passoth & Rowland 2010) and specifically through the 'doing' of LGBT equalities work at a specific geographical and historical juncture in the UK.

The second aim of this thesis, to 'explore the localized impacts and implementation of LGBT equalities legislation in a time of financial austerity', is grounded in the social and political climate in the UK at the time of data collection and writing, particularly with regard to the twinned practices and discourses of 'austerity' and the 'Big Society' as implemented via the post-2010 Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government. While austerity, the Big Society and implications for local communities and community groups have attracted considerable scholarly attention, such work tends to be of a general nature or to raise issues of wealth and class rather than equalities work (see Bednarek 2011; Chaney 2012; Lister 2011; North 2011) – this gap appeared all the more notable due to the

implementation in late 2010 of the Equality Act 2010 (Crown 2010), a large piece of legislation which mandated three proactive duties to most public sector organisations. Equalities work itself has been explored in some detail through wider literatures surrounding LGBT politics and sexual citizenship (see Cooper 2004; Duggan 1994; Duggan 2003; Spade 2011; Stychin 2000; Stychin 2003), but this literature has only rarely engaged with how 'equality' emerges through the embodied performances and discourses of state and public sector actors and impacts on geographically and temporally specific LGBT communities and community groups. In chapter 6 I developed these literatures and addressed these gaps regarding public sector LGBT equalities in an era of austerity. My research found the most common constructions of LGBT 'equality' via the work of the LGBT Equalities Forum mapped comparatively easily onto Equality Duties A and B (see Chapter 6 Section 1 for these duties), which I argued were heavily grounded in the theory and discourse of political liberalism outlined in Chapter 3 Sections 4.1-3. (Cooper 2004:69; Duggan 1994; Duggan 2003; Brown 2009:1499; Lister 2011:6; Monro 2005:74-79; Richardson 2005; Spade 2011). This would seem to support the literature identifying liberalism as central to contemporary understandings and practices of LGBT equalities in the UK (Blasius 2001; Mertus 2007:1064; Newton 2009:47 – see Chapter 2 Section 4.5 for further details). However Duty C's mandate to 'foster good relations' proved to be an area of confusion for public service providers and LGBT community members alike. Problematic subjectifications emerged from the data which connected LGBT equality to neoliberal subjects of active, responsible LGBT citizens – local LGBT communities were perceived as being interpellated as 'responsible' for public sector equalities work, with LGBT equality itself producing such problematic complicities. However, the data also revealed that forum members as well as respondents to the online questionnaire deployed subjectivities produced through the discourse of equality in ways which openly challenged the perceived shift in responsibility resulting from the implementation of the Equality Act 2010. The

research also suggested alternative constructions of 'equality' centred around the impact of societal heteronormativities on public sector service provision, as well as the understanding that public sector organisations are hybridised with the diffuse heteronormativities of 'wider society'. The data pointed to a vision of public sector LGBT equalities which contested the subject of the responsible LGBT citizen or community – these public sector LGBT equalities were constructed precisely as engaging with and tackling assumptions and societal norms surrounding sexualities and gender identities, defying the discursive boundaries between state and society which appeared to cause so much confusion regarding Equality Duty C. The implementation of legislation such as the Equality Act 2010, while not unproblematic, cannot therefore be necessarily a matter of complicity with broader neo/liberal agendas (Herman 1994; Knopp 1998). As such I find much in my thesis to encourage greater attention to the queer and progressive possibilities of 'working within' perceived liberal equalities projects (Beger 2001; Browne & Bakshi 2013; Currah 2001; Herman 1994; see Chapter 2 Section 4.5), challenging queer theories and politics which posit simple oppositions between complicity/assimilation and resistance/transgression. Indeed, my exploration of discourses of LGBT equalities within a longitudinal, cross-sectoral, mixed-methods PAR project further demonstrates how specific everyday practices of 'LGBT equalities' can work to produce and maintain but also contest and reframe unified understandings of 'equality' as critiqued in Chapter 2 Sections 4.1-3.

The third aim of the thesis, to 'explore the co-construction of the urban, the rural and sexualities through policymaking and research in the context of Hastings and Rother', was addressed primarily in Chapter 4; this chapter also primarily addressed aim 4, though certainly Chapters 5 and 6 also develop understandings of LGBT lives beyond the metropolis in important and novel ways. Geographic literature has engaged with LGBT lives through a rural/urban dynamic (Annes and Redlin 2012; Browne 2011:17; Gray 2009; Herring 2007; Homfray 2007; Kazyak 2011; Kramer 1995; Little 2007; Whittier 2012),

through which particular features of the urban and the rural are seen to be of significance with regard to LGBT lives - writers note a common connection made between urban and city space and features such as anonymity (Annes and Redlin 2012; Bell and Valentine 1995a; Kennedy 2010:1059; Kirkey and Forsyth 2001; Valentine and Skelton 2003), safety and tolerance of LGBT expression (Gorman-Murray 2009; Hanhardt 2013; Kennedy 2010:1074), access to LGBT-focused and LGBT-friendly services (Gray 2009:5; Lindhorst 1997) and the existence and development of LGBT identities and communities (Herring 2007:344-345; Doderer 2011; Kramer 1995; Brown 2009; Johnston 2009; Gray 2009; Kazyak 2011; Lindhorst 1997; Gorman-Murray 2008; Bell, 1995; Annes & Redlin 2012; Smith 1997:16; Valentine & Skelton 2003:849). Rural and non-urban space is commonly imagined to lack such features or to exhibit their opposite. My research built on this literature by recognising the continued importance of the rural/urban dynamic as a framework through which public sector LGBT equalities work is developed. However, in answer to aim three and also meeting the fourth aim to 'contribute to studies of the geographies of sexualities beyond the urban metropolis', I challenge imaginaries of the rural as unsafe, intolerant, isolating and void of LGBT lives or communities as well as imaginaries of the urban as safe, welcoming and the natural space of LGBT existence (Browne 2011; Comerford et al 2004; Gorman-Murray et al 2012; Gray 2009; Kazyak 2011; Kennedy 2010; Kirkey and Forsyth 2001; Skeggs et al 2004; Whittier 2012); however, my work also answers calls to question idyllic constructions of the rural as a space chosen in opposition to the city (Browne 2011; Taylor 2011b). Moving beyond the urban/rural dynamic, my research also shows how discourses and data from the LGBT Equalities Forum for Hastings, Rother and East Sussex complicate definitions of urban and rural through discursive slippages and the impact of specific geographic imaginaries such as the 'gay capital'. LGBT lives in East Sussex demonstrate how the urban and the rural are not fixed, but instead bleed into one another and can attach to the same area in different contexts through the discourses of LGBT



equalities work and public sector service provision, in ways which can work to elide areas which do not fit easily into the dynamic from research and broader geographic considerations of LGBT lives (Brown 2008). This chapter also raised geographic imaginaries such as the 'small town' as pathways to critically engage with a wider variety of spaces, arguing that they may function where urban and rural discourses break down and render these spaces less visible.

### **7.3 – Strengths and Limitations of Research**

The work which has led to this thesis involves a long-running and complicated piece of mixed-methods research, itself entangled with a cross-sectoral PAR project involving a wide variety of partners. As such, it is necessary to reflect critically on what limitations as well as strengths this particular methodology, the data gathered and the multiple modes of analysis have lent to the research.

In Chapter 3 Section 3 I explored how the literature surrounding PAR discusses the potential problems and limitations of undertaking such research. Reflecting on the actual 'doing' of the research, one of the strengths of this research that has emerged has been the institutional context of the University of Brighton. While writers on PAR have noted the potential for universities setting bureaucratic and academic hoops which PAR projects may find it difficult to jump through (Aziz et al 2011; Koch & Kralik 2003:11; Pain 2004:659), the Community/University Partnership Programme (Cupp) at the University of Brighton (Hart 2007; Laing & Maddison 2007; see also Chapter 3 Section 4) provides a useful institutional inroad for participatory community research. The existence of this established and well-known programme within the university has lent support and justification to the undertaking of this kind of community-focused PAR, to the extent that community

engagement research associated with Cupp has been incorporated within the University of Brighton's corporate strategies (University of Brighton 2012:23). This has provided research stemming from the LGBT Equalities Forum, including this thesis, with a level of internal institutional support and assisted me in challenging critiques of PAR as academically dubious or less valid (Bostock & Freeman 2004:473).

Now that the research is complete, I also find myself reflecting on Rachel Pain's assertion of the impossibility of erasing differences in power between project participants and project researchers (Pain 2004), though regarding this particular project it is important to consider the power relations between different participants from different organisations and groups as well. While I noted how these differences could operate during meetings of the LGBT Equalities Forum in Chapter 3 Section 5.1, the ending of the project as of 2013 should not mean the ending scrutiny of these power relations. On a personal level I remain connected with members of the LGBT Equalities Forum from public sector organisations and from local LGBT communities, a number of whom have become friends. Indeed one of the strengths of this particular PAR project has been that regular interactions over an extended period of time, shared aims and multiple phases of research and reflection contributed to an atmosphere of growing trust and social as well as political connection. As can be seen from their contributions in Chapters 4-6, participants appeared to feel free to be open, reflective and critical of their own organisations, which resulted in a great richness of data which I suggest would be unlikely to be achieved by a project in which forum members could not participate in the development of the research.

However, it cannot be denied that our connections have changed since the end of the project – speaking for myself, we communicate far less frequently, and we do not work together on defined projects with defined aims. Additionally, as I currently live in Brighton (as I did during the lifespan of the LGBT Equalities for Hasting, Rother and East Sussex

project), I remain at something of a geographic remove from the LGBT communities and services which this research aimed to engage, assist and empower. The complex and overlapping geographies identified in Chapter 4, as well as the hybridised and geographically sprawling public sector institutions and LGBT communities identified in Chapter 5, mean that this is not a simple case of my being entirely insulated from research impacts qua my position as a part of the LGBT community and a queer user of public services. However I would suggest that it means that not only is it more difficult for me to identify or benefit from positive impacts of this research in my everyday life as an LGBT person, but also that I am removed from more of the potentially negative impacts if this research is felt to have 'failed' or to have simply not achieved significant progress in advancing local LGBT equalities. As such it is difficult to gauge the extent to which 'empowerment' of local LGBT people occurred through their participation in this research, and whether their aims in participating were satisfactorily met. Anecdotally, though my ongoing connections and friendships with project participants and other local LGBT networks, I know that research stemming from the project (specifically the published reports from the Mapping Exercise and the Online Questionnaire) is circulating and is being used by those trying to progress local LGBT equalities. I have also attended a variety of local community and public sector meetings, events and forums to publicise not only the research but also the contributions of groups like the Hastings and Rother Rainbow Alliance. However without subsequent research to explore the various social and political impacts of the LGBT Equalities Project for Hastings, Rother and East Sussex, as well as the impressions and experiences of project partners, we cannot be sure that this project and this research truly helped to progress positive social change for local LGBT people.

This reflective critique is doubly problematic due to the clear benefits I have gained from my participation as a researcher in the project – a PhD thesis which has already led to a relatively lucrative research post in an institution often seen (and acting) as elitist and

complicit in oppressive neoliberal structures (Brulin 2001; Fuller & Askins 2007; Kesby et al 2010). This is not only an ethical concern but, due to the particular ethos of PAR research as concerned with power and empowerment, a clear methodological limitation too. This could be borne in mind when reading the following Section 4 of this chapter – any or all of the proposed further research directions could be fruitfully combined with the addressing of this crucial limitation, by being grounded once more in the East Sussex area.

Aside from these methodological concerns surrounding PAR, additional strengths as well as limitations can be identified with regard to the mixed-methods approach to the research, and the specific methods used. Using these three methods (the Mapping Exercise, the Online Questionnaire and the recorded meetings of the LGBT Equalities Forum – see Chapter 3 Sections 5.1-3) has produced an extremely rich dataset allowing for the exploration of data from a variety of different positions including corporate institutions, individual institutional representatives, LGBT community members and activists, and, as detailed in Chapters 5 and 6, porous and fluid positions which are constantly shifting.

Indeed it is the richness of the data stemming from these three methods which enables the complex fluidities of such positions to be more clearly engaged with and explored. Despite this all three methods are limited in several respects. Most crucially, and as briefly noted in Chapter 3 Sections 6.1 and 6.2, the development and analysis of the quantitative aspects of the research (the Mapping Exercise and the Online Questionnaire) were heavily influenced by the multiple aims and positions of forum participants. Quantitative (as well as qualitative) questions were often developed through a process of negotiation, over multiple forum meetings and between multiple forum partners – academic researchers, LGBT community activists and public sector representatives – each of whom attempted to produce a method of data collection which would satisfy their varying understandings of validity, comparability and usefulness. Chapter 3 Section 6.2 highlights some of the issues which resulted during the statistical analysis of this quantitative data from the Online

Questionnaire, most crucially the fact that only the most basic tests of statistical significance and correlation could be used as opposed to predictive parametric tests. This was due to the nominal nature of the data generated by those questions developed in partnership. While I suggested the possibility of recoding the nominal data, partners involved in the quantitative analysis resisted this attempt to (as one partner put it) 'dumb down' our shared data, and argued that tests of significance and correlation would be sufficient enough to demonstrate validity for their varied aims. Therefore while these statistics may be considered weak and inconclusive according to some academic standards (Dancey & Reidy 2011; Loftus 1996) they nevertheless satisfied the multiple 'validities' proposed by project partners.

I also reflect here on the qualitative data generated through the LGBT Equalities for Hastings, Rother and East Sussex project, and particularly the Foucauldian discourse analysis through which it was analysed (see Chapter 3 Section 6.3 for details of this analysis). While in Chapter 3 I justified my choice of this form of discourse analysis as a tool, once analysis was complete it was clear that this could only result in a relatively small amount of useful findings given the large amount of extremely rich data. This thesis lists the initial set of thematic codes produced to assist in analysing the data in Appendix G, and even the most cursory scan of this appendix will demonstrate the large number of codes which have not been explored at all, let alone in detail, as part of Chapters 4-6. Selecting appropriate codes and aspects of the dataset for a deeper discourse analysis can only come after extensive personal reflection and in concert with the wider context of discourses and practices surrounding the data as it was gathered. Informed by poststructuralism (Chapter 1 Section 6) and queer theory (Chapter 2 Section 2.1), my analysis of discourse to explore of how particular objects and subjects come to be re/produced, sedimented, marginalised or privileged is a powerful tool in highlighting the contestations and multiple workings of binary oppositions such as urban/rural; however it is necessarily is not concerned with

demonstrating 'truth' or objectivity. As such my selection of thematic codes and my analytic process may be open to charges of 'relativism' or that there is no real way to judge whether I have successfully demonstrated that discourses of LGBT equalities have constituted or contested these particular subjects and objects. Here I defer to the defence of Geraldine Pratt, herself critical of poststructural techniques such as discourse analysis. Pratt argues in favour of acknowledging an epistemological as well as political and ethical distinction between anything-goes relativism and (specifically discussing poststructural and discursive approaches to gender) 'a careful process of situating differences among women so as to understand how gender is constructed in myriad ways' (Pratt 2008:56). In the case of my analysis, I demonstrate such a 'careful process of situating differences' through minutely-detailed explorations of data gathered across years of research, the collection (and in some cases analysis) of which was developed in close partnership with those most involved in the discourses and subjectifications I explore. The discourse analysis undertaken for specifically for this thesis followed the steps suggested by Parker (2004:310) to demonstrate an organised and rigorous analytic process. My analysis strives therefore not for singular or objective 'truth' – certainly it is the case that others exploring my data could identify alternative discourses and subjectifications enacted through it – but for authenticity in the eyes of subjects and readers.

With these critiques in mind, I suggest it would be somewhat spurious to flag them as simple 'limitations'. To do so would be to demand community-focused PAR conform to a particular set of positivist scientific standards surrounding 'validity', which I feel would jeopardise the entire ethos of reflexive, action-oriented participatory research (Aziz et al 2011; Fals Borda 2001; Koch & Kralik 2006:14; Kindon et al 2010; Pain 2004). Indeed, in Chapter 5 Section 3.3 I engage with precisely these issues of producing evidence and demonstrating validity. The kind of multi-partner PAR undertaken through the LGBT Equalities Forum is itself a response to demands for rigid positivist validity, acknowledging

that this construction of validity must be addressed while simultaneously contesting it and acknowledging other 'validities'. This research negotiates rather than conforms to this form of positivist scientific validity – it attempts to be 'valid enough' to contribute to multiple research aims and perspectives while also incorporating those which cannot be addressed solely through a strictly positivist approach.

#### **7.4 – Further Research Directions**

The wealth of data captured by the mixed-methods PAR approach used could not possibly be done full justice in a single thesis. As can be seen in Appendix G, a large number of qualitative analysis codes remain under-explored in the thesis and yet the data accruing to them suggests intriguing new possibilities for research. In addition, the results of my analysis point towards new areas of exploration for geographers of sexualities and those interested in public sector LGBT equalities in the UK. I highlight some of the key areas of possible future research in this section.

In Chapters 3 and 5 I dwelt extensively on the participatory nature of the research underpinning this thesis, noting in particular the importance of the audio recorded forum meetings in capturing and facilitating reflection upon the participatory research process itself. These chapters, combined with my personal research notes recording my experiences as a participant in the forum, have encouraged me to consider the spatialities of participatory research. The LGBT Equalities Forum as a space enabled and produced particular performances and practices, while the repeated 'doing' of PAR resulted in a variety of connections between participants which extended across personal, professional and community subjectivities. Re-reading my personal research diary and listening to the recorded transcripts of the forum, I am struck by the feelings of friendship and camaraderie

which appeared to develop, by the number of times participants made each other laugh and developed 'in-jokes' within this particular space. I have also noted the connections between participants which occurred (physically) outside this space, such as meeting each other for coffees, chatting during car or train rides or meeting at various events unconnected to the forum. I feel that important insights could be gained by further exploring the complex socio-spatialities of participatory research, which may further build upon the hybrid possibilities beyond the physical spaces of partnership work which I discussed in Chapter 5.

I also envisage vital research based in the 'ordinary' small cities, large towns and areas which do not fit comfortably into rural or urban, such as those explore in this thesis. Focused as it is on issues of public sector LGBT equalities, this thesis was not able to satisfactorily engage with the complexities and specifics of LGBT lives and communities in such areas. Alternative geographic imaginaries such as the 'small town' may be able to produce important new insights rendered invisible by the prevailing urban/rural dynamic and also help to understand the needs of relatively neglected LGBT lives and communities, while simultaneously offering an ongoing and robust challenge to metronormative geographies of sexualities.

Finally, building on my work in Chapter 6, I recommend further research into public sector engagements with the three public sector equality duties, particularly Equality Duty C. While this research was valuable due to its geographically and temporally grounded nature, future research which drew upon broader UK geographies and across a different period of time could give better indications as to how LGBT equalities are being rationalised and implemented at a variety of geographic scales. It would also seem important to consider whether, in the years after the Equality Act 2010's implementation, these duties are



considered to have had an influence on institutional policy and practice, and on local LGBT lives and communities.

### **7.5 – Thesis Conclusion**

In this thesis I have sought to bring together geographies of sexualities and gender identities with the production and practice of LGBT equalities. ‘Metronormative’ understandings of LGBT lives risk neglecting already-marginalised LGBT lives and communities, while also masking the complexity of the urban/rural dynamic with regard to sexual and gender identities. By exploring LGBT equalities ‘in the shadow of the gay capital’, I challenged assumptions of rural intolerance and inequalities towards LGBT people, and showed that imaginaries of ‘the urban’ and ‘the rural’ remain vitally important in the construction of sexualities and gender identities, but are constructed by them in return. However, I have also demonstrated the equal importance of alternative geographic imaginaries, such as specific ones like the ‘gay capital’ and more broad ones like the ‘small town’ – by acknowledging a wider array of geographies, I argue that we can engage with relatively invisible LGBT lives and communities in the UK which may nevertheless be numerically common. Reflecting on the Participatory Action Research which underpinned this research, I also demonstrated that novel and progressive LGBT equalities work can and does occur outside of cities and metropolitan urban centres – indeed, while the kind of public sector / community partnership work undertaken by the LGBT Equalities Forum was not unproblematic, I have argued that the hybrid possibilities emerging from it can spark important and radical reconsiderations of the assimilation vs transgression debate upon which LGBT politics so often circle around. Finally, my research highlighted the discursive and performative slipperiness of public sector LGBT ‘equalities’. However, this very slipperiness – particularly with regard to the anxieties surrounding Equality Duty C –

demonstrates that public sector equalities need not necessarily mean complicity with problematic neo/liberal agendas of normalisation and responsabilisation. The discussions occurring within the LGBT Equalities Forum, and emerging through its PAR initiatives, clearly demonstrate that cities and urban areas do not have a stranglehold on progressive LGBT equalities – radical discussions, rationalisations and practices were occurring in East Sussex during the period 2010-2013 in the wake of the Equality Act 2010. Attending to LGBT equalities in rural and non-urban areas widens our understanding of how geographies and equalities are intertwined, and brings into focus challenging and potentially progressive discourses and practices which may enable further work to move beyond binaries of assimilation/transgression and opposition/complicity regarding the politics of LGBT equalities.

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**Appendix A – ‘On Our Doorsteps’ Funding Application Form for LGBT  
Equalities in Hastings, Rother and East Sussex Project**



**University of Brighton**

**Community  
University  
Partnership  
Programme**

**On our  
doorsteps**

The following questions should be answered with reference to the project selection criteria in the Guidance Notes. You should also confirm that your application has been seen by and agreed by your Head of School/line manager. *It is essential that you have contacted Ceri Davies to discuss your application before this form is submitted:* [c.davies@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:c.davies@brighton.ac.uk)

**1. Partnership Information**

**University Partners**

*Supervisor/University partner:* Dr. Kath Browne (School of Environment & Technology)

*University Research Assistant:* Nick McGlynn (School of Environment & Technology)

*Contact details:* School of Environment & Technology, Cockcroft Building, Lewes Road, Brighton, BN2 4GJ

Email: [k.a.browne@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:k.a.browne@brighton.ac.uk)

Tel: +441273 642377

**Community Partners**

*Hastings Rainbow Alliance*

*Contact details:* [info@hrra.org.uk](mailto:info@hrra.org.uk)

HRRA, c/o Hastings Voluntary Action, 31a Priory Street, Hastings, TN34 1EA  
07505 819344

*Hastings & Rother LGBT Wellbeing Group*

*Contact details:* (Charles Neal, Chair) [charlesneal@pinktherapy.com](mailto:charlesneal@pinktherapy.com)  
01424 719123

**Ongoing relationships**

We seek this funding to begin a project based alliance that will work within a community of practice to progress equalities for LGBT people in Hastings. We are asking for this seed funding to seek further support in order to develop these partnerships into mutually beneficial relationships, perhaps through a PhD project.

## **2. Project Information (no more than 1000 words)**

### **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Equalities Community-University Partnership in Hastings, Rother and East Sussex: Preparing for the Equalities Act 2010**

#### **Context:**

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) lives are marginalised and excluded in spatially uneven ways. Hastings is one of the most socially and economically deprived regions of the UK and the most deprived in the South-East. Not only are LGBT people and communities struggling against this background, they are also dealing with a low awareness of their needs and the existence of gender and sexual difference in the area. This is particularly pertinent in as the Equality Act 2010 comes into place. This act puts the onus on public bodies to cater for their LGBT populations. Given that there is often a lack of engagement with LGBT communities- there is a clear need to upskill local public bodies to adequately enact their new duties.

A 2003 survey of LGBT lives in Hastings and Rother (Fairley and Noudjem, 2004) found that whilst there was evidence of seeking to move from the city and not feeling accepted in the community, there were also significant proportions of people who had not experienced discrimination at work or experienced physical violence. However, the vast majority of respondents (84%) felt that their views were not taken into account by service providers.

With the passing of the Equalities Act (2010) service providers have public service duties to LGBT communities and constituents. This is having the dual effects of firstly empowering LGBT activists who can now make demands of services without needing to 'prove' that there are LGBT people in the area and that they have needs, and secondly the Act has prompted a desire from services to understand their responsibilities and meet the requirements of the new legislation.

This project will build on the successful Equalities Forum held on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> February organized by the Rainbow Alliance and supported by the University of Brighton. Alongside speeches from Equalities Minister Michael Foster and campaigner Peter Tatchell, the University's Count Me In Too project was presented and options for Hastings and Rother discussed. Local examples of good practice were identified in areas such as education. Similar to the Go Hastings report (Fairley and Noudjem, 2004), it can be seen that in LGBT equalities in Hastings, Rother and East Sussex is complex. The Equalities Day in itself prompted an agreed amendment to the Hastings Borough Council's policy that now ensures 'equality for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender (LGBT) Community, Hastings Borough Council will include objectives to accept LGBT issues within the Single Equalities Scheme and Action Plan'.

Thus, this project will offer a timely intervention into the local context of Hastings, Rother and East Sussex as a whole, where traditionally interaction between LGBT communities and local services and providers has not necessarily resulted in positive action for change or response to identified needs. It will benefit the community partners in extending their engagement with services, public bodies etc. and it will augment academic work in the area of LGBT lives within and beyond the metropolis.

### **Project Aims:**

#### *Project aim:*

The project aims to improve the lives of LGBT people in Hastings, Rother and East Sussex by creating strategic networks between academic institutions, local communities and services. The initial phase of the promotion of these networks will be in the lifetime of the 'On Our Doorsteps' project.

Whilst it is impossible to estimate the number of people this project will impact, it is clear that there is a need and desire to facilitate productive partnerships within the already existing structures of Hastings, Rother and East Sussex.

#### *Longer term aims*

Ongoing work will seek the active participation in the activities of local organizations working with, or on behalf of, LGB&T residents, to include younger and older people, more rural residents, people with varying abilities, BME and other minority residents. This project aims to begin affecting the awareness and decision-making of local elected representatives, suppliers of services and employers.

### **Activities to be undertaken**

The activities here are proposed by the University of Brighton and representatives from Hastings and Rother Rainbow Alliance with the Hastings and Rother LGBT Wellbeing Group and will be finalised with the steering group. There will be at least two phases in the development of ongoing partnership working in the area of LGBT equalities in Hastings Rother and East Sussex.

*Phase one-* supported by on our doorsteps funding will include:

1. A series of meetings/action learning sets with specific aims and tangible outcomes. The first meeting to decide the content and format of these meetings will be on the 19<sup>th</sup> May 2010. Action Learning Sets, following the model developed by McNulty et al (2010), will be explored as an option for this group.
2. A mapping exercise to identify pockets of excellence as well as gaps. This exercise was agreed at the LGBT equalities meeting in March 2010. The questions to be asked and the sampling method to be used has yet to be decided. It is expected that asking questions regarding legal responsibilities, policies, practices and so on will in itself prompt in itself public bodies to become aware of their legal responsibilities and how they might deliver and monitor these.
3. Setting up a website forum where questions can be posed and answered in ways that address the local contexts but can draw on national and international data.
4. Academic insights into service provision and excellence beyond specific metropolises - questioning the assumption that only metropolitan areas are engaging with their LGBT populations

#### *Phase two:*

This project will support the possibilities of pursuing larger projects by beginning putting key partnerships in place, developing and engendering trust in the University

of Brighton and the University's commitment to LGBT communities in Hastings and area

1. Action learning sets to pursue partnership working in targetted ways, identified in phase one and through the mapping exercise.
2. From the mapping exercise, a review of literature and available toolkits (including Stonewall's guide to monitoring, <http://www.stonewall.org.uk/workplace/1473.asp#whatsitgot>), exploring good practice elsewhere and discussions with the LGBT equalities steering group recommendations for mechanisms whereby local public bodies and others can be accountable to, and learn from, LGBT people will be put forward.
3. Assessing the potentials and desire for future community-university projects that examine gender and sexual difference in East Sussex
4. Exploring funding options for a PhD that focuses on the priorities of the group

### **Impacts**

There will be a number of tangible outcomes from this project that will be sustainable beyond the life of the *On Our Doorsteps* funding. It is expected that 10-20 people will be involved in steering groups through the life of the on our doorsteps funding with 50 people attending a dissemination/next phase event in January 2011.

*Phase one impacts could include:*

- From a series of LGBT equalities meetings- partnership working and developing of relationships
- Improving how local public bodies can meaningfully engage with their LGBT communities, recommendations to attain this may include repeating and making annual an LGBT equalities day in the region where services can learn from and be accountable to the local population
- Increased awareness of public body duties and participation of LGBT people in democratic processes.
- Improved working practices by those involved through increased awareness and knowledge of how to cater for LGBT populations
- Shared tools and research that enhances working practices and prevents wasteful duplication of effort.
- Journal article to be written following the project on service provision 'beyond the metropolis'
- Further bids that draw on, and augment, the networks created and work to improve LGBT lives in East Sussex.

### **3. Project Management**

Please describe what project management arrangements you will put in place and address the question of ethics

#### **Project management**

Overall the project will be managed by the University Researcher Dr. Kath Browne. This will be undertaken in a way that recognises the need to fully involve LGBT

people and public bodies in achieving the aims of the research. Dr. Browne has extensive experience of working within the Count Me In Too research and thus has an understanding of working across University-community-public body divides.

Key task for Dr. Browne will include:

- Facilitate meetings and community engagement
- Supervise the work of Nick McGlynn
- Budget management

### **Ethical approval**

Ethics approval will be received through SET procedures. As there is already a PhD student undertaking research in the area of social cohesion and inclusion in Hastings, she will be used to advise on key ethical issues that may arise in this context. The expertise of Dr. Kath Browne will offer insights into the key ethical issues in working with LGBT groups.

It is anticipated, due to the nature of this project, that the key ethical issues will pertain to informed consent and confidentiality. It is not expected that extremely vulnerable people will be involved directly with this research, however as LGBT people are involved ethical approval will be needed.

#### 4. Tasks & Budget

Please outline the main tasks and timescales for completion in the table below (Appendix 1) and include a budget outlining the costs you are applying

Task description	Start	Finish	By whom	Outcome	Notes
Meeting organisation	May	Dec	NM	Series of LGBT equalities meeting- approx. one every 6 weeks depending on the wishes of the group	
Meeting facilitation	May	Dec	KB	Enhance partnership working and shared knowledges; directing all activities and decide key aspects of the research	
Planning mapping exercise- decide key questions, decide sampling, areas to be covered	May	June	Stakeholder group	Focus of mapping exercise decided	
Undertake mapping exercise	June	Nov	NM	Mapping of public duties	
Interim examination of mapping exercise	Sept	Sept	Stakeholder group	Discussion of the progress of the mapping exercise, discussion of gaps and ways to address them, highlighting areas of potential concern	
Website forum	July	Ongoing	KB to seek student involvement	Website that enables users to share knowledges	
Funding applications	Oct	Until successful	NM/KB to write with full involvement of stakeholder group	Applications to a range of bodies to extend the work on LGBT equalities, perhaps within the framework of the PhD and within the Coastal Regeneration Research Centre	
Academic writing	Nov	Late 2011	KB/NM	Learning from Hastings used to inform national and international knowledges regarding LGBT equalities	
Dissemination event	Nov	Jan	All	Sharing outcomes of the mapping exercise	316

**Costs**

<b>Cost</b>	<b>Amount (£)</b>
Lead researcher (1 day per month for 6 months)	1500
Research Assistant (1 day per week for 6 months)	2300
Contribution for community time and capacity- Rainbow Alliance	500
Meeting costs	300
Contingency	400
<b>Total</b>	<b>5000</b>

## **Appendix B - LGBT Equalities Forum Participant Information Sheet**

**Title of Project: LGBT Equalities in Hastings, Rother & East Sussex**

**Introduction:** You are being invited to take part in a research study that explores LGBT equalities in Hastings, Rother & East Sussex through discussions held by the LGBT Equalities Forum and the planning, preparation and execution of an LGBT equalities mapping exercise.

Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Talk to others about the study if you wish.

Please ask the researcher Nick McGlynn or his supervisors if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Contact details can be found below. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

**Purpose of research:** The purpose of this research is to understand further contemporary LGBT equalities in Hastings, Rother and East Sussex.

**Why me?:** You have been chosen to take part in this research due to your involvement with the LGBT Equalities Forum.

**What happens if I take part?:** If you agree to be involved, meetings of the LGBT Equalities Forum will be audio-recorded. The researchers will always indicate clearly when recording is beginning and when it is ending. The researchers will also use notes taken during and after meetings of the LGBT Equalities Forum to capture data that cannot be captured by audio recording. Audio recordings will later be typed out by a transcriber, and written notes will be typed up. Verbatim quotations from the transcript may be used and published reports and presentations from the LGBT Equalities in Hastings, Rother and East Sussex research project, and they may also be used in future research investigating LGBT communities, equalities and services in Hastings, Rother and East Sussex. Quotations will be kept anonymous, unless you ask to be identified.

**Do I have to take part?:** It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part, you will be recorded along with others during meetings of the LGBT Equalities Forum. If you decide not to take part, but others do, your contribution to the conversations will not be transcribed or used, although as usual the overall decisions and discussions of the group will be recorded in meeting minutes.

You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. If you wish to withdraw from a recording or from the research as a whole at any time (including during a recording) you may do so immediately. You do not need to give a reason, and you will incur no



negative effects, nor will this affect your rights. Please let Nick McGlynn know when you feel comfortable to do so and he will remove your contributions.

**What are the benefits of this research?:** The benefits of taking part in this research include helping to find out more about LGBT equalities in Hastings, Rother & East Sussex and working in a collective way with the aim of improving LGBT lives in this area. Additionally, capturing data from this pilot project will help to record the methods involved in this kind of equalities research, which could be used in other LGBT equalities projects.

**Will I be named?:** You can choose whether or not to be named in the data gathered. You can choose how you would like to be named – usually this is your forename and your position in your organisation, but please speak to Nick McGlynn if you would like to be named in a different way, or if you would like to describe your position in a different way.

If you do not wish to be named you will be assigned a pseudonym and the general area of work you are involved in will be referred to in a non-identifying way. To better ensure your anonymity you can choose how your area of work is referred to.

During a meeting you can ask that certain parts of your words are not recorded. Please let Nick McGlynn know when you feel comfortable to do so and he will note to remove your contributions.

After a meeting, you can still ask that certain parts of recorded data are not used, even if you have chosen to take part and be named in the research. Please contact Nick McGlynn at your convenience to arrange this.

**How will what I say be used?:** Verbatim quotations from the transcript may be used and published reports and presentations from the LGBT Equalities in Hastings, Rother and East Sussex research project, and they may also be used in future research investigating LGBT communities, equalities and services in Hastings, Rother and East Sussex. Quotations will be kept anonymous, unless you ask to be identified.

If you want to remain anonymous the data will be anonymised where possible before it is used in any publication or reported on elsewhere. Due to the nature of the data collected there may be times when you could be identified because of your experience/involvement/position. If you do not wish to be known in relation to these Nick McGlynn will do his best to make to generalise any identifying details, and he will discuss this with you.

If you do wish to be identified with your words (and of course achievements), your name will be used in the outputs but no personal or contact details will be revealed.

You will be asked if you would like a copy of the transcripts (a written version of what you have said) of your own recorded data. Summaries and selected quotes from this recorded data may be seen by the LGBT Equalities in Hastings, Rother and East Sussex group. There is a chance that your data may be archived with all the other LGBT Equalities in Hastings, Rother & East Sussex materials, ensuring that this is available for future generations. Please let us know you do not want this to happen.

Any information you provide will be kept private and not discussed by the researchers formally or informally.

**How will what I say be stored?:** Your data will be stored securely during and after the study, in locked drawers and password-protected computer files, in a secure building. Only the academic researcher (Nick McGlynn) and his supervisors will have access to the complete data.

**Further information, problems and complaints:** If you wish to be informed of the results of the research after this project's completion, you can contact either of the researchers. If you encounter any sort of problem or have a complaint please contact Nick McGlynn ([n.mcglynn@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:n.mcglynn@brighton.ac.uk), tel. 01273 641993). If you would like to speak to a different person, please contact Dr Kath Browne ([k.a.browne@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:k.a.browne@brighton.ac.uk)), or the School of Environment & Technology at the University of Brighton ([entec@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:entec@brighton.ac.uk), tel. 01273 642288), who will be able to assist you or direct you to someone who can.



**Appendix D - Mapping Exercise General Questions and Bespoke  
Questions for East Sussex County Council Adult Social Care  
Department**

Dear <name of contact>,

I am writing to you from the University of Brighton and on behalf of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Equalities Group of Hastings, Rother and East Sussex. Since May 2010 this group has been working to devise a series of questions to map public sector engagements with lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) equalities. I enclose a questionnaire asking general and specific questions about your organisation's equalities initiatives and practices in the LGBT area.

The overarching work, of which this initial mapping is just a part, seeks to work for positive social change for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans LGBT people in Hastings, Rother and East Sussex, by helping voluntary and statutory services to improve their own services with regard to LGBT people and equalities. Additionally, data from this pilot project could be used in other LGBT equalities projects.

We are specifically contacting your organisation at the recommendation of members of the LGBT Equalities Group. We are asking you to complete the attached questionnaire in electronic form following the directions provided and return it to Nick McGlynn ([n.mcglynn@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:n.mcglynn@brighton.ac.uk)). If you wish to complete a hard copy version of this questionnaire, please contact Nick McGlynn, (01273 641993).

All the questions ask for information that should be within the public domain and address organisational and policy issues. **Therefore, please do not include personal or sensitive information.**

Please attach any relevant documents or examples, using additional pages if necessary or as an attachment to a replying email. The data you provide will be made publically available, and may be used in published academic reports, presentations and papers. It may be disseminated throughout local communities and press. The data may also be used in future research investigating LGBT communities, equalities and services in Hastings, Rother and East Sussex.

If there is anything that is not clear, if you would like more information, or if you wish to be informed of the results of the research after this project's completion, you can contact the academic researcher, Nick McGlynn, by email ([n.mcglynn@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:n.mcglynn@brighton.ac.uk)) or phone (01273 641993), or alternatively by sending a letter to:

School of Environment & Technology  
Cockcroft Building  
Lewes Road,

Brighton BN2 4GJ

If you encounter any sort of problem or have a complaint please contact Nick McGlynn. If you would like to speak to a different person, please contact Dr Kath Browne ([k.a.browne@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:k.a.browne@brighton.ac.uk)), or the School of Environment & Technology at the University of Brighton ([entec@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:entec@brighton.ac.uk), tel. 01273 642288), who will be able to assist you or direct you to someone who can.

Yours,

Nick McGlynn and Dr. Kath Browne (University of Brighton)

on behalf of the LGBT Equalities in Hastings, Rother & East Sussex Group

## **LGBT Equality Policies**

1) Does your organisation have policies that relate to lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) equality? (please tick)

- YES\_\_\_ (go to Q1a)
- NO\_\_\_ (go to Q2)
- DON'T KNOW\_\_\_ (go to Q2)
- N/A\_\_\_ (go to Q2)

1a) If yes, please provide details in the space provided, and/or send Nick McGlynn specific policies as an attachment. Continue to Q2.

2) Does your organisation account for 'multiple marginalisation' with regard to LGBT people (eg. LGBT people with disabilities, older and younger LGBT people)? (please tick)

- YES\_\_\_ (go to Q2a)
- NO\_\_\_ (go to Q3)
- DON'T KNOW\_\_\_ (go to Q3)
- N/A\_\_\_ (go to Q3)

2a) If yes, please provide details in the space provided, and/or send Nick McGlynn specific policies as an attachment. Continue to Q3.

3) Does your organisation collect data about LGBT service users? (please tick)

- YES\_\_\_ (go to Q3a)
- NO\_\_\_ (go to Q4)
- DON'T KNOW\_\_\_ (go to Q4)
- N/A\_\_\_ (go to Q4)

3a) If yes, what data is collected? Please provide details in the space provided, and/or send Nick McGlynn specific policies as an attachment. Continue to Q3b.

3b) In what ways is this data used? Please provide details in the space provided, and/or send Nick McGlynn specific policies as an attachment. Continue to Q4.

4) Have your organisation's Equality Impact Assessments addressed LGBT issues?

- YES\_\_\_ (go to Q4a)
- NO\_\_\_ (go to Q5)
- DON'T KNOW\_\_\_ (go to Q5)
- N/A\_\_\_ (go to Q5)

4a) If yes, have these Equality Impact Assessments been acted upon? Please provide details in the space provided, and/or send Nick McGlynn specific policies as an attachment. Continue to Q5.

5) Does your organisation try to ensure that its public information and media is LGBT friendly?

- YES\_\_\_ (go to Q5a)
- NO\_\_\_ (go to Q6)
- DON'T KNOW\_\_\_ (go to Q6)
- N/A\_\_\_ (go to Q6)

5a) If yes, in what ways does it do so? Please provide details in the space provided, and/or send Nick McGlynn specific policies as an attachment. Continue to Q6.

6) Will the cuts in public services announced in October 2010 affect LGBT equalities work in your service?

- YES\_\_\_ (go to Q6a)
- NO\_\_\_ (go to Q7)
- DON'T KNOW\_\_\_ (go to Q7)
- N/A\_\_\_ (go to Q7)

6a) If yes, in what ways will they do so? Please provide details in the space provided, and/or send Nick McGlynn specific policies as an attachment. Continue to Q7.

7) What would help your organisation to take further positive steps to improve LGBT equality in your organisation?

## **LGBT Equality and Staff**

1) Does your organisation collect data about LGBT staff members?

- YES\_\_\_ (go to Q1a)
- NO\_\_\_ (go to Q2)
- DON'T KNOW\_\_\_ (go to Q2)
- N/A\_\_\_ (go to Q2)

1a) If yes, what data is collected? Please provide details in the space provided, and/or send Nick McGlynn specific policies as an attachment. Continue to Q1b.

1b) How is this data used? Please provide details in the space provided, and/or send Nick McGlynn specific policies as an attachment. Continue to Q2.

2) Does your organisation offer LGBT-related staff training?

- YES\_\_\_ (go to Q2a)
- NO\_\_\_ (go to Q3)
- DON'T KNOW\_\_\_ (go to Q3)
- N/A\_\_\_ (go to Q3)

2a) If yes, when were these offered and to whom? Please provide details in the space provided, and send Nick McGlynn a recent schedule and agenda as an attachment. Continue to Q2b.

2b) Is LGBT-related staff training compulsory?

- YES\_\_\_ (go to Q3)

- NO\_\_\_ (go to Q3)
- DON'T KNOW\_\_\_ (go to Q3)
- N/A\_\_\_ (go to Q3)

3) Are there any LGBT staff associations or groups in your organisation?

- YES\_\_\_ (go to Q3a)
- NO\_\_\_ (go to Q4)
- DON'T KNOW\_\_\_ (go to Q4)
- N/A\_\_\_ (go to Q4)

3a) If yes, please provide details of these groups and their activities in the space provided, and/or send Nick McGlynn details as an attachment. Continue to Q3b.

3b) What support do they receive from your organisation? Please provide details in the space provided, and/or send Nick McGlynn specific policies as an attachment. Continue to Q4.

4) Does your organisation have a member of staff responsible for championing LGBT equalities?

- YES\_\_\_ (go to Q4a)
- NO\_\_\_ (go to next section)
- DON'T KNOW\_\_\_ (go to next section)
- N/A\_\_\_ (go to next section)

4a) If yes, please provide specific details of the staff and their roles and responsibilities in the space provided, and/or send Nick McGlynn details as an attachment. Continue to next section.

## **The Equality Act 2010 and LGBT People**

1) How is your organisation informing its staff about the LGBT-related parts of the Equality Act 2010? Please provide details in the space provided, and/or send Nick McGlynn specific policies as an attachment.



**Note:** The Equality Act charges public authorities with a proactive duty to

- eliminate LGBT discrimination,
- advance LGBT equality,
- foster understanding between LGBT people and non-LGBT people.

2) Does your organisation address duty a: eliminate LGBT discrimination?

- YES\_\_\_ (go to Q2a)
- NO\_\_\_ (go to Q3)
- DON'T KNOW\_\_\_ (go to Q3)
- N/A\_\_\_ (go to Q3)

2a) If yes, please provide details in the space provided, and/or send Nick McGlynn specific policies as an attachment. Continue to Q3.

3) Does your organisation address duty b: advance LGBT equality?

- YES\_\_\_ (go to Q3a)
- NO\_\_\_ (go to Q4)
- DON'T KNOW\_\_\_ (go to Q4)
- N/A\_\_\_ (go to Q4)

3a) If yes, please provide details in the space provided, and/or send Nick McGlynn specific policies as an attachment. Continue to Q4.

4) Does your organisation address duty c: foster understanding between LGBT people and non-LGBT people?

- YES\_\_\_ (go to Q4a)
- NO\_\_\_ (go to Q5)
- DON'T KNOW\_\_\_ (go to Q5)
- N/A\_\_\_ (go to Q5)

4a) If yes, please provide details in the space provided, and/or send Nick McGlynn specific policies as an attachment. Continue to Q5.

5) In what ways will your organization ensure that LGBT people are not disproportionately affected by the public sector service cuts announced in October 2010? Please provide details in the space provided, and/or send Nick McGlynn specific policies as an attachment.

### **Adult Social Care Questions**

1) Has the self-directed support 'Putting People First' policy made a difference regarding lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) equality?

- YES\_\_\_ (go to Q1a)
- NO\_\_\_ (go to Q2)
- DON'T KNOW\_\_\_ (go to Q2)
- N/A\_\_\_ (go to Q2)

1a) What difference has the Putting People First policy made in relation to LGBT equality? Please provide details in the space provided, and/or send Nick McGlynn specific policies as an attachment. Continue to Q2

2) Does Adult Social Care try to ensure LGBT equality in commissioning and in partner groups and organisations?

- YES\_\_\_ (go to Q2a)
- NO\_\_\_ (go to Q3)
- DON'T KNOW\_\_\_ (go to Q3)
- N/A\_\_\_ (go to Q3)

2a) If yes, please provide details in the space provided, and/or send Nick McGlynn specific policies as an attachment. Continue to Q3.

3) Are LGBT equalities addressed for older LGBT people living in care homes and residing in elderly wards?

- YES\_\_\_ (go to Q4a)
- NO\_\_\_ (go to Q5)
- DON'T KNOW\_\_\_ (go to Q5)
- N/A\_\_\_ (go to Q5)

3a) If yes, please provide details in the space provided, and/or send Nick McGlynn specific policies as an attachment.

**Thank you for completing this questionnaire and helping us to map LGBT equalities in Hastings, Rother and East Sussex. If your organisation would like to get involved in this initiative please let Nick McGlynn know.**

**Please return your completed questionnaire to Nick McGlynn at the University of Brighton by email ([n.mcglynn@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:n.mcglynn@brighton.ac.uk)) or mail to:**

**School of Environment & Technology,**

**Cockcroft Building,**

**Lewes Road,**

**Brighton BN2 4GJ**

## **Appendix E – Online Questionnaire Ethics Approval Form**

### **UNIVERSITY OF BRIGHTON SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENT AND TECHNOLOGY ETHICS APPROVAL FORM MPhil/PhD and STAFF RESEARCH PROJECTS**

This form is to be used by MPhil/PhD students and staff seeking ethical approval for their research from the School of Environment and Technology Research Ethics and Governance Committee.

All of those completing this form must receive approval from an appropriate ethics committee (usually the School of Environment and Technology Research Ethics and Governance Committee) prior to commencing their research.

Please read the University Guidance on Good Practice in Research Ethics and Governance before completing this form. This form should be checked carefully for typographical and grammatical errors before submission. Incomplete or badly presented forms will be returned. Supervisors of student projects have a responsibility to ensure that the guidelines are followed and that applications are properly presented.

If after considering this form the School Research Ethics and Governance Committee consider Tier Two approval is required, the Principal Investigator / Research student will be notified and this form automatically passed to the Chair of the Faculty Research Ethics and Governance Committee for consideration.

**Please attach the SET Research Ethics Checklist you have already completed to this form.**

#### **Section A – Key details**

1. Name of student/Principal Investigator **Nick McGlynn**
2. Name of supervisor (for MPhil/PhD students) **Dr Kath Browne**  
**(Please note that this research is being conducted through participatory research and therefore the ‘researchers’ also include members of the LGBT Equalities Forum. In addition, it is hoped that the research will continue beyond the PhD supervised by Dr. Kath Browne)**
3. Title of project (no more than 20 words) **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Trans (LGBT) Equalities in Hastings, Rother & East Sussex**

#### 4. Aims of the study

*Please summarise your aims in one or two sentences. Write no more than 100 words.*

1. Examine public service equality policies for LGBT people in Hastings and Rother.
2. Explore the localized impacts and implementation of LGBT equalities legislation in a time of financial austerity.
3. Contribute to studies of the geographies of sexualities beyond the urban metropolis.

#### 5. Research context

*A brief summary should be provided discussing the relevant published literature so that the Committee can understand the context to your research. In addition, please supply four or five up-to-date references to the relevant published literature. You may supply up to 800 words.*

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) lives are marginalised and excluded in spatially uneven ways. This research builds on 1) work on the geographies of sexualities, and also 2) work on how social policymaking and the public sector engage with gender and sexual identities.

Historically, geographical studies of sexualities have focused on metropolitan urban centres (Brown 2008). With regard to 'the rural', geographers have previously explored the troubled and secretive lives of rural LGBT people (Kramer 1995). More recent scholarship calls this urban/rural positive/negative dichotomy into question, critically interrogating the relationships between the urban and the rural with regard to LGBT people and communities. LGBT people are no longer seen as existing solely in 'the urban' or 'the rural' but instead as existing in a relationship with both (Kennedy 2010), particularly in post-industrial British society. This research looks at public sector services for LGBT people outside of cosmopolitan urban centres, in an area which cannot simply be labelled 'urban' or 'rural'.

UK-based scholars have contributed to the discussion surrounding the UK government and public sector and how these have engaged with gender and sexual identities. Particularly noted is the profound effect of changes in the governing political party to the public sector's work on sexual and gender equalities and the lives and needs of LGBT people; at a more local level, local governments and the public sector need capacity, resources and legislative/political backing to move ahead with LGBT-related initiatives (Colgan et al 2009). Other writers have engaged more critically with the theory and practice of LGBT equality in the UK public sector. Monro has argued that the evaluation of policies designed to address issues related to

LGBT identities and sexualities has thus far been inadequate. She suggests that key factors in the successful implementation of such policies – such as homophobia, fragmented political structures and the local and national political context – are often not addressed (Monro 2006). Coming from a different angle, Cooper demonstrates the ways in which the very promotion of LGBT equalities, at the level of local government and services, can paradoxically lead to the diminishing capacity for an active sexual citizenship, ie. a citizenship ‘involving collective acts of participation and political guidance’ (Cooper 2006:924). Therefore policies designed to improve or promote LGBT equalities at the local level are far from unproblematic, and may result in new forms of disempowerment which are all the more difficult to see through a rhetoric of rights and equality.

Recently the UK has seen the advent of the far-reaching Equalities Act 2010, through which public sector bodies took on proactive duties to improve equalities for minorities across seven protected characteristics – including gender identity and sexual orientation. In the same year the Liberal Democrat / Conservative coalition government implemented a series of heavy financial cuts to public sector bodies. This confluence suggests that now may be a particularly complex and difficult time for LGBT initiatives and the public sector. Therefore this research offers a timely intervention by bringing together geographies, sexualities and the public sector in a particular geographic setting. This will highlight the diverse and uneven contexts in which LGBT lives are lived and legislative equalities practiced which refuse to be bounded, including urban and rural, and national and local.

### **References**

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Kennedy, M. (2010) *Rural Men, Sexual Identity and Community*, Journal of Homosexuality 57:8.

Kramer, J (1995) *Bachelor Farmers and Spinsters: Gay and Lesbian Identities and Communities in Rural North Dakota*, in D. Bell & G. Valentine eds. Mapping Desire. New York: Routledge.

Monro, S (2006) *Evaluating local government equalities work: The case of sexualities initiatives in the UK*, Local Government Studies 32:1.

## 6. Research design

*Please provide no more than 800 words and ensure that you discuss your sampling strategy (if appropriate), data collection methods and strategy for data analysis.*

This research consists of two parts. First, an extensive online questionnaire which seeks to recruit LGBT people. The questionnaire includes extensive qualitative as well as quantitative questioning. Second, a half-day event at which local LGBT people will discuss their experiences in facilitated focus groups and have their discussions recorded. This combination of methods will enable the collection of robust and detailed data. The quantitative data gathered by the questionnaire will be comparable with data gathered by local government and public services, with the qualitative data lending clarity and further detail. The qualitative data gathered by the focus groups will enable the exploration of a much wider and more complex landscape of LGBT lives and experiences.

### **Part 1 – Questionnaire**

The online questionnaire was designed in partnership with members of the LGBT Equalities in Hastings, Rother & East Sussex Forum. This forum includes local academics, activists, students, community groups, representatives of local government and public services, representatives from voluntary sector organisations, and interested individuals from the area. Forum members built on an initial series of questions suggested by the academic researchers – these questions provided the thematic structure of the questionnaire, which addresses demographic information; health and wellbeing; safety; areas of living, working and socialising; policies and legislation; public services; and local community groups. Members were also invited to include one or two questions particularly pertinent to their service or organisation. The involvement of this diverse group ensured that the data produced would be in a form usable by local services, and also that it would address and be relevant to local issues and concerns. Once complete the questionnaire will be available via [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com). Piloting will be done with the assistance of members of the LGBT Equalities Forum.

Sampling will operate via pre-existing contact networks maintained by the academic researchers and forum members, word of mouth/snowballing, and through notices in local press and publications, including those of participating public services and community groups. To allow those without personal computers to participate, local computers will be advertised and made available for filling in the questionnaire. In addition, at least one 'drop-in' session will be organised at which those wanting to complete the questionnaire will be able to do so with the assistance of the researcher – these sessions will be arranged either in a University of Brighton space or at a local library.

Both quantitative and qualitative data will be generated by the questionnaire. Academic researchers will perform the analysis. Statistical analysis of quantitative data will be performed with the assistance of SPSS software. Analysis of qualitative data will incorporate manual discourse analysis supported and enhanced by qualitative data coding and analysis software such as NVivo. The data will be explored using academic thinking, current policy and popular debates and analysed in relation to the data gathered during the 5th November event (see part 2) and previous phases of the research as well as the researcher's own notes and research diaries.

### **Part 2 – Event**

This event will supplement the qualitative data generated by the questionnaire. The research focus of this event will be a series of round-table discussions, allowing attendees to share their thoughts about issues raised at the event and their personal experiences as local LGBT people. These discussions will be facilitated and audio recorded by members of the LGBT Equalities Forum, and will provide more detailed qualitative data incorporating a wider variety of perspectives. Each round-table will be themed according to the suggestions of forum members and issues raised by participants during the event. There will be 2 discussion sessions, which will encourage participants to take part in more than one discussion. Facilitators will prepare a few open-ended prompts but otherwise the discussions will be unstructured.

Those invited to the event have been contacted via pre-existing networks maintained by the academic researchers and forum members, word of mouth/snowballing, and through notices in local press and publications, including those of participating public services and community groups.

The transcription of the audio recordings will be performed by the academic researcher, Nick McGlynn. Analysis of the qualitative data will incorporate



manual discourse analysis supported and enhanced by qualitative data coding and analysis software such as NVivo.

### **Dissemination**

The initial findings of this research will be disseminated to members of the LGBT Equalities Forum in a hard-copy findings report, produced by Nick Mcglynn and Kath Browne in consultation with LGBT stakeholders and the LGBT equalities forum. An electronic version will enable wider dissemination of this findings report, sharing the results with local LGBT communities with the assistance of local LGBT community groups and the local press. Funding permitting, a small launch event may be held to further publicise the findings.

The data will be owned by the University of Brighton but potentially available for future research. This will need to be approved and supervised by University researchers. Further dissemination might include other published reports, press releases, events and presentations from/to the LGBT Equalities Forum.

7. Provide details of financial sponsorship and any ethical issues this may raise (50-150 words)

1) The PhD research is funded through a University of Brighton studentship. The researcher has worked with the LGBT Equalities Forum and partner LGBT community groups prior to this research and the academic nature of the research has been discussed by them. Forum members have been heavily involved in the design of the research from inception and have been given paid time to participate in the forum.

2) Public sector representatives, including some facilitators, are charged £50 for attendance at the 5th November event. To ensure against these representatives inadvertently influencing discussions, facilitators will receive coaching beforehand to limit their involvement in the discussions (see attached guide for facilitators).

8. If the project involves funding from a Research Council or other organisation with an ethics policy (e.g. a charity) please confirm that the organisation's ethical procedures have been considered and outline any actions taken.

N/A

**Please use the SET Research Ethics Checklist to decide which additional section(s) of this form to complete and complete appropriately**

If you ticked yes to Question 1 in the checklist (Negative Environmental impacts) complete Section B

**If you ticked yes to any of Questions 2-9 (Human Participant Issues) complete Section C**

If you ticked yes to Question 10 (Indirect Involvement of the Public) complete Section D

If you ticked yes to Question 11 (Secondary Data Sources) complete Section E

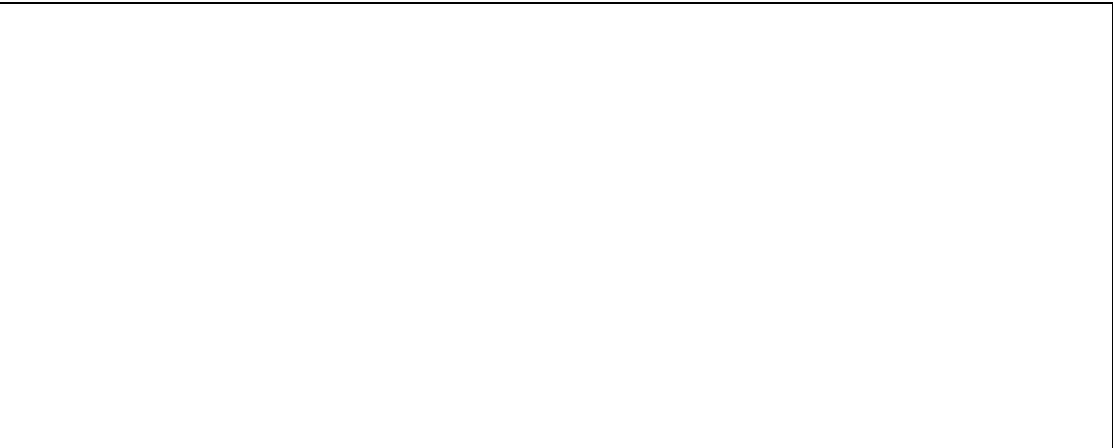
**The project student and the supervisor or the principal investigator in the case of staff research must sign the form in Section F**

**Section B - Potential Risk to the Environment**

*The aim of this section is to check whether you have taken the necessary steps to ensure your research will avoid causing significant negative impact on the environment.*

9. If the research is likely to have significant negative impacts on the environment provide details of these impacts (*for example the release of dangerous substances or damaging intrusions into protected habitats*).

10. Please describe how you will mitigate against significant environmental harm and manage risks.



### **Section C - Potential Risk to Human Participants directly working with the researcher**

*The aim of this section is to check whether you have taken the necessary steps to ensure your research will avoid causing physical or emotional harm, pain, discomfort or stress to human participants.*

11. If human participants are directly involved provide brief details regarding the participants and how they will be contacted (e.g. number, age, gender, ethnicity, general residential location).

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) participants will be sought for an online questionnaire and/or participation in a series of recorded round-table discussions. Sampling will mainly be achieved via pre-existing LGBT contact networks in the Hastings and Rother areas. Participants will only be contacted **directly** by the researchers or partner groups/organisations if they have already signed up to a contact network such as a mailing list. Partner groups and organisations include:

- East Sussex Hospitals NHS Trust
- East Sussex County Council (including Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Libraries & Information Service)
- Hastings Borough Council
- Rother District Council
- Wealden District Council
- NHS Hastings and Rother
- Sussex Police
- Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
- University of Brighton
- East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service
- Hastings & Rother Rainbow Alliance
- Her Majesty's Prison Service (HMP Lewes)
- Hastings & Rother Health & Social Care Forum
- Hastings Voluntary Action
- Care for the Carers

- Crime Reduction Initiatives

Public services in East Sussex Country Council will advertise the questionnaire through their network, and this research is also being approved through their procedures.

Other participants may become involved through hearing about the research via word of mouth/snowballing, or through seeing details of the research in local publications such as newspapers, on websites, on in the publications of partner organisations in the LGBT Equalities Forum. Copy of planned advertising is attached to this form.

12. If human participants are directly involved provide details of any participants who might be considered vulnerable due to age or to a social, psychological or medical condition. Examples include children, people with learning disabilities or mental health problems but participants who may be vulnerable are not confined to these groups (*see the University's 'Guidance on Good Practice in Research Ethics and Governance' for more details. Proposals involving such participants are often likely to require ethical approval from the Faculty of Science & Engineering Research Ethics and Governance Committee*).

Given the nature of the research participants may be vulnerable due to their sexual or gender identity. Service users of partner organisations will be contacted and invited to take part in the questionnaire.

13. If human participants are directly involved provide details of any risks participants are likely to face that would not be considered minimal risks (*see the University's 'Guidance on Good Practice in Research Ethics and Governance' for details of possible risks including, but not limited to, physical risks to participants, distress arising from prolonged testing or questions of a sensitive nature, risks for researchers and risks for vulnerable people*). If risks are only minimal please describe the risks and explain why you believe they are only minimal.

The identifiable risks are:

- 1) the potential to be 'outed' (re. sexual or gender identity) through someone else becoming aware of their completing the questionnaire in public or in private or attending the round-table discussions;
- 2) the sensitive and potentially upsetting nature of the questions that asks for details regarding distressing experiences such as hate crime, housing and mental health
- 3) potential coercion on the part of service providers to submit a questionnaire or during the round-table discussions;
- 4) potential coercion on the part of the researcher to submit a questionnaire.

14. Describe the procedures that will be put in place to ensure safe and ethical direct involvement of human participants (Where necessary and as appropriate *include comments where necessary on obtaining informed consent, reducing harm, providing feedback and accessing participants through an individual providing information such as a teacher, manager, employer etc.*). Examples of consent and information forms can be found on StudentCentral.

**Regarding risk 1** (risks during data collection) see Q17.

**Regarding risk 2** (risks due to sensitive information sought), the questionnaire provides advice and contact details for sources of support in areas of sensitive information, at the beginning and end of the questionnaire and at the beginning of every section. These are local support sources, suggested by members of the LGBT Equalities Forum. Where possible these are tailored to the specific area of questioning, eg. mental health support contacts are listed at the start of the Health & Wellbeing section.

The questionnaire also makes it clear that all areas of questioning are strictly optional and should only be answered if the person wishes to do so. At the start of each section it makes clear that the respondent can withdraw at any time during the questionnaire by closing the browser window, and that answers will not be recorded until the completion of the questionnaire.

During any potentially upsetting discussions during the round-table discussions, participants will be able, and advised to leave the discussion without giving a reason. The University researchers will be in place to advise people where they can seek support, including contact details. They will also have a quiet space where people can discuss their feelings. It will be made clear that University researchers are not councillors but are available to listen and provide details of support and advice. Where the situation is not possible to control, services present (including mental health charities) will be sought for advice and if there is any immediate danger to the person or those in the event emergency services will be called.

**Regarding risk 3** (coercion from service providers), if those participating in round-table discussions feel coerced (either directly or indirectly) into taking part, they will be able to remove themselves from the recording immediately simply by saying so, or afterwards by contacting Nick McGlynn, whose details will be given to every participant. The code of conduct that will be used also outlines these opportunities.

The questionnaire clearly states that this should only be completed if the participant wants to. If they feel they have to but do not wish to be involved they are advised to write this in a qualitative answer box and their answers will be removed.

**Regarding risk 4** (coercion from the researcher), the researcher will not force anyone contacted to submit a questionnaire. During drop-in sessions they will be there to support or answer questions, but will not look at the answers given to questions unless asked to by the participant. As with risk 3,

participants are advised to note any coercion in a qualitative answer box, which will result in the removal of their answers.

15. If covert or other controversial research methods are to be used or if the research procedures contravene conventional ethical protocols (*including consent, confidentiality and feedback*), justify the use of such methods and procedures here and outline the measures that will be put into place to mitigate against potential harm. If no controversial techniques will be used and the research will follow normal ethical protocols, please write 'normal ethical protocols' in the box below.

Normal ethical protocols.

16. If human participants are to receive financial reimbursement for their time (*excluding reasonable expenses to cover travel and other costs*) provide details and a short justification (*e.g. amounts and form of reimbursement*).

N/A

17. Describe in 50-100 words how you will ensure data collection is confidential and anonymous (*e.g. interviews cannot be overheard, details will not be accessible to others*), how data will be stored and who will have access to the data. If the data will not be confidential or anonymous outline the justification for this decision here and procedures for mitigating against potential harm. In particular, please outline consent and data protection procedures for the use of participants' images if photographic or video recordings are to be made in the course of the research.

All data should be stored securely. Documentation should be kept in a locked cabinet or desk, and electronic data should preferably be kept on a removable disk or data stick which can be locked away, or if this is not possible on a password protected computer. (*see the University's Guidance on Good Practice in Research Ethics and Governance for further details*)

The online questionnaire will be created via [surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com). It will include a warning about internet privacy, suggests using a computer in a public place (such as a local library) if in doubt, and lists tips and instructions about how to remove traces of this internet use from a variety of web browsers – sourced from <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/internet-safety-guide>. Those advertising the questionnaire or directing their service users towards it will be asked to ensure there is no pressure or influence on the participants. Further protections, including details about privacy when using public computers, are stated at the start of the questionnaire.

Recordings from the round-table discussions will not be made unless full informed written consent has been given by participants. The information about the research will be verbally communicated and all participants will receive a written participant information sheet. Participants will be given the right to withdraw at any time from the conversation/group and also to have their comments removed from the transcript. Consent forms will be signed at the conclusion of the discussion and participants reminded of their right to withdraw, confidentiality etc. Information sheets will contain University researcher details in order to give participants the opportunity to withdraw after the event.

Upon completion of the PhD, ownership of the data will pass to Kath Browne. After 10 years, archiving of the data will be discussed with the local LGBT community.

#### **Section D - Potential risk to members of the public indirectly involved in the research without their knowledge at the time**

*The aim of this section is to check whether you have addressed any ethical issues arising from activities such as covert observation of people in non-public places and the use of methods that will affect privacy.*

18. If the public are indirectly involved in the research without their knowledge at the time please provide brief details (*e.g. how they will be involved and (where known) the age, gender, ethnicity and location of those who will be indirectly involved*).

19. Provide details of any negative impacts members of the public will be likely to face and that would not be considered minimal impacts (*e.g. invasion of privacy, harm to property, being subject to what an individual perceives to be inappropriate behaviour*). If risks are only minimal please describe the risks and explain why you believe they are only minimal.

20. Describe any procedures that will be put in place to ensure safe and ethical indirect involvement of members of the public (*include comments where necessary on providing information and feedback if requested by the public*). Examples of information forms can be found on StudentCentral.



21. If covert or other controversial research methods are to be used or if the research procedures contravene conventional ethical protocols (*including consent, confidentiality and feedback*), justify the use of such methods or procedures here and outline the measures that will be put into place to mitigate against potential harm. If no controversial techniques will be used and the research will follow normal ethical protocols, please write 'normal ethical protocols' in the box below.

22. Describe in 50-100 words how you will ensure data collection is confidential and anonymous (*e.g. people will not be able to be identified by photographs or notes taken by observers*), how data will be stored and who will have access to the data. If the data will not be confidential or anonymous outline the justification for this decision here and procedures for mitigating against potential harm.

All data should be stored securely. Documentation should be kept in a locked cabinet or desk, and electronic data should preferably be kept on a removable disk or data stick which can be locked away, or if this is not possible on a password protected computer. For undergraduate projects normally only the student and supervisor will have access to the data (*see the University's 'Guidance on Good Practice in Research Ethics and Governance' for further details*).

### **Section E - Secondary Data**

*Secondary data refers to any data you plan to use that you will not collect yourself. Examples of sensitive secondary data include datasets held by organisations, patient records, confidential minutes of meetings, and personal diary entries (these are only examples and are not an exhaustive list)*

23. Please provide details (50-100 words) regarding any secondary data to be used that may carry sensitive personal or sensitive organisational information.

24. If secondary data sets containing sensitive personal or sensitive organisational information are to be used outline how such use will be ethically managed (*include details such as anonymising data sets, ensuring protection of source agency, gaining consent of data owners, and how the data will be stored*).

**Section F – Further Details, Accompanying Documentation and Signature**

25. Please add anything relating to ethical issues that should be considered when assessing this project that has not been addressed elsewhere on this form. Continue on another sheet if necessary.

Since public services will be involved in advertising the project and may encourage their service users to participate, there is a risk of participants feeling coerced into participation, and/or feeling influenced in their answers. Service providers will be asked to ensure that their service users have the time to think about taking part and do not feel forced into doing so. The need to take time and to think about participation is reiterated at the beginning of the questionnaire and participant information sheet. Where service users require support to complete the questionnaire and wish to do so, they are advised at the outset to only complete and submit the questionnaire if they are happy to be involved.

The questionnaire is lengthy and is expected to take around an hour to complete. Length has been negotiated to some extent via the extensive use of routing, which will allow many participants to bypass much of the questionnaire which is not relevant to them. However, this remains a significant investment of a participant's time. The findings from the questionnaire, shared amongst local LGBT communities and services, will potentially benefit local participants. These benefits may include enabling local public services to find out more about LGBT equalities, raising

participants' particular LGBT issues, increasing the awareness of LGBT lives outside urban metropolises, highlighting the real impact of LGBT equality legislation and policymaking, and tackling the dearth of research on LGBT lives and experiences in the Hastings and Rother areas. These potential benefits are made clear to participants from the outset, as is the length of the questionnaire. Participants can withdraw at any time, and if a participant withdraws before completing the questionnaire their answers will not be saved. A bar at the top of the questionnaire will indicate progress through the questionnaire.

As noted previously, the Hastings and Rother area suffers from a dearth of research on LGBT lives and experiences. However, the researchers have found the sole foregoing piece of research (Fairley & Nouidjem 2004) useful in developing this research and achieving its initial aims, as the older 'Go Hastings!' report enabled research questions to be formulated which addressed local public services' older policy promises and LGBT initiatives. Members of the LGBT Equalities Forum – including LGBT community members - have also expressed a desire to have further research carried out in the future which will address the findings from this research project. Therefore, in order to contribute to longitudinal and historical studies in the future, we plan to archive the data collected through this phase of the research after 10 years. The data should be archived by University of Brighton researchers and ownership at maintenance after 10 years negotiated with LGBT communities. Archiving will only take place after consultation with local LGBT communities. This will be clearly explained in participant information sheets, during the 5th of November meeting and at the start of the questionnaire.

26. Indicate which of the following are attached to this form.

*The Research Ethics Checklist should be attached for all projects; you only need to provide the other documents if they are applicable to your project*

SET research Ethics Checklist (please remember to attach)

Participant information sheet

Material to be used to advertise the project

Participant consent form (or introduction to be used on questionnaire, see below)

Please note that projects that use questionnaires to be completed by respondents do not need a separate consent form, as consent is inferred if the questionnaire is completed; however, the opening statement on the questionnaire should indicate that this will be the case. All those completing a questionnaire should be offered an information sheet providing further details of the project and contact details of the University. When questionnaires are conducted by the researcher as part of an interview then a consent form should be signed.

27. Please sign this form.

Student / Principal researcher's name

Signed

Date

28. This form must be checked and approved by your supervisor (for MPhil / PhD students)

Any further Comments from supervisor:

Supervisor name

Signed

Date

## **Appendix F – Online Questionnaire Information and Questions**

### **Questionnaire Information**

**Introduction:** You are being asked to take part in research that looks at lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) equalities in Hastings, Rother & East Sussex using a detailed questionnaire. It will ask you about:

- Yourself and your identity
- Your health
- Your safety
- Your public services
- Your local community groups
- LGBT laws and policies
- Where you live, work and socialise

Before you decide whether you want to do the questionnaire, we will give you some information about it and how it will be used. Please take time to read the following information carefully and decide if you want to take part. You do not have to take part, but we hope that you will feel able to. **No one should force you to take part in this research.** If they do and you do not wish to be involved, please let us know using any of the write-in data boxes and we will remove your answers.

Please contact the researcher, Nick McGlynn ([n.mcglynn2@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:n.mcglynn2@brighton.ac.uk), tel. 01273 641993) or his supervisors (Dr Kath Browne, [k.a.browne@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:k.a.browne@brighton.ac.uk), tel. 01273 642377) if there is anything that isn't clear or if you want more information. **If you decide to take part, your consent to be involved is implied in submitting the questionnaire.**

**What is this research about?:** This research is going to get a picture of LGBT equalities and lives in Hastings, Rother and also in the rest of East Sussex. We aim to use your answers to better understand the current state of LGBT equalities in Hastings, Rother and East Sussex, particularly regarding public services.

**What happens if I take part?:** If you agree to fill in the questionnaire, your anonymous answers will be recorded by the website. If you are being helped to complete this questionnaire or someone is filling it in for you, please ensure that you grant your full consent for the answers to be submitted before they do so.

**How old do I need to be to take part?:** Only those aged 16 and above should complete this questionnaire. If you are a young LGBT person, you may be interested in Anything But, a local LGBT youth group. Visit <http://www.connexions360.org.uk/thingstodo/LGBTU/Pages/anythingbut.aspx> for details.

**How long will this take?:** Completing the questionnaire should take you **around an hour**. **You will not be able to save your answers, so please make sure you will have enough time.** If you want to stop filling in the questionnaire and withdraw your answers just close the browser window and your answers will not be recorded.

**Will I be named or identifiable?:** **No – your answers will be kept anonymous.** You will be given a number and every effort will be made to ensure you cannot be identified by your words. If you wish to ensure that others

using your computer do not find out about your answers, you should either use a computer in a public place (such as your local library), or delete your internet history after submitting the questionnaire. If you'd like to find out how to do this, see 'Tips for private computer use', below.

**What if I change my mind?:** You are free to withdraw from the questionnaire while answering it. Simply close the browser window – your answers will not be recorded. Once your answers have been submitted it is not possible to withdraw.

**What if I find the questionnaire upsetting/distressing?:** You might find replying to some of the questions upsetting or distressing. If you do, there are a number of places you can go to find support. In particular, you may wish to contact the Hastings & Rother Rainbow Alliance ([info@hrra.org.uk](mailto:info@hrra.org.uk), tel. 07505 819344), the Hastings & Rother Gay Helpline (01424 444777) or Sussex Police (0845 60 70 999). We will give you some contact details at the start of each section, and let you know what we'll be asking about.

**What are the benefits of this research?:** The potential benefits of taking part in this research may include:

- helping your local public services find out more about LGBT equalities in this area;
- highlighting LGBT equalities issues which public services are not aware of or are not dealing with;
- raising awareness of LGBT lives outside of big cities and places which have a gay 'reputation';
- investigating the real impact of LGBT equality laws and policies;
- finding out how the economic cuts are affecting LGBT equality.

**How will my answers be used?:** A findings report based on this questionnaire will be released, which may include data and quotes from your answers. Your answers might also be used in future published reports, press releases, events and presentations from the LGBT Equalities Forum, and they might also be used in academic publications investigating LGBT equalities and public services in Hastings, Rother and wider East Sussex. The reason for these reports is to make public services and others think about LGBT equalities and how they might make things better for LGBT people. Academic publications will help to people to think about LGBT equalities nationally and internationally. Your detailed answers and any details that might say who you will not discussed by the researchers outside of formal research discussions.

**How will what I say be stored?:** The University of Brighton will own, store, maintain and control access to your data. Your data will be stored securely during and after the study, in locked drawers and password-protected computer files, in a secure building. Only University of Brighton researchers will have access to the complete data. After 10 years the data will be securely archived and maintained in consultation with LGBT communities, in order to assist historical and longitudinal studies.

**Further information, problems and complaints:** If you want to be told about what the research finds out, get in touch. You will also be able to leave your contact details once you complete the questionnaire but this will not be stored with or linked to your answers. If you have any questions, problems or complaints let Nick McGlynn know ([n.mcglynn2@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:n.mcglynn2@brighton.ac.uk), tel.). If you would like to speak to a different person, please contact Kath Browne ([k.a.browne@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:k.a.browne@brighton.ac.uk) tel. 01273 642377), or the School of Environment & Technology at the University of Brighton ([entec@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:entec@brighton.ac.uk), tel. 01273 642288), who will be able to assist you or direct you to someone who can.

***Please click here to confirm that you have read and understood the above information, and that you consent to taking part in this research.***

**If you are worried about who might see that you have come to this site or see your answers then here are some tips:** As you surf the Internet your Internet browser (e.g. Internet Explorer) will save certain information such as which sites you have visited, files you've downloaded and images you've viewed. If you are worried that someone may have access to your computer, do one of the following:

- 1) Use a public computer (such as at a local library or internet café) or a trusted friend's computer;
- 2) Follow the private browsing tips, below, when using your own computer.

#### **USING A PUBLIC COMPUTER:**

If using a computer in a public place and you do not wish to be seen, choose a computer that will let you sit with your back to a wall if possible, and make sure your screen cannot be seen by other users. The public computer will erase your information and your internet history when you log out. Look out for drop-in sessions specifically for this research where you will be able to complete the questionnaire and not be overlooked.

#### **PRIVATE BROWSING TIPS:**

**Deleting Cookies, Files and Internet History:** If you know what browser you are using then skip to the relevant instructions below. If you don't know the type of browser you are using, click Help on the toolbar at the top of the browser screen. A drop down menu will appear, the last entry will say About Internet Explorer, About Mozilla Firefox or something similar. The entry refers to which browser type you are using. You should then refer to the relevant instructions below

#### **Internet Explorer 6.0**

- Click the Tools drop down menu and select Internet Options
- On the General tab under Temporary Internet Files:
- Click Delete Cookies
- Click Delete Files
- Under History click Delete History
- On the Content tab under Personal Information click AutoComplete
- Click Clear Forms and then click OK
- Click OK again to close Internet Options and save your changes

#### **Internet Explorer 7.0**

- Click Tools drop down menu and select Internet Options
- Under Browsing History click Delete
- Delete browsing history by clicking each delete button as required or click the Delete All button
- Click Close and then Click OK to confirm the deletion

#### **Mozilla Firefox / Netscape**

- Click the Tools drop down menu and select Options
- Click on the Privacy option
- Under Private Data click Clear Now
- Place a tick in all the options available and click Clear Private Data Now
- Click OK to confirm

#### **Opera**

- Click the Tools drop down menu and select Preferences
- Click the Advanced tab and select History on the left hand menu
- Click the Clear and Empty Now buttons
- Select Cookies from the left hand menu
- Click Manage cookies
- Select any entries on the list you want to delete and click Delete
- Click Close when you have finished deleting all the entries you want to
- Click OK to close Preferences

#### **E-mail**

If someone has access to your e-mail account they may be able to read your incoming and outgoing mail. Make sure you choose a password that someone will not be able to guess and change it regularly.

Source: NIDIRECT Domestic Violence – Internet Safety Guide

<http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/internet-safety-guide>

(accessed 9/8/2011)

## ABOUT YOU

This section will ask you about your details and aspects of your identity, such as your sexual identity, gender identity and your ethnicity.

If anything in this section makes you feel distressed or upset, please stop. You can withdraw from the questionnaire by closing the browser window - this will mean your answers will not be stored or seen by the researchers. You can get support and information by contacting the Hastings & Rother Rainbow Alliance ([info@hrra.org.uk](mailto:info@hrra.org.uk), tel. 07505 819344), the Hastings & Rother Gay Helpline (01424 444777) or Sussex Police (0845 60 70 999).

2. What is your age?

Under 16 / 16-25 / 26-35 / 36-45 / 46-55 / 56-65 / 66-75 / 76+ / Don't know

### **ROUTING FOR THOSE ANSWERING 'UNDER 16'**

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this questionnaire. Unfortunately we can only accept questionnaires from those aged 16 or over. You will now be taken to the end of the questionnaire, where you will find information about local LGBT community groups and how to get involved. You might also be interested in Anything But, a local group for younger LGBT people.

Visit <http://www.connexions360.org.uk/thingstodo/LGBTU/Pages/anythingbut.aspx> to find out more.

### **END OF ROUTING FOR THOSE ANSWERING 'UNDER 16'**

3. Which of the following do you most identify with?

Lesbian / Gay / Bisexual / Queer / Questioning / Straight or heterosexual / Unsure / Don't know / Other (please explain)

4. If you would like to, please give us any further information about your sexual identity.

5. Which of the following do you most identify with?

Male / Female / None / Other (please specify) / Don't know



6. Have you gone through any part of a process (including thoughts or actions) to change from the sex you were described as at birth to the gender you identify with, or do you intend to? (This could include changing your name, wearing different clothes taking hormones or having any gender reassignment surgery)

Yes / No / Don't know

***Routed to those answering YES/ DON'T KNOW***

7. About the process to change from the sex you were described as at birth, which of the following options best applies to you?
- a. I am thinking about going through this process
  - b. I am currently going through this process
  - c. I have already been through this process
  - d. I have been through this process, then changed back
  - e. I prefer not to say
  - f. Don't know
  - g. None of the above

***Routed to those answering NONE OF THE ABOVE***

8. If none of the above, please provide some further details.

***All who are routed Yes/Don't know:***

9. Please tell us what it is like to be a person who lives, or is thinking of living, as a sex different to how you were described at birth.

***END OF ROUTING***

10. To which of these ethnic groups do you feel you most belong?
- a. White
    - i. English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British
    - ii. Irish
    - iii. Gypsy/Irish Traveller
    - iv. Any other White background (please describe)
  - b. Mixed / multiple ethnic groups
    - i. White & Black Caribbean
    - ii. White & Black African
    - iii. White & Asian
    - iv. Any other mixed/multiple ethnic background (please describe)
  - c. Asian / Asian British
    - i. Indian
    - ii. Pakistani
    - iii. Bangladeshi
    - iv. Chinese
    - v. Any other Asian background (please describe)
  - d. Black / African / Caribbean / Black British
    - i. African

- ii. Caribbean
- iii. Any other Black / African / Caribbean background (please describe)
- e. Other ethnic group
  - i. Arab
  - ii. Any other ethnic group (please specify)
- f. Don't know

11. Do you regard yourself as belonging to any religions or beliefs?  
Yes / No / Don't know

12. Which religions or beliefs do you belong to? (tick as many as apply)
- a. Christian (including Church of England, Catholic, Protestant and all other Christian denominations)
  - b. Buddhist
  - c. Hindu
  - d. Jewish
  - e. Muslim
  - f. Sikh
  - g. Any other religions or beliefs (please describe)
  - h. None
  - i. Don't know

13. Which one of the following best describes your current employment situation? Please tick all that apply.

- i. Employed full time (paid work for an employer)
- ii. Employed part-time (paid work for an employer)
- iii. Self-employed or work for your own/family's business
- iv. Retired
- v. Looking for work
- vi. Volunteering
- vii. In full-time education
- viii. Other (please explain)
- ix. Don't know

14. What is your yearly income from all sources before deductions? (do not deduct tax, National Insurance, pension/superannuation or health insurance payments)
- i. Less than £10,000 (less than £800 a month, £200 a week or £30 a day)
  - ii. £10,001 to £20,000 (£801-1700 a month, £201-400 a week or £31-60 a day)
  - iii. £20,001 to £30,000 (£1701-2500 a month, £401-600 a week or £61-90 a day)
  - iv. £30,001 to £40,000 (£2501-3300 a month, £601-800 a week or £91-120 a day)
  - v. £40,001 to £50,000 (£3301-4100 a month, £801- 900 a week or £120-150 a day)
  - vi. More than £50,001 (£4101 a month, £901 a week or £151 a day)
  - vii. Don't know

15. Are you or do you identify yourself as being deaf, hard of hearing, deafened or deaf-blind?  
Yes / No / Don't know

**ROUTED TO THOSE ANSWERING YES**

16. As an LGBT person who identifies as being deaf, hard of hearing, deafened or deaf-blind, how easy is it for you to live in your area?  
Very easy / Easy / Neither easy nor difficult / Difficult / Very difficult / Don't know / NA

17. Please tell us about your experiences of being deaf, hard of hearing, deafened or deaf-blind in your area.

**End of routing**

18. Do you identify yourself as having a long-term health impairment or physical disability?  
Yes / No / Don't know

**ROUTED TO THOSE ANSWERING YES**

19. As an LGBT person who identifies as having a long-term health impairment or physical disability, how easy is it for you to live in your area?  
Very easy / Easy / Neither easy nor difficult / Difficult / Very difficult / Don't know / NA

20. Please tell us about your experiences of having a long-term health impairment or physical disability in your area.

**End of routing**

21. If you provide **unpaid** support for a relative, friend or neighbour who could not manage without your help then you are a carer. You may be caring for someone because they are ill, frail, disabled, or have mental health or substance misuse problems. Caring can include things like:
- personal care, such as washing and dressing
  - practical care, such as cooking, housework and shopping
  - health care, such as giving medication
  - emotional support, such as providing company
  - helping with financial affairs

Thinking about these examples, are you a carer?

Yes / No / Don't know

**Filtered to those answering Yes**

22. Who do you care for? (tick as many as apply)
- Partner
  - Other family member
  - Friend or neighbor
  - Other (please explain)

23. Please tell us about your experiences of being an LGBT carer.

24. Are a parent or carer of children?
- Yes / No/Don't know

**These questions will be routed – only those with children aged will answer.**

25. How many of your children are aged...
- a. 0-5
  - b. 6-11
  - c. 12-16
  - d. 17+

**Routed – only those with children aged 0-5 will answer.**

23. Do you use any of the following Children's Centre services? Yes / No
- a. Home visits
  - b. Fun days
  - c. Groups (play activities)
  - d. Creche
  - e. Baby massage or baby signing
  - f. Breastfeeding support
  - g. Training courses
  - h. Parenting courses
  - i. None of these services (please explain any particular reasons)

24. As an LGBT parent/carer what are your experiences of these services?

25. Has a child in your family ever been bullied or taunted because of **your** sexual and/or gender identity?  
Yes, often / Yes, sometimes / Yes, rarely / No, never / Don't know

26. Please tell us about any incidents.

27. Do you know where to get advice and support as an LGBT parent or carer?  
Yes / No / Don't know

**END OF ROUTING**

28. Is there anything else about your identity that you would like to tell us?

#### YOUR HEALTH AND WELLBEING

**This section asks you about your physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.**

**If anything in this section makes you feel distressed or upset, please stop. You can withdraw from the questionnaire by closing the browser window - this will mean your answers will not be stored or seen by the researchers. You can get support and information by contacting the Hastings & Rother Rainbow Alliance ([info@hrra.org.uk](mailto:info@hrra.org.uk), tel. 07505 819344), the Hastings & Rother Gay Helpline (01424 444777), the Sussex Mental Helpline (0300 5000101), Health In Mind (0300 0030130) or Sussex Police (0845 60 70 999).**

29. How would you describe your physical health?.

Very good / Good / Neither good nor poor / Poor / Very poor

30. Please explain or give any details.

31. Have you experienced difficulties with any of the following in the last 5 years? Please tick as many as apply.

- i. Significant emotional distress
- ii. Depression
- iii. Anxiety
- iv. Isolation
- v. Confidence/self-esteem
- vi. Stress
- vii. Anger management
- viii. Insomnia
- ix. Fears/phobias
- x. Problem eating/eating distress
- xi. Panic attacks
- xii. Self harm
- xiii. Addictions/dependencies
- xiv. Suicidal thoughts
- xv. None of the above
- xvi. Don't know

**Routed to those ticking at least one box.**

32. Do you get any support or help for any of these difficulties?  
Yes / No / Don't know

**Routed to YES**

33. Please tell us where you get support or help from.

34. Please give any details about the kind of support or help you get.

**END OF ROUTING**

35. Would you like to get more support or help regarding these difficulties?  
Yes / No / Don't know

**ROUTED TO YES**

36. What help would you like to receive?

**END OF ROUTING**

37. Do you ever feel isolated?  
Yes, always / Sometimes / No, never / Don't know

**ROUTED TO YES & SOMETIMES**

38. Please tell us about your experiences of isolation and feelings of isolation.

YOUR SAFETY

This section asks you about issues of abuse, violence and hate crime, as well as your personal feelings of safety.

If anything in this section makes you feel distressed or upset, please stop. You can withdraw from the questionnaire by closing the browser window - this will mean your answers will not be stored or seen by the researchers. You can get support and information by contacting the Hastings & Rother Rainbow Alliance ([info@hrra.org.uk](mailto:info@hrra.org.uk), tel. 07505 819344), the Hastings & Rother Gay Helpline (01424 444777) or Sussex Police (0845 60 70 999).

39. Have you experienced any of the following in the last 5 years that was due to your sexual and/or gender identity? Please tick as many as apply.
- i. Verbal abuse
  - ii. Physical violence
  - iii. Criminal damage
  - iv. Harassment
  - v. Sexual assault
  - vi. Negative comments
  - vii. Teasing
  - viii. Bullying
  - ix. Other (please describe)
  - x. None of the above
  - xi. Don't know

**ROUTED HERE**

40. Please tell us where these incidents took place.
41. Please tell us any details of the incidents.
42. Please tell us who was responsible for these incidents.
43. Please tell us what effects these incidents had on you and others.
44. Did you report any of the incidents?  
Yes / No / Don't know

**ROUTED TO YES**

45. Which incident/s did you report?
46. Please tell us who you reported the incident/s to.
47. Please tell us why you reported these incidents.
48. Please tell us about your experience/s of reporting.

**END OF ROUTING**

49. Are there any incident/s which you did not report?  
Yes / No / Don't know

**ROUTED TO YES**

50. Which incident/s did you not report?

51. Please tell us why you did not report them.

**END OF ROUTING**

52. How safe do you feel...

- a. where you live?
  - i. Very safe / Safe / Unsafe / Very unsafe / Don't know / NA
- b. where you work, volunteer or study?
  - i. Very safe / Safe / Unsafe / Very unsafe / Don't know / NA
- c. where you socialise?
  - i. Very safe / Safe / Unsafe / Very unsafe / Don't know / NA

53. Please tell us some details about your feelings of safety in Hastings, Rother, and wider East Sussex.

54. What does 'safety' mean to you?

YOUR PUBLIC SERVICES

**This section asks you about your local public services, such as the police, the NHS and your local council.**

**If anything in this section makes you feel distressed or upset, please stop. You can withdraw from the questionnaire by closing the browser window - this will mean your answers will not be stored or seen by the researchers. You can get support and information by contacting the Hastings & Rother Rainbow Alliance ([info@hrra.org.uk](mailto:info@hrra.org.uk), tel. 07505 819344), the Hastings & Rother Gay Helpline (01424 444777) or Sussex Police (0845 60 70 999).**

55. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being the least LGBT-friendly and 5 being the most LGBT-friendly, how LGBT-friendly do you find the following services? 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / Unsure / Don't use this service

- a. Your GP
- b. East Sussex hospitals
- c. Sussex Police
- d. Your local district council
- e. East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service
- f. East Sussex County Council - social worker
- g. East Sussex County Council - social care provider
- h. East Sussex County Council - residential services
- i. East Sussex County Council - Children's Services
- j. East Sussex County Council - Libraries & Information Service
- k. East Sussex County Council - other services/departments

56. Are you comfortable being 'out' about your sexual and/or gender identity when using the following services? Yes / No / Unsure / Don't use this service

- a. Your GP
- b. East Sussex hospitals

- c. Sussex Police
  - d. Your local district council
  - e. East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service
  - f. East Sussex County Council - social worker
  - g. East Sussex County Council - social care provider
  - h. East Sussex County Council - residential services
  - i. East Sussex County Council - Children's Services
  - j. East Sussex County Council - Libraries & Information Service
  - k. East Sussex County Council - other services/departments
57. If you have used the following services, did you feel that overall you were treated with respect and dignity? (Please tell us about your experiences) Yes, I was always treated with respect and dignity / Yes, I was usually treated with respect and dignity / Only sometimes / No, I was not treated with respect and dignity / Don't use the service
- a. Your GP
  - b. East Sussex hospitals
  - c. Sussex Police
  - d. Your local district council
  - e. East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service
  - f. East Sussex County Council - social worker
  - g. East Sussex County Council - social care provider
  - h. East Sussex County Council - residential services
  - i. East Sussex County Council - Children's Services
  - j. East Sussex County Council - Libraries & Information Service
  - k. East Sussex County Council - other services/departments
58. If you have used the following services, did the staff treat you, your family and friends without discrimination and free from prejudice due to sexual and/or gender identity? (Please tell us about your experiences) Yes, always / Yes, usually / Sometimes / No / Don't use the service
- a. Your GP
  - b. East Sussex hospitals
  - c. Sussex Police
  - d. Your local district council
  - e. East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service
  - f. East Sussex County Council - social worker
  - g. East Sussex County Council - social care provider
  - h. East Sussex County Council - residential services
  - i. East Sussex County Council - Children's Services
  - j. East Sussex County Council - Libraries & Information Service
  - k. East Sussex County Council - other services/departments
59. Do you use any library services in East Sussex? Yes / No / Don't know
60. How important do you consider the following for your local library services? Very important / Important / Neither important nor unimportant / Unimportant / Very unimportant / Don't know
- a. Regular LGBT-focused events.
  - b. Promotion of LGBT-interest material in library displays.
  - c. Relevant library news promoted directly to LGBT individuals and organizations.
61. Have you or someone you care for used any of these Adult Social Care support services? (please tick all that apply)
- a. home care
  - b. personal assistant
  - c. day opportunities
  - d. voluntary services
  - e. none
62. Have you or someone you care for used residential services? (please tick all that apply)



- a. Yes - respite care
- b. Yes - residential care home
- c. No
- d. Don't know

63. Do you ever go away from where you live to access LGBT-**specific** services?
- i. Yes, once or twice a year / Yes, once or twice a month / Yes, once or twice a week / No, never / Don't know / NA

**Routed to YES**

64. When you go away from where you live to access LGBT-**specific** services, where do you travel to?

**END OF ROUTING**

65. Do you ever go away from where you live to access LGBT-**friendly** services?
- i. Yes, once or twice a year / Yes, once or twice a month / Yes, once or twice a week / No, never / Don't know / NA

**Routed to YES**

66. When you go away from where you live to access LGBT-**friendly** services, where do you travel to?

**END OF ROUTING**

67. When using or accessing public services are you willing to give information about your sexual and/or gender identity for monitoring purposes?
- a. Yes, always / Yes, sometimes / No, never / Don't know / Other (please explain)

68. Are the following important for you to feel comfortable giving information about your sexual and/or gender identity? Very important / Important / Neither important nor unimportant / Unimportant / Very unimportant / Don't know
- a. The information is kept anonymous and confidential.
  - b. I believe the service is LGBT-friendly.

69. Is there anything else that you consider important for you feel comfortable giving information about your sexual and/or gender identity for monitoring purposes?

70. Are there services in East Sussex which are designed for you that you do not use?
- a. Yes/No/Don't know

**Yes- routed**

71. Why do you not use these services?

72. Are there services you need as an LGBT person which don't exist in East Sussex?
- Yes / No / Don't know

**Routed to YES**

73. What services do you need which don't exist in East Sussex?

**End of routing**

74. Do you feel that you face any particular barriers when using public services?
- a. Yes / No / Don't know

**Yes - routed**

75. Please tell us about the barriers you feel you face when using public services.

## POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

This section asks you about national and local LGBT laws and policies. You don't need any special knowledge.

If anything in this section makes you feel distressed or upset, please stop. You can withdraw from the questionnaire by closing the browser window - this will mean your answers will not be stored or seen by the researchers. You can get support and information by contacting the Hastings & Rother Rainbow Alliance ([info@hrra.org.uk](mailto:info@hrra.org.uk), tel. 07505 819344), the Hastings & Rother Gay Helpline (01424 444777) or Sussex Police (0845 60 70 999).

76. Have you heard of the Equality Act 2010?
- Yes
  - No
  - Unsure
77. What do you think the Equality Act 2010 is ?
78. In general, do you think your local public services are upholding the first duty of the Equality Act with regard to LGBT people – **the duty to eliminate LGBT discrimination?**
- Yes / No / Don't know
79. Please tell us for the reasons for your answer, including examples if you know of any.
80. In general, do you think your local public services are upholding the second duty of the Equalities Act with regard to LGBT people – **the duty to advance LGBT equality?**
- Yes / No / Don't know
81. Please tell us for the reasons for your answer, including examples if you know of any.
82. In general, do you think your local public services are upholding the third duty of the Equalities Act with regard to LGBT people – **the duty to improve relations between LGBT people and non-LGBT people?**
- Yes / No / Don't know
83. Please tell us for the reasons for your answer, including examples if you know of any.
84. Do you think that legislation like the Equality Act 2010 and its three equality duties are important for LGBT people? Yes / No / Don't know
85. Please tell us for the reasons for your answer, including examples if you know of any.
86. Do you think that the financial cuts to the public sector will affect the LGBT equality of your local public services?
- Yes, they will improve LGBT equality / Yes, they will weaken LGBT equality / No, things will stay the same / Don't know
87. Please tell us for the reasons for your answer, including examples if you know of any.
88. Aside from the public sector cuts, do you think the recent economic situation in the UK has/will have

a particular effect on you as an LGBT person?

a. Yes / No / Don't know / NA

89. Please explain.

90. Equality Impact Assessments highlight the potential impact of public services' policies and activities on local people. Are you aware of the Equality Impact Assessments run by your local public services?

a. Yes / No / Unsure

91. Do you think that Equality Impact Assessments are important for LGBT people?

a. Yes / No / Don't know

92. Please tell us your reasons.

#### WHERE YOU LIVE, WORK & SOCIALISE

**This section asks you about the places where you live, work and socialise, including questions about your housing and where you travel to.**

**If anything in this section makes you feel distressed or upset, please stop. You can withdraw from the questionnaire by closing the browser window - this will mean your answers will not be stored or seen by the researchers. You can get support and information by contacting the Hastings & Rother Rainbow Alliance ([info@hrra.org.uk](mailto:info@hrra.org.uk), tel. 07505 819344), the Hastings & Rother Gay Helpline (01424 444777) or Sussex Police (0845 60 70 999).**

93. Which area do you mainly live in?

a. Hastings / Rother / Wealden / Eastbourne / Lewes / Brighton & Hove / Not in East Sussex / Don't know / NA

94. **This question is optional, and it will not be used to identify you in any way. We will use this information to make comparisons between specific areas, such as town centre / outskirts, urban / rural, etc.**

a. What are the first 4 letters and numbers in your main residential postcode?

95. As an LGBT person, how easy is it for you to live in your area?

a. Very easy / Easy / Neither easy nor difficult / Difficult / Very difficult / Don't know / NA

96. Please describe any examples or reasons for your answer

97. Which one of the following best describes your accommodation?

- i. Privately owned
- ii. Rented - Council Housing
- iii. Rented - Private landlord
- iv. Rented – Association
- v. University- or college-owned student residence
- vi. Care home
- vii. Sheltered housing
- viii. Staying with friends/partner
- ix. I am homeless

- x. Trailer/caravan
- xi. Other (please describe)

98. Do you know where to get support if you have a problem with your housing?  
a. Yes / No / Unsure / NA

99. Which area do you mainly work, volunteer or study in?  
a. Hastings / Rother / Wealden / Eastbourne / Lewes / Brighton & Hove / Not in East Sussex / Don't know / NA

100. As an LGBT person, how easy is it for you to work, volunteer or study in these areas? (Please describe any examples or reasons for your answer)  
a. Very easy / Easy / Neither easy nor difficult / Difficult / Very difficult / Don't know / NA

101. Which area do you mainly socialize in?  
a. Hastings / Rother / Wealden / Eastbourne / Lewes / Brighton & Hove / Not in East Sussex / Don't know / NA

102. Please tell us about the places where you socialize.

103. Is there anywhere you won't go to socialize?  
Yes/no/ Don't know

**Routed to YES**

104. Please tell us about these places.

105. In the past year, have you ever gone away from where you live to visit LGBT venues and/or events?  
i. Yes, once or twice / Yes, once or twice a month / Yes, once or twice a week / No / Don't know / NA

**Routed to YES**

106. Where did you go to?

**End of routing**

107. In the past year, have you ever gone away from where you live to socialise with LGBT people?  
i. Yes, once or twice / Yes, once or twice a month / Yes, once or twice a week / No / Don't know / NA

**Routed to YES**

108. Where did you go to?

**End of routing**

#### YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY GROUPS

This section asks you about local community groups such as the Hastings & Rother Rainbow Alliance (HRRRA) and BourneOut.

If anything in this section makes you feel distressed or upset, please stop. You can withdraw from the questionnaire by closing the browser window - this will mean your answers will not be stored or seen by the researchers. You can get support and information by contacting the Hastings & Rother Rainbow Alliance ([info@hrra.org.uk](mailto:info@hrra.org.uk), tel. 07505 819344), the Hastings & Rother Gay Helpline (01424 444777) or Sussex Police

(0845 60 70 999).

109. If you live, work or socialise in Hastings or Rother, are you aware of the Hastings & Rother Rainbow Alliance (HARRA)?  
Yes/ No/Don't know/I don't live, work or socialise in Hastings or Rother

**ROUTED TO THOSE ANSWERING YES OR DON'T KNOW**

110. HARRA engages in a variety of activities and services. Which activities do you think HARRA currently does provide? Which should HARRA provide? And which activities have you used?

	a. Activities/services which HARRA provides	b. Activities/services which HARRA <b>should</b> provide	c. HARRA activities/services which you have used
Social activities			
LGBT information			
LGBT advice or support			
Regular newsletter			
Guide to LGBT venues and events			
Advocating for LGBT people			
Running an LGBT youth group			
The 'voice' of local LGBT people			
Other (please describe)			

111. If you live, work or socialise in Eastbourne, are you aware of BourneOut?  
Yes/ No/Don't know/I don't live, work or socialise in Eastbourne

**Routed to YES**

112. Please describe any of your experiences with BourneOut

THE END

**If anything in this section makes you feel distressed or upset, please stop. You can get support and information by contacting the Hastings & Rother Rainbow Alliance ([info@hrra.org.uk](mailto:info@hrra.org.uk), tel. 07505 819344), the Hastings & Rother Gay Helpline (01424 444777) or Sussex Police (0845 60 70 999).**

113. With regard to your sexual and/or gender identity, is there anything else that should have been included in this research?

114. With regard to your sexual and/or gender identity, what would make life better for you in East Sussex?

115. If you would like to, please leave us feedback about this questionnaire.

#### NOW THAT YOU'VE FINISHED...

Thank you for completing the questionnaire. **Any information you provide from now on will not be linked with your answers to the questionnaire.**

We aim to use your answers to better understand the current state of LGBT equalities in Hastings, Rother and East Sussex, particularly regarding public services. On behalf of the LGBT Equalities Forum, thank you for participating in this research and assisting us in this aim.

If you felt upset or distressed by anything in this questionnaire and would like some support, please contact the Hastings & Rother Rainbow Alliance ([info@hrra.org.uk](mailto:info@hrra.org.uk), tel. 07505 819344), the Hastings & Rother Gay Helpline (01424 444777) or Sussex Police (0845 60 70 999).

Click here if you would like to see the details from the beginning of the questionnaire again, including information on privacy and anonymity.

#### **CLICKING ROUTES TO INFO FROM FIRST PAGES, INCLUDING ETHICS DETAILS**

If you would like to:

- be kept informed about the questionnaire and its results,
- hear more about the LGBT Equalities Forum,
- or participate further in making East Sussex's public services more LGBT friendly,

then please provide contact details below. **Your details will not be linked with your questionnaire.**

If you would like to find out more about the **Hastings & Rother Rainbow Alliance (HRRRA)**, a local community group for Hastings and Rother LGBT people, you can contact them by:

- sending an email to [info@hrra.org.uk](mailto:info@hrra.org.uk)
- sending a letter to HRRRA, C/O Ore Community Centre, 455 Old London Road, Hastings, TN35 5BH
- calling 07505 819344

For more information about HRRRA, visit <http://www.hrra.org.uk>.

If you would like to find out more about **BourneOut**, a local community group for Eastbourne LGBT people, you can contact them by visiting <http://www.bourneout.co.uk>.

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this research, please contact Nick McGlynn ([n.mcglynn2@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:n.mcglynn2@brighton.ac.uk)), who will be happy to help you. If you would like to speak to a different person, please contact Dr Kath Browne ([k.a.browne@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:k.a.browne@brighton.ac.uk)), or the School of Environment & Technology at the University of Brighton ([entec@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:entec@brighton.ac.uk), tel. 01273 642288), who will be able to assist you or direct you to someone who can.

## Appendix G – Qualitative Analysis Nodes

- Austerity
  - Money vital for equality
  - Public sector cuts
    - Combating cuts
    - Cuts to LGBT equality initiatives
    - I can't see that the cuts will damage something that isn't there
    - Prioritisation
    - you really can't make a case for one group at the expense of others.
  - Targeting difference
- Being a victim
- Class and wealth
- Coming Out
  - Repeated coming out
- Community
  - biggest voices
  - Communities need to be out
  - Community building events
  - Community Organisations
    - As a resource
    - BourneOut
    - Funding community groups
    - HRRAs
      - HRRAs - boundaries
      - What else should HRRAs do
    - Empowerment
      - how do we find things out when we're not looking for them~
  - Meaning of community
  - Political engagement
  - Representing the community
  - Saying the same thing but nothing changes
- Diversity
- Equality
  - acceptance once you ask is not that same as being promoted in first place
  - Business case
  - Definition or identifiers of equality
  - Discrimination
  - Education and understanding
  - Equality Act 2010
    - Equality Act and power
    - Equality Duties
      - Equality Duty A
      - Equality Duty B
      - Equality Duty C
    - Implementation
    - Is equality act and legislation important
    - it's the inconsistency that upsets me
    - Not fully understood
  - Equality as bureaucracy
  - Inequality
  - Integration
  - Legal rights
  - LGBT Equality
    - there is a long way to go yet



- Multiple marginalisation
- Positive Discrimination
- Proactive approach to equality
- Professionalisation of equality
- Protected Characteristics
  - Differences between protected characteristics
  - Similarities between protected characteristics
- Ranking equality
- Tolerance
- Whose responsibility
  
- Equality Forum
  - Being in a meeting
    - Being on tape
    - this kind of work's always social!
      - Laughter
  - Complicity with status quo
  - Confidentiality
  - Discussing equality issues
  - Meeting space
  - Other forums
  - Pushing aims
  - Representing our organisations
  - Research
    - Mapping Exercise
      - Development of mapping exercise
      - Person who filled in mapping questions
  - Questionnaire
    - Development of questionnaire
      - Language issues
    - Multiple identities in questionnaire
    - Quantitative data
    - Questionnaire accessibility
    - Questionnaire Feedback
  - Same old faces
  - Student volunteers
  
- Evidence
  - Census
  - Comparable data
  - Data dumps
  - Equality seen to be done
  
- Geography
  - Brighton
    - Avoiding Brighton
    - Brighton and anonymity
    - Brighton and or as the scene
    - Brighton and younger people
    - Brighton as the best it gets
    - Brighton compared to London
    - Brighton Pride
    - Brighton separated from East Sussex
    - Diversity in Brighton
    - East Sussex groups going to Brighton
    - LGBT groups in Brighton
    - LGBT population in Brighton
    - LGBT press
    - 'Real' Brighton
    - Safety in Brighton
    - Services in Brighton
    - Socialising in Brighton
  - Complex geography

- Distance and Travel
    - Expensive travel
    - Large area complicates community
    - Public transport
    - Travelling for anonymity
    - Travelling to socialise
  - 'East Sussex'
    - East Sussex services
    - HRRRA covering East Sussex
    - LGBT focused on Hastings
    - Low LGBT expectations
  - Eastbourne
    - Eastbourne as urban
    - Eastbourne deprived
    - Eastbourne not an area of concern
    - Eastbourne's LGBT infrastructure
  - Hastings
    - Hastings as covered
    - Hastings as hiding or escape
    - Hastings not rural
    - Hastings vs other areas
    - LGBT life in Hastings
    - Safety in Hastings
    - Services in Hastings
  - How easy is it for you to live in your area
    - Living in Brighton
    - Living in Eastbourne
    - Living in Hastings
    - Living in Lewes
    - Living in Rother
    - Living in Wealden
  - International
  - Lewes
    - Lewes as wealthy
    - Services in Lewes
  - London
  - Public space
  - Rother
    - LGBT life in Rother
    - LGBT work in Rother
    - Rother as rural
    - Rother's complex geographies
    - Services in Rother
  - Rural
    - LGBT more difficult in rural areas
    - Rural as less well known
    - Rural isolation
    - Rural LGBT life
    - Rural LGBT lives less known
    - Urban vs rural
  - small town life
  - Urban or city
    - Brighton as a city
    - Younger people move to city
  - Wealden
- Governance
    - Citizenship
    - Government
    - MPs
    - Political Parties
  - Heteronormativity

- Heterophobia
- Homophobia
- Identities
  - Age
  - Being LGBT
  - Bisexuals
  - Feeling different
  - Gender
  - Intersectionality
  - Irrelevant Sexual or Gender Identity
  - Multiple identities
  - No different to anyone else
  - Other identities
  - Problems with labels and identities
  - Trans\*
    - Living as trans
    - Trans processes
    - Transvestism
  - Use of 'LGBT'
- Isolation
- Legislation
  - Guidance on legislation
- LGBT Friendly
- LGBT Visibility
- Localisation
  - Big Society
- Mainstream
  - Media
  - Wider society
- Mental Health
  - Support you'd like to receive
- Micro and Macro Scales
- Named Cases
  - Aaron
  - Aisha
  - Alison
  - Anthony
  - Colm
  - Dan
  - Dominic
  - Dorothy
  - Edward
  - Emily
  - Felix
  - Gillian

- Grace
- Graham
- James
- Jamie
- Jeremy
- Julian
- Karen
- Katie
- Kerry
- Lara
- Mary
- Michael
- Researcher 1
- Researcher 2
- Samuel
- Sean
- Shona
- Simone
- Tricia
  
- National
  
- 'Normal'
  
- Organisational
  - Acronyms
  - Attitudes of Staff
  - Blurred boundaries
  - Box Ticking
  - Changes to services
  - East Sussex County Council
  - East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service
  - Eastbourne Borough Council
  - Embedding LGBT equality
  - GPs
  - Hastings Borough Council
  - Hats
  - Language and jargon
    - Plain English
    - Speaking the right language
    - 'Wrong' language or jargon
  - LGBT Events
  - LGBT friendliness
  - LGBT imagery
  - LGBT staff network
  - Libraries
  - Monitoring
    - Service User Monitoring
      - What else is considered important
    - Staff Monitoring
  - Multiple identities in questionnaire
  - NHS
  - Organisational Hierarchy and Governance
  - Organisations need to be out
  - Partnership

- Ownership of partnership initiatives
    - People doing good work
    - People who can make change
      - Decision makers
      - Equality and Diversity Workers
      - LGBT people in orgs
    - Personal or professional
    - Policies
      - is it being used
    - Private sector
    - Public sector
      - Accountability
      - Barriers to use for LGBT people
      - Choice and Democratisation
      - Commissioning
      - Consultation
      - Differences between organisations
      - Dropping away
      - Engagement
      - Equality Impact Assessments
      - LGBT services
        - Specialist service provision
        - Why don't you use them
      - New opportunities
      - Public Sector Equalities Work
        - Being realistic
        - LGBT-specific vs general equalities
        - Outcome focused
      - Public services impt to LGBT people
      - Run like a business
      - Services understanding LGBT lives
      - the LGBT work should be embedded in practice
      - the ones that do the community work
      - Treatment by services
        - GPs
        - Hospitals
        - Libraries
        - Local authority
        - Police
      - Unavailable service which is needed
        - Socialising
      - Using services
        - We can't do a project without proving there's a need now
    - Rother District Council
    - Schools and children
    - Sussex Police
    - Training and Staff Development
    - Transparency
    - Unions
    - Universities
    - Working days off
- Passing
- PhD
- Plain English
- Potential negative impact
- Relationships
  - Children

- Family
  - Partners
    - Marriage and Civil Partnership
      - Legal rights
- Religion
- Rights
- Safety
  - Hate incidents and crimes
    - Reasons for not reporting
      - didn't want to raise further tension
      - Not serious enough
      - There wouldn't be any point
    - Reasons for reporting
    - Reporting service
  - Safety in your area
    - Brighton
    - East Sussex
    - Eastbourne
    - Hastings
    - Lewes
    - Pubs and clubs
    - Rother
    - Rural
    - Towns
  - Teasing and 'banter'
  - What does safety mean
    - Acceptance
    - Being yourself
    - Freedom
    - Risk, potential or fear
    - Self censoring
- Sex
- Simplicity
- Snark
- Socialising
  - Places you won't go to socialise
    - Brighton
    - Eastbourne
    - Hastings
    - St Leonards
    - Wealden
  - The scene
- Stonewall
- Terminology
  - Use of LGBT
- Time
  - Modernity
- Voluntary Sector
  - Volunteering
- What would make life better

- Work and jobs
  - Working in your area

