3 See Pike (1981), passim, to which I am indebted for the ideas developed in this section. See also Sizemore (1984).
4 Lévi-Strauss (1976), pp. 120–21.
5 Huyssen (1986), pp. 52–3, quoting Le Bon, Gustave (1981) *The Crowd*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, pp. 39, 52.
6 See, particularly, Little, Peake and Richardson, eds. (1988).

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22   Gill Valentine
'(Hetero)Sexing Space: Lesbian Perceptions and Experiences of Everyday Spaces'

There's nothing like a Saturday morning in the town centre to make you feel unconventional

(Lesbian, middle class, 20s).[1]

It is well established in the geographical literature that age and gender have a profound impact on individuals' perceptions and experiences of everyday spaces (Hart, 1978; Valentine, 1989). It is argued that, in particular, differences between the sexes stem from inequalities of power between men and women which are reflected in the way space is designed, occupied, and controlled. But, as the quote above suggests, the ability to appropriate and dominate places and hence influence the use of space by other groups is not only the product of gender; heterosexuality is also powerfully expressed in space.

The myth of a private–public dichotomy

The dominant form of sexuality in modern Western culture is heterosexuality, despite the fact that same-sex relationships have occurred throughout time and across different societies and cultures with varying degrees of acceptability and frequency (D'Emilio and Freedman, 1988). The term homosexuality was coined by the medical profession in the late 19th century, "it was primarily viewed through a medical framework as a pathology, its causes were located in biological degeneracy or family pathology, and treatments ranged from castration to psychoanalysis" (Plummer, 1988, p. 23). Although homosexuality is no longer treated as a mental illness, the stigma and negativity surrounding same-sex relationships prevail despite the fact that there has been a shift in social consensus about the role of sexuality: "from reproduction to intimacy and personal happiness, and from family and community to the individual" (Herek, 1992a, p. 93).

Ideologically, heterosexuality is also linked to the notion of gender identity, that is, the shared beliefs and meanings attributed to what it means to be a man or a woman (masculinity and femininity). This is because the notion of opposite-sex relationships presumes, first, that there is a binary distinction between being a man and being a woman, and, second, that these binary gender identities (masculinity–femininity) map neatly onto binary sexed bodies (man–woman) (Butler, 1990).

'Normal' masculinity and feminity are defined in relation to one another such that the construction and reproduction of gender identities both create and perpetuate male superiority, or patriarchy (Coveney *et al.*, 1984). The asymmetrical (opposite-sex parents) family is by definition a heterosexual concept and hence childrearing is also heterosexually identified (Herek, 1992a).

To be gay, therefore, is not only to violate norms about sexual behaviour and family structure but also to deviate from the norms of 'natural' masculine or feminine behaviour. These norms change over space and time, and hence sexuality is not defined merely by sexual acts but exists as a process of power relations (Foucault, 1988). Heterosexuality in modern Western society can therefore be described as a heteropatriarchy, that is, a process of sociosexual power relations which reflects and reproduces male dominance.

Ostensibly, sexuality would appear to belong in the private space of the home, not the public sphere of the office or the restaurant. This assumption is reflected in a US survey of heterosexual attitudes to homosexuals, which produced a common response from participants that they had no objection to homosexuals as long as they did not flaunt their sexuality in public (Herek, 1987), an assumption repeated in similar UK surveys. But this cultural dichotomy (sic) locating sexuality in private rather than public space, is based on the *false* premise that heterosexuality is also defined by private sexual acts and is not expressed in the public arena. Yet, heterosexuality is institutionalised in marriage and in the law, tax, and welfare systems, and is celebrated in public rituals such as weddings and christenings. This therefore highlights the error of drawing a simple polar distinction between public and private

activities, for heterosexuality is clearly the dominant sexuality in most every-day environments, not just private spaces, with all interactions taking place between sexed actors. However, such is the strength of the assumption of the 'naturalness' of heterosexual hegemony, that most people are oblivious to the way it operates as a process of power relations in *all* spaces. However, to be lesbian or gay[2] is both to perceive and to experience the heterosexuality of the majority of environments.

This paper will therefore use research carried out in a town in England[3] to explore lesbian perceptions and experiences of everyday spaces (home, work-place, social spaces, service environments, and public open spaces). The findings are based on forty in-depth interviews (which were taped and tran-scribed) with women aged between 18 and 60 years who currently identify themselves as lesbian and are either in a lesbian relationship or are seeking a female partner. Some of these women previously identified themselves as heterosexual. Of these, some made a distinct break between their heterosexual and gay lives; others made a more gradual transition to a lesbian identity, living with a male partner whilst coming to identify themselves as lesbian. Thirteen have been married, and eight have children from previous hetero-sexual relationships.

By only concentrating on the perceptions and experiences of women who currently identify themselves as lesbians, this paper appears to dichotomise sexuality into 'gay' or 'straight'. However, I recognise that sexual identities can be fluid; and that there are multiple sexual identities within and outside the dominant heterosexual–homosexual discourses. For example, bisexuals are commonly 'outsiders' in environments appropriated and controlled by heterosexuals and lesbians and/or gay men (Eadie, 1992).

Heterosexualised spaces

House and home

Housing in 19th and 20th century Britain has been and is "primarily desgined, built, financed and intended for nuclear families – reinforcing a cultural norm of family life with heterosexuality and patriarchy high on the agenda" (Bell, 1991, p. 325). For example, common features such as 'master' bedroom and smaller bedrooms for children physically represent and reinforce the cultural norm of the reproductive monogamous family unit. Although the significance and use of different rooms have changed over time with changing class and gender relations (for example, the decline in domestic labour and the mechan-isation of domestic tasks have made the kitchen a more 'respectable' room), housing design continues to express a privatised form of family life (Matrix, 1984) in which all tasks such as cooking, eating, and childcare are contained within the family.

However, lesbians are less likely to have children than heterosexual cou-ples; the most common estimate is that only 25% of lesbians are parenting (Adler and Brenner, 1992), and those influenced by feminist politics are more likely to be nonmonogamous and to want to organise childcare and domestic

chores on a collective basis (Ettorre, 1978). Yet there is no housing stock designed and built for nonheteropatriarchial life-styles. In the 1970s, therefore, a significant trend was evident amongst lesbian feminists of creating their own housing forums through squatting and communal living (Egerton, 1990).

Housing provision is also orientated towards the asymmetrical family. Many lesbians share the economic marginalisation of heterosexual women, but public-housing providers and managers often do not recognise same-sex 'family units', and those without children are rarely eligible for the declining stock of public-authority housing (Anlin, 1989). In addition, gay partners do not have the same legal rights to succeed to a tenancy on the death of a partner. Although women with sufficient income to buy their own homes can overcome barriers of access to the housing market, some lesbians interviewed also claimed that their house purchases were influenced by their perceptions of the sexuality of space. In particular, women claim that they have or would consciously avoid living in rural communities because they perceive towns as more likely to have a gay community. Also, urban areas are seen as more anonymous, and hence lesbians believe it is easier to manage and control others' images of their sexual identity in such an environment (Valentine, 1993a). Similarly, some towns, such as Brighton, are perceived to have a large and active gay community (Valentine, 1993b), whereas others have a heterosexual image because of their association with suburban family life.

Decisions about specific locations are also motivated by perceptions of the heterosexuality of space at a local level. A number of women said they had chosen to avoid modern middle-class housing estates because they were conscious that as two women they would stand out in neighbourhoods they perceived to contain predominantly asymmetrical families, and that this would make them feel 'out of place'. More insidiously, they were also aware that by 'standing out' as an 'abnormal' family unit their property could become a target for antigay violence. This is reflected in the fact that five out of the forty women have experienced violence or other forms of harassment from neighbours because of their sexuality, two know of friends whose property has been attacked, and others have overheard neighbours' aggressive comments about their sexuality, such as 'bloody lezzies'.

It is because of such incidents or their possibility that a number of the women interviewed have consciously chosen to live in neighbourhoods of mixed age and race where they perceive it is easier to blend in. In particular, one housing area has developed a reputation as a lesbian residential (though not as an institutional) ghetto (Valentine, 1993b) and consequently a snowball effect appears to be in operation, with other lesbians being drawn to the area to be near friends and because the neighbourhood is perceived to be tolerant.

The older women interviewed (aged 30–60 years) who were living with a female partner were most conscious of this dual risk of feeling out of place or being harassed as an outsider, because they were conscious that the absence of a male partner highlighted the fact that they were obviously fulfilling neither the gender role nor the expectations of the majority of their peer group. The younger women were less concerned about the sexuality of residential areas,

they reasoned that because of their youth they were not expected to have a husband or male cohabitee and hence landlords and/or neighbours would assume two women living together to be students or friends sharing for financial reasons rather than lesbian partners.

But it is not only housing which reflects heterosexual life-styles, the ideology of the home also derives much of its meaning from this identification with the asymmetrical family. The home is "the spatial location of family identity and the place within which family relations are played out" (Bowlby *et al.*, 1985, p. 8). Therefore, because of its association with the family and child-rearing, and hence with emotional and physical sustenance, the home is perceived as a haven or refuge from the stresses and anxieties of the public world of work and strangers. For some lesbians, the private space of their own 'home' is the only place where they feel safe and able to express their sexual identity without fear of exposure or violence, because they can control access to it and the behaviour of others and the expression of sexuality within it. Hence 'home' can be a haven where they can forget the habit of self-concealment and be themselves.

But for others who live or spend time in matrimonial or parental houses, the heterosexual family-based ideology of the 'home' makes them sites of alienation. For it is in the heteropatriarchal home, which is controlled by the extended family, that many lesbians (both those who are open and those who are secretive about their sexual orientation) become particularly conscious that they do not fit in with the asymmetrical 'family' identity because they do not conform to a particular form of heterosexual and gendered relations.

> I mean, as much as I love my family I always feel I don't fit in. The only place I feel at ease is with gay people . . . I feel I sit there in a room full of my family and feel I'm just not part of this, I don't fit in. I feel as if I'm stuck on a pedestal you know, not that I'm better than them but that everybody's looking at me, that I don't blend in (working class, 30s).

> I do sometimes find it hard when the normal straight world impinges on me. Like when I go home to my parents' for example and my sister's there with her husband or my cousins come over for the day and they all live, well as far as I know anyway, straight lives, I mean I don't feel it so much now but there was a time when I really felt that tug of wanting to be like everyone else. There's such a lot of pressure to conform, to be like everyone else even though we know what other people have doesn't necessarily make them happy, you know, the family, the man, the woman and the kids, all that stuff (middle class, 30s).

This perception of being out of place in the family home is made apparent not only through relatives' overtly heterosexual behaviour and rituals but also through the taken-for-granted way in which they assume all members of the family will share antigay sentiments or join in with antigay comments. Consequently, for lesbians the parental or matrimonial home is devoid of many of the shared meanings, experiences, and values which are simultaneously taken for granted by heterosexuals but which also serve to shape or reinforce the asymmetrical identity of the family. In this way, heterosexual power is invested in and expressed through so-called private spaces.

So, far from the heteropatriarchal home representing a great mixture of associations, actions, and emotions which contribute to a person's identity, for many lesbians 'the family home' symbolises everything they do not want or are unable to be.

For example, the home is perceived as one of the few places where you can impose something of your own identity on the environment. But for young lesbians living with parents or friends, or women who identify as lesbians but are living with male partners who are unaware of their sexuality, the lack of privacy or sanctity in the 'home' because it is a space controlled by others means that it becomes a site where identity is concealed or suppressed: for example, through hiding lesbian books or pictures of lovers; or there is deliberate misrepresentation by the display of heterosexual images, such as posters of male stars. Similarly, when the heterosexual world of cleaners, builders, meter readers, and visitors impinge on houses controlled by lesbians, some women attempt to maintain the sanctity of their home by hiding lesbian signifiers or by employing gay tradespeople to carry out work in the house.

Those who choose to disclose their sexuality to relatives or male partners risk exclusion from the family or marital home, rejection by relatives, and losing custody of children.

Far from being a haven, therefore, and an antidote to the pressure lesbians experience outside, the heteropatriarchal power which is invested in the matrimonial or parental home means it often becomes the site where gay women are put under most pressure to conform to a heterosexual identity of the family or to conceal their lesbianism. This desire to please relatives or to conform pressurises many gay women into heterosexual relationships which they then regret. Home for many lesbians is therefore not where the heart is but the place they need to escape from to express their heart's desire.

The workplace

A national survey of attitudes to lesbians and gay men in the USA revealed that 25% of respondents to the poll would strongly object to working around people who are gay. A further 27% said they would prefer not to do so (Herek, 1992b). Similarly, a survey of the heads of 640 sociology departments in the early 1980s showed that 63% held reservations about hiring a known homosexual (D'Emilio, 1989). British figures suggest that actual discrimination is commonplace. The Lesbian Employment Rights group found that 151 out of 171 gay women questioned in London in 1984 had experienced some form of antilesbianism in the workplace (Hall, 1989). Nine of the forty women interviewed have actually been discriminated against for being gay or have witnessed the negative way in which those who are 'out' are treated in the workplace. Lesbians are therefore very conscious that employers perceive gay sexuality as negative and inferior. One of three lesbians who came 'out' at work said:

They've already got rid of one, hounded her out . . . Because the management committee, right-wing middle-class fogeys, that were there didn't like it [her open-

ness about her sexuality] and harassed her so much she said that was it, she couldn't work with them, and our employer didn't back her up at all . . . They don't support us even though they have this equal opportunities policy, it's not worth the paper its written on. And the other one has definitely been stopped for promotion and is not chosen for lots of training events, so she's definitely being kept down. Me, well the head of the service has told me I'm too aggressive so I know that I'll probably be rotting here for the rest of my life (middle class, 30s).

But sexuality in the workplace is not confined to the attitudes of employers. Organisations themselves are not asexual but heterosexual. The whole organisation of production has evolved in parallel to the social organisation of reproduction. The heterosexual family, therefore, is seen to complement working organisations by "providing continuity and the rest and recreation workers need to be productive", whereas "the gay lifestyle is not perceived to be stable or to offer the same restoratives" (Hall, 1989, p. 126). Correspondingly, many organisations adopt a paternalistic approach to workers and their families which is reflected in the way companies provide, for example, life assurance, private health care, and other benefits for heterosexual family units only. Therefore, employers both organise and represent a particular form of power relations, heterosexual, in the workplace.

Similarly, expectations about gender roles and behaviour are also transferred to the workplace, a process described by Nieva and Gutek (1981, p. 59) as "sex role spillover". For example, women in modern Western culture are currently associated with characteristics related to their domestic role, such as being passive, caring, emotional, tidy, clean, whereas men are associated with dirt, danger, and assertiveness. As a result, workplaces commonly develop asymmetrical structures with complementary roles for men and women which reflect these constructions of masculinity and femininity. These constructions change over both time and space, but the binary distinction and the patriarchal power relationship between masculine and feminine is reproduced (Cockburn, 1983). The gendering of jobs in this way therefore establishes and effectively polices heteropatriarchy hegemony in the workplace, so that women who do 'masculine' jobs, such as engineering, run the risk of being labelled butch and therefore lesbian, whereas men in so-called 'feminine' roles, such as nursing, are perceived as effeminate and hence gay (Bowlby *et al.*, 1987). Lesbian and gay sexualities are therefore represented in the workplace as abnormal and inferior, or at best as a personal problem (Burrell and Hearn, 1989).

The (hetero)sexualisation of the workplace is not limited to the asymmetrical gendering of jobs. Gutek (1989) cites Schneider's (1982) research to support her claim that women at work are perceived to be inherently sexual in appearance, dress, and behaviour: "Because it is expected, people notice female sexuality, and believe it is normal, natural, an outgrowth of being female" (Gutek, 1989, p. 60). Therefore, women's behaviour and dress are often interpreted in a sexual way by men, even though they were not intended as such (Abbey *et al.*, 1987). Those women who do not conform to expectations of femininity, by, for example, not wearing makeup or by not flirting or responding to male overtures, risk being labelled lesbian and therefore as unsuccessful or inferior women.

Women interviewed who have not disclosed their sexual identity at work said that in order to operate successfully in a patriarchal workplace they feel pressurised into passing as heterosexual by conforming to a feminine identity, for example, by wearing makeup and skirts and feigning sexual interest in men. As a result of adopting a gender–sexual identity which is devoid of meaning for them, some lesbians feel out of place at work. Such subterfuge also means that it is less easy for lesbians to identify each other at work and therefore it perpetuates the isolation of gay individuals and the invisibility of the homosexual population.

This sociosexual behaviour in the workplace is not confined to asymmetrical interactions between sexually labelled employees; individuals' private lives and experiences are also used as common currency in exchanges between colleagues, particularly women, in the public arena of the workplace. For example, heterosexuals talk about what they have done in their leisure time with their partners, share marital difficulties or confidences, freely speak to lovers on the telephone, and display heterosexual signifiers such as photographs and wedding rings. Therefore most workplaces come to reflect physically and socially the ideology and social relations of the majority of the inhabitants, and so this reinforces the heterosexual identity of the employees as a group.

Whereas heterosexuals take for granted their freedom to express their sexuality publicly and therefore transcend the so-called public–private dichotomy, lesbians are alienated from colleagues by the need to keep their private lives out of the workplace. The most common coping strategy used to separate public and private identities is to avoid any mention of a partner or relationship at work (Valentine, 1993a). As a result, lesbians also have to avoid situations where the physical divide between home and work social relations is breached. For example, by not inviting colleagues home or attending social events organised by employers or amongst colleagues where there is pressure to produce a partner of the opposite sex. But, although this may maintain a neutral or asexual front, the women interviewed said that as a consequence they feel isolated because they are unable to share their personal problems and experiences with others. More significantly, this inability to join in makes them appear aloof, and so they are unable to develop authentic friendships with workmates, so tending to undermine their working relationships with colleagues and their ability to network.

For many lesbians, therefore, the workplace is not experienced as an asexual environment but as a *heterosexual* environment. This is because workplaces are physically and socially organised to reflect and reproduce asymmetrical sociosexual relations. As a result of this expression and representation of heteropatriarchal relations in space, heterosexual employees as a group appropriate the space through (hetero)sexualised signifiers, conversations, and behaviour.

Social spaces

Just as heterosexuality spills over from the home into the workplace, so it also imbues social spaces such as hotels and restaurants. In particular, hotels have

a dual image; first, they represent a surrogate home for families on holiday and therefore are associated with heterosexual family units; second, they are effectively surrogate bedrooms having specific (hetero)sexual associations as a site for adultery and 'dirty weekends'.

Lesbian couples are therefore conscious that booking a double room implies that a sexual relationship is taking place between the women. In a survey by the *Pink Paper* (1991) it was found that hotels rejected bookings by single-sex couples, claiming there were no vacancies, but rooms were made available to subsequent heterosexual callers. Only one woman interviewed had been rejected in this way. But others said that they felt inhibited and embarrassed trying to make reservations because they anticipated they may be refused a room.

Although hotel and bed-and-breakfast (B&B) receptionists may be prepared to accept bookings from any paying customer, other guests and staff often appear to be less tolerant of difference. The women interviewed claimed to have been stared at, talked about, and verbally abused by fellow guests and intimidated by aggressive staff. They attributed this to the fact that they were identified as lesbians by the absence of male partners, an insufficiently feminine appearance, and intimate body language and behaviour. In other words, they failed to dress and behave according to their gender identity.

Even if they do not encounter any adverse reactions, women also claim to feel out of place in hotels and B&Bs because they are conscious of being the only single-sex couple present in an overwhelmingly and overtly heterosexual environment. A common response, therefore, is to avoid 'straight' places and to seek out accommodation run for or by homosexuals.

Lesbians also report similar experiences of hostility and discomfort in some restaurants, which, like hotels, are environments associated with intimacy and heterosexual courting rituals. They are also places where people commonly 'dress up' reflecting asymmetrical gender roles; for example, when going out women put on makeup and jewellery and men put on jackets, and so emphasise their heterosexuality. Consequently, women claim that when dining with a female partner they have been given poor tables 'out of sight' and hostile service by the staff; fellow diners have stared at them, and they have felt inhibited and unable to hold normal conversations or to touch and exchange intimacies. Women who have been married contrasted these reactions with the way they took for granted their ability to express their sexuality over dinner with a male partner without fear of incurring a hostile response or of feeling out of place.

Whereas hotels and restaurants are environments of intimacy, public houses, particularly at night, are traditionally identified as male-dominated environments. Women's access to pubs has historically been constrained by norms about morality and respectability. This meant that females entering public houses had to be accompanied by men and were restricted to set bars or times (Green *et al.*, 1987). Although it is more common now for women to go to pubs and clubs in the company of other women, women still avoid going into pubs and night clubs alone. This is not only because women's access to these places at night is limited by fear of travelling through public space alone

at night (Valentine, 1992) but also because women alone in such venues are assumed to be available and receptive to sexual overtures from men and therefore encounter high levels of sexual harassment (Westwood, 1984). But sexual attention is not always unwanted. Women actively dress up and go out to pubs and clubs 'with the girls' with the intention or hope of finding a new partner (Burgoyne and Clark, 1984). Consequently, lesbians who make it clear through appearance or behaviour that they are not interested in men or that they are together as a couple stand out as different. Therefore, lesbians often feel conscious of being out of place or are actively made aware of this by hostile reactions from men.

Like housing and the workplace, therefore, most social spaces are organised to reflect and express heterosexual sociosexual relations. In particular, hotels and restaurants are environments of intimacy associated with heterosexual romance, dating, and sex; and pubs and clubs are environments where women receive and are expected to be receptive to male sexual advances. Lesbians can therefore feel out of place because of the orientation of these places towards heterosexual couples, or they are made to feel out of place by the hostility of others who identify them as outsiders through their dress, body language, and disinterest in men.

Public open spaces

> I feel very angry that wherever you go, that you're on the outside . . . I've always hated not being able to touch my partner in public. You know, you see everyone else walking hand-in-hand or arm-in-arm down the street on a Saturday, in all the shops. And that's never been a possibility for me.
>
> (middle class, 40s)

As this quote and the opening quote in this paper suggest, certain forms of overt displays of affection between men and women are commonplace in public places such as the high street. Such behaviour is particularly evident in open spaces such as the park and the beach during hot summer weather.

The taken-for-granted way in which asymmetrical couples and families take up public space serves to alienate lesbians who are rarely able to procure space in the same way. However, when lesbian, gay, and bisexual communities are mobilised and make their presence visible they can appropriate public space. By turning the tables on heterosexuals in this way, Gay Pride demonstrates that space is sexualised, and, more specifically, that it is 'usually' heterosexual.

Lesbians who do make the nature of their relationship apparent in public spaces risk a violent response. Like sexual abuse perpetrated against all women, antigay violence exists on a continuum from comments to threats, assault to murder. Kelly (1987) makes the point that the continuum of sexual violence does not refer to a linear line from least to most serious, despite the fact that some forms of violence are perceived as more common and therefore less serious than others, because individuals react differently to different experiences depending on their background and the way in which they per-

ceive the incident as it happens. In particular, it has been argued that offences are subjectively linked, that is, one offence tends to accompany or follow from another (Warr, 1987). For example, verbal abuse is often a prelude to physical assault. 'Minor' incidents are therefore often very traumatic because of the implication that something 'more serious' could have followed.

Of the forty women interviewed 75% have been verbally abused at least once because of their sexuality, and three women have been chased and threatened and/or assaulted. Most also know of others who have been attacked, including one whose colleague on a helpline was murdered.

These figures are low compared with a study of 400 lesbians in San Francisco, CA, which found that 84% had experienced antilesbian verbal harassment, 57% had been threatened with physical violence, and 12% had been punched, kicked, or beaten (von Schulthess, 1992). Such violence also appears to be on the increase. In a survey of lesbians and gay men in Philadelphia, PA, in 1986–87, Gros *et al.* (1988) found that the number who had experienced criminal violence because of their sexuality had doubled since a previous survey in 1983–84 (Aurand *et al.*, 1985).

Of the sixty-one incidents recalled[4] by the women, 84% took place in 'ordinary' public spaces, whereas only 16% occurred in gay-identified places such as outside gay pubs, and all but one were exclusively perpetrated by men or boys. The women said that some of this public harassment was triggered because they had been seen expressing affection, such as holding hands, and therefore were known to be gay; others because they had not responded to male sexual overtures and therefore had been accused of being lesbians. This may, however, have been used as a sexual insult on a par with calling the women frigid, from men who felt their masculinity had been challenged, rather than being an intentionally accurate observation. But fourteen of the women said that the only explanation for incidents they had experienced was the fact that they had short hair and were wearing trousers and in most cases were in the company of another woman. By implication, therefore, they were not conforming to the dress and behaviour expected of a heterosexual woman in an 'ordinary' public space. This is in contrast to surveys about the victimisation of gay men which show that men are primarily attacked in gay spaces (again by men, not women) such as pubs or well-known cruising areas rather than in spaces that are not identified as gay (Berrill, 1992).

The difference between the geography of antilesbian attacks and the geography of assaults against gay men therefore implies that antilesbian violence is not only an attempt by heterosexuals to police the expression of gay sexual identities, but also reflects the fact that, although men are freely able to use and occupy public space alone or with other men without fear of sexual harassment, women who do so without male companions are open to comments about their appearance or to sexual overtures from men (Valentine, 1989; Westwood, 1984). Antilesbian abuse which is directed at women in public spaces reflects men's attempts to police independent women's behaviour, and hence reflects patriarchal power relations.

Conclusion – (hetero)sexing space

The evidence presented in this paper confirms that heterosexuality is the dominant sexuality in modern Western culture. This supremacy is attributed to the fact that opposite-sex sex is constructed as natural and therefore superior to homosexuality because of its association with procreation (Burrell and Hearn, 1989; Schneider and Gould, 1987). However, heterosexuality is not defined merely by sexual acts in private space. As the quote above implies, it is a *taken for granted* process of power relations which operates in most everyday environments, thus highlighting the inaccuracy of assuming a sexual public–private dichotomy.

Heterosexuality is expressed in the way spaces are physically and socially organised; from houses to the workplace, restaurants to insurance companies, spaces reflect and support asymmetrical family units. The lack of recognition of alternative sexual identities means that places and organisations exclude lesbian and gay life-styles and so unconsciously reproduce heterosexual hegemony. As a result of this expression and representation of heterosexual relations in space, heterosexuals as a group are allowed to appropriate and take up space, for example, with heterosexual signifiers such as pictures of partners or through constant (hetero)sexualised dialogue. Although the workplace and houses are perceived as asexual despite their heterosexual orientation, certain social spaces such as hotels have generally recognised (hetero)sexual associations which can directly inhibit and restrict their use by lesbians.

The dominance of heterosexuality is therefore perpetuated because lesbians feel out of place because space is organised for and appropriated by heterosexuals and so expresses and reproduces asymmetrical sociosexual relations. As a result, many lesbians practice self-censorship by avoiding or minimising the time spent in (hetero)sexualised space where they feel they do not belong, choosing, for example, where possible to socialise in gay spaces or self-created spaces where they feel at home. But more insidiously, heterosexual hegemony is maintained and policed through homophobia. Strictly, this means fear of homosexuals but it is commonly used to describe hatred and negative treatment of homosexuals. This includes the use of rejection, discrimination, and, ultimately, violence to oppress lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals. Many gay women therefore avoid publicly expressing their sexuality in environments where they perceive they will encounter such hostility. By concealing their identity in this way, lesbians become invisible in everyday environments. This fear of disclosure feeds the spatial supremacy of heterosexuality in three ways. First, it masks the number of lesbians present and so reinforces the heterosexual identity of environments. Second, it facilitates the perpetuation of negative stereotypes about what lesbians are like. Third, it ghettoises gay sexuality by making it difficult for lesbians to identify and meet other lesbians except in gay-defined spaces.

But lesbian identities are policed not only by homophobia but also by patriarchy. Heterosexuality is ideologically linked to the notion of gender identities (masculinity and femininity) because the notion of opposite-sex

relationships presumes a binary distinction between what it means to be a man or a woman. Masculinity and femininity have been and are constructed and reconstructed in relation to one another to create and perpetuate male supremacy (Coveney *et al.*, 1984). In particular, women are perceived to be inherently sexual in appearance and behaviour and, in the last analysis, submissive to men, whereas male sexual behaviour is interpreted in terms of dominance and power. This asymmetry of gender identities is reflected in the behaviour and dress ascribed to and expected of each sex. Women are therefore expected to dress to be sexually attractive to men, to respond to male sexual overtures and dialogue, but to avoid public space alone at night or specific male-dominated environments, such as pubs, when unaccompanied by others. Heterosexuality in modern Western societies is therefore patriarchal, that is, it reflects male dominance.

This was recognised by feminists in the 1970s. Lesbianism was therefore identified by radical feminists as a political choice, under the slogan 'Feminism is the theory, lesbianism is the practice'. As Bunch (1991, p. 320) states: "lesbian feminist politics is a political critique of the institution and ideology of heterosexuality as a cornerstone of male supremacy. It is an extension of the analysis of sexual politics to an analysis of sexuality itself as an institution".

Lesbian feminists have therefore challenged notions of femininity and women as "the feminine (inferior) side of the masculine/feminine couple" (Young, 1990, p. 74). The media have seized on this notion of lesbianism as a challenge or threat to the hegemonic strength of patriarchy and the asymmetrical family. Consequently, lesbianism is constructed and reproduced in the media and popular culture as synonymous not only with masculinity and ugliness but also with 'man-hating' and aggression (Young, 1990).

Women who dress, behave, do jobs, or go to places associated with men run the risk of being labelled 'butch' and hence as 'man-hating' lesbians. The stigma and negativity associated with being a lesbian therefore means that accusations of being a 'dyke' are used by some men to keep independent women in their place, and, similarly, some women use the accusation to pressurise other women into complying in their own oppression (Bunch, 1991). In this way, the stigma of lesbianism is used to police patriarchal gender identities. Consequently, because gay women commonly have lifestyles which are relatively independent of men – for example, they go to pubs, or restaurants, or hotels without male partners – they are often abused as 'dykes'. However, the evidence I have presented in the sections on social and public space suggests that such hostile comments are not always intended to be accurate observations of lesbians' sexuality but can be meant as a term of abuse for independent women who, for example do not dress and behave according to men's expectations of femininity.

Lesbians therefore feel out of place and fearful of discrimination or violence in certain environments not only because of homophobia directed at them because they have been identified as the homosexual 'other', but also because of a patriarchal backlash, directed at them because they are women who are relatively independent of men and therefore are a threat to the hegemony of patriarchy. This pressurises some lesbians to dress and behave

in a highly feminine or heterosexually identified way to avoid the accusation 'dyke'. The adoption of these fictional sexual identities in different spaces means that gay women are unable to develop authentic relations with others, so hindering their working, social, and business relationships and their ability to network. So patriarchy also perpetuates the invisibility of lesbians in everyday spaces and pushes the expression of lesbian identities into gay-identified or self-created spaces.

Thus, although lesbians, as the homosexual 'other', experience a different form of oppression from heterosexual women, expressed through homophobia, all women are also touched by antilesbianism. However, by ignoring antilesbianism or collaborating in perpetuating it, some heterosexual women comply in their own oppression, because such antilesbianism is also used to police heterosexual women's dress, behaviour, and activities. Hence, if 'dyke' were not a term of oppression, heterosexual women would also have more freedom to define their own identities. However, in practice, actual strategies to work together are made difficult by the apparently different interests of heterosexual and gay women.

I therefore suggest there is a need for more research to explore the complex and perhaps contradictory experiences of lesbians, heterosexual women, gay men, and bisexuals in a heteropatriarchy and hence to highlight the most appropriate ways in which to challenge its hegemony.

Notes

1 The quotes used in the text from interviews are verbatim. Ellipsis dots indicate that a word or phrase has been removed. Those quoted are identified only by an age and a class label. The author recognises that class, like sexual and gender identities, can be fluid and that individuals can maintain multiple class positions (Graham, 1992). In addition, because of the life-style changes women sometimes go through when they adopt a lesbian identity, the class position of many lesbians is complex. Consequently, the terms middle and working class are used to indicate only the current occupational status of the woman concerned. No further information can be supplied about the interviewees because of the need to maintain their anonymity.

2 Strictly, homosexual is a biological term, gay is used to describe homosexual men and women, and lesbian is used by women who wish to be distinguished from gay men. However, some women prefer to be identified as gay rather than lesbian, and vice versa. Therefore, in this paper the terms have been used interchangeably to describe all homosexual women. Other terms used are 'to come out' – to be open about sexuality; 'straight' – gay word for 'heterosexuals' 'dyke' – used as a term of antigay abuse by heterosexuals but as a positive label by lesbians.

3 Fear of prejudice, discrimination, and violence causes many lesbians to conceal their sexual identity from colleagues, friends, and relatives. In order to protect the anonymity of the participants, the identity of the town where the research was conducted and all the names of people and places mentioned in this paper have been changed.

4 The figure of sixty one is the number of incidents described in the interviews, but several women said they had experienced other episodes too numerous to recall. In addition, other researchers have found that respondents tend to underreport 'minor'

incidents because they are 'taken for granted' as common experiences. Therefore the actual levels of abuse may be much higher.

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23 D. A. Leslie
'Femininity, Post-Fordism and the "New Traditionalism"'

Introduction

> A new kind of woman with deep-rooted values is changing the way we live ... To us, it's a woman who has found her identity in herself, her home, her family. She is the contemporary woman whose values are rooted in tradition.
>
> (*Good Housekeeping* advertisement, 1990)

Femininity is in large part constructed through representations in the cultural arena, and space is fundamental to the circulation of images and the constitution of identity. Representation is profoundly political, and there is a need to bridge the divide between social sciences and cultural studies, between discourses and the material conditions of women's existence (Barrett, 1992; Bondi, 1990; Deutsche, 1991; Grossberg *et al.*, 1992; Massey, 1991; Morris, 1992; Rose, 1992). In this paper I examine the growing tension between materialism and poststructuralism in feminism and argue that it is important to take cognizance of the fact that the redefinition of images and the creation of new forms of identity are of pivotal importance in the recent round of restructuring (Burgess and Wood, 1988; Watson, 1991). An interest in representation need not signal an abandonment of materialism.

In the current period of economic, political, and cultural upheaval, a crisis with profoundly spatial dimensions, advertising serves as a crucial point of mediation between production and consumption, where the emergence of new meanings of masculinity and femininity and their shifting geographies can be examined. In periods when gender roles undergo marked shifts, such as in the 1920s and the 1950s, advertising takes on a particularly important role

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