Yvette Taylor (2004) 'Negotiation and Navigation - an Exploration of the Spaces/Places of Working-class Lesbians'

Abstract

This article draws upon my research on working-class lesbians, which explores the relationship between class, sexuality and social exclusion. Research participants were drawn mainly from Scotland (Glasgow, Edinburgh and the Highlands), with smaller samples in Yorkshire and Manchester; in total fifty-three women took part, most being interviewed individually, others as part of three focus groups, and a couple in 'paired' interviews. The significance of sexuality and class position is highlighted across various social sites from family background and schooling to work experiences and leisure activities. The women's own identifications, understandings and vivid descriptions point to the continued salience of class as a factor in shaping life experiences. This article focuses primarily on the women's 'sense of place' and their relations to the often devalued territories that they inhabit. The relationship between sexual identity and class has received little academic attention - here the 'gaps' in the literature pertaining to 'lesbian and gay' space, and to (de-sexualised) class space, will be identified. By including empirical data I offer a picture of the ways in which classed spaces is sexualised and sexualised space is classed and suggest that space is constitutive of identity in terms of where it places people, both materially and emotionally.

Keywords: Class; Identity; Sexuality; Space; Stigma

Introduction

1.1 This article draws upon my research on working-class lesbians[1], which explores the relationship between class, sexuality and 'social exclusion'. Research participants were drawn mainly from Scotland (Glasgow, Edinburgh and the Highlands), with smaller samples in Yorkshire and Manchester[2]; in total fifty-three women took part, most being interviewed individually, others as part of three focus groups, and a couple in 'paired' interviews. The significance of sexuality and class position is highlighted across various social sites from family background and schooling to work experiences and leisure activities. The women's own identifications, understandings and vivid descriptions point to the continued salience of class as a factor in shaping life experiences. This article focuses primarily on the women's 'sense of place' and their relations to the often undervalued territories that they inhabit, suggesting that space is constitutive of identity in terms of where it places people, both materially and emotionally. I will combine analysis of Bourdieu's concept of classed 'habitus', with Valentine's (1995) research on lesbians housing 'choices'. 'Movements' through space are fractured by homophobia, as Valentine points out, but they are also mediated by classed dis/comforts. By re-claiming working-class territories as positive sites of self-identification the women challenge the authoritative devaluations of their 'communities'.

1.2 Rarely do concerns with sexuality and class, and their spatial manifestations, combine in such a way as to highlight interconnections and interactions. Although Binnie (2000) compares the management of particular classed spaces with the regulations of places of public sex, arguing that both the sex industry and the manufacturing industry are seen as polluting and unsightly, there is little sense of the effects this has upon the individuals who daily experience, use and live in these places. Similarly, there is a lack on attention to the ways in which classed space is sexualised or sexual space is classed. Furthermore, research into lesbian and gay space has typically focussed on 'scene' space, and although there have been proposals for a re-conceptualisation of where lesbians are, and therefore who and what they can be (Bell and Valentine, 1995; Valentine, 1995) these still ignore class as an important component of 'everyday space'. As such, the experiences of working-class lesbians, their relations to space and their identities constructed within, are marginalized.

1.3 I aim to rectify this erasure by considering the significance of class and sexuality to the women's 'sense of place', seeking to explore the means of navigation and negotiation the women employ to find their way though everyday life. Everybody, by default of having lived, has a personal map of where they are,

where they were and the time in between. For some this map is more real, more enduring, than for others. This is particularly so given that working-class areas are not only spatially marginalized but also increasingly depicted as 'sink' estates, symbolic of decay and degradation, and synonymous with an 'underclass' status (Murray, 1990). Ideas of an 'underclass' features in both academic and political discourses (Bradley and Hebson, 1999), perpetuating class inequalities as individuals become responsible for remedying their own situations. (MacDonald and Marsh, 2000). This emphasis on individual character traits leaves structured disadvantage, situated within working-class areas unchallenged. If it's a case of you are where you live, what happens when where you live is 'a bit rough'?

1.4 Places 'form an important source of meaning for individuals which they can rely upon to tell stories and thereby come to understand themselves and their place within wider society' (Thrift, 1997: 160). However, little consideration has been give to the possible challenges, limitations and negotiations in identifying with a stigmatised spaces or 'communities' (although see Haylett, 2001). Discourses of 'classlessness' often convey notions of potential and actual movements and mobilities, which make for a more 'fluid' social structure - but such ideas fail to address continued working-class identification with working-class 'communities'. Understandings of the constraints on individual mobility are also required. Bourdieu's (1984) concept of classed 'habitus' conveys the set of cultural practices which generate a sense of belonging among its members, producing 'choices', confidence and 'entitlements'. Here, middle-classness indicates a 'sufficient' level of economic and cultural capital, an ability to negotiate the space successfully, whereas working-classness often signifies 'lack' and outsider status. This is useful in thinking about how movements through spaces are structured. It also points to the entrenched, emotional 'value' of spaces, relevant to how we view social space and how we negotiate it (Skeggs, 1997).

1.5 Whole working class 'communities', can be denigrated on the basis that they fail to display the 'proper' standards, accommodate and breed social 'problems' and generally are 'run down' (an evaluation also attached to working-class bodies within such space) (Skeggs, 1997; Haylett, 2001; Howarth, 2002). The women challenge these judgements by positively identifying with (marked) working-class spaces, revealing a re-assessment on their own terms, rather than subscribing to a 'middle-class'[3] estimation. However, this judgement was continually negotiated, challenged, ridiculed, accepted and enacted -informed by social and economic 'capitals', as well as structural and interpersonal 'authority' (Bourdieu, 1984; Southerton, 2002). Their own positive re-evaluations rarely, if ever, received validation, making them uncertain and vulnerable.

1.6 Nevertheless, working-class women's identity constructions are not solely based on dis-identification and avoidance of pathologised working-class positions (Skeggs, 1997). This is not to evade the very real problems women experience in living within economically marginalized 'communities'. Rather I suggest that the women do not inevitably seek to 'escape' them - not everybody actually wants to live in Hebden Bridge[4]. Their 'movements' through space are also informed and restricted by financial hardships as well as by the dis/comforts experienced in not/belonging in classed space. As such, it is not simply a matter of packing up and moving on, of buying a new map and getting on with it.

1.7 Here, Kelly and Lisa describe the negative associations surrounding Lisa's 'home', which is known as a 'sink area', and the feelings this has produced - a secrecy and silence on the matter, even if Lisa resists these classifications ('probably'). L: It's 100% council housing estate, it's the biggest one in Europe, so it's like a sink area basically. Not just people who were working-class, people who were unemployed, one parent families, there were a lot of young parent families. It was only built about 20 years ago but it's gone right down hill because you get drug abuse, fighting, gangs. It does get a lot of bad publicity, probably more than it deserves and there's a school on there which accommodates the whole catchment area, the whole of Brandon, so it's 100% working-class intake, 100% council housing ... I went there and no-one ever expects anything of you as well.K: When I met Lisa, about a year and a half ago, didn't I? You kept that really quite a *secret*. (Kelly, 23 and Lisa, 23, Yorkshire)

1.8 As can be seen in many of the women's comments on the areas they come from, the language Lisa uses is very definite ('100 %'). With this there is an almost apologetic feeling to the latter part of her description, that on one hand she is attempting to convey the sense of deprivation while at the same time feeling that she must stand up for where she came from. Alongside this narration of geography and meaning is also the revelation that she kept silent about her background within her friendship, and although it may only be figure of speech, her 'admission' of where she grew up is described in terms of it 'coming out', of revealing something important.

1.9 Lisa's description encompasses the material signifiers of working-class space, as well as (stereo)typical working-class inhabitants. There are also many visual signifiers of classed space, and of poverty, as places, and people looked 'rough' and 'poor'. For instance, Grace recognises the 'look' of poverty while at the same time qualifying her assertions. Her awareness of the possibility of misrecognition appears in her account: Everywhere you look, there's still extreme poverty, do you know what I mean ...

even where I stay in Penicuik, even in the Council schemes now and you can tell street by street who doesn't have money and who isn't in employment, do you know what I mean? Just by the conditions of the gardens, do you know what I mean, and I'm not running people down because their gardens aren't nice 'cause they're unemployed. But it's just that whole kind of - that look of poverty, do you know what I mean (Grace, 30, Edinburgh)

1.10The geographic descriptions given by the women were often vivid and insightful and it was clear that their emotional maps emphasised not only the physical aspects of their environments but also the feelings and experiences contained within. Several women noted the contradiction between the 'image' of the area and the 'reality'; appearances and perceptions can be deceptive. There are 'hidden' levels of poverty, unapparent through surface appearances, particularly when inhabitants are complicit in this 'covering up' ('It's what I call a fur coat and no drawers town' -Ali). This suggests a degree of shame in poverty or a necessity to 'pretend' to be otherwise. It also reveals the deep and conflicting meanings contained within space, recognised by 'insiders'. Some meanings are viewed as more pressing and ultimately more 'real'. The surface image of the place is later contrasted with real-ness based on increasing familiarity, conveying ideas of the hidden, as well as the visible, aspects of poverty. The negotiation of 'outsider' and 'insider' meanings also forms patterns of identifications, affecting a 'coming-out' about where you belong.

Sexuality, Class and Geography

2.1 The degree of 'comfort' in classed space can be mapped onto to the level of comfort, safety and belonging within heterosexual space. Here multiple inequalities co-exist and regulate who 'fits in'. The women manage 'outness' within space, at times feeling unsafe and insecure, whilst also explicitly and impressively challenging homophobic attack, attempting to change their social landscapes. For example, Rita humorously ridicules the 'accusations' against her, while also highlighting a serious point about the 'kind of person' she is: We do get very, very drunk and we do shout a lot when we get out the taxi! And the neighbours don't like it they've decided, because we go out a lot and because I allow my kids to have parties, we have actually proved that we are gay (laughs). That's what the nice Catholic lady across the road said! Her son's football kept hitting my window and I went out and said 'If that happens again I will put a knife through your ball', he said 'I'll tell my mum on you.' He did it again and I slashed his football. His mother came storming over, she said 'I suppose that's what you kind of people do!' I said 'What's my kind of people, I'm a mother, I'm a mother, I have windows and doors, that's the kind of person I am - I don't want them smashed!' I don't see them anymore. (Rita, 52, Manchester)

2.2 The women's views of various locations were informed by their own and other's feelings towards their sexuality. Operating along a continuum, homophobic acts can be as 'subtle' as verbal abuse or as overt as physical attack. Silence can also be experienced as homophobic, as a refusal to enter into conversation with the 'other'. Many women were 'closeted' in their current locations but this should not straight forwardly be read as problematic, 'outness' is a process, rather than a state of being ('out'), which is negotiated daily. To this extent women had to negotiate and manage the straight places in which they lived, producing complex feelings around (self)deception. This also relates to and interacts with their feelings around class identity - there are parallels to be made around the negotiation of stereotypes and processes of mis/recognition, whereby some 'fit' into normalised social space whereas others 'fall out'. There are inter-subjective comparisons made and enforced, with reference to social 'standards' and 'norms', and like working-class identity, lesbian existence is similarly equated with pollution and contamination of 'respectable' space.

2.3 In '*Matter out of place: visibility and sexuality in leisure space'* , Skeggs (1999) compares a group of white working-class heterosexual women, whose identity is based on 'dis-identification' (from being working-class), and a group of lesbians who form their identity through visibility, recognition and territorialization. However, the lesbians remain un-identified in terms of class, suggesting that sexuality became the primary classifying device for the lesbians. The contrast with the identified working-class women, suggests that the lesbians class position is neutral or unmarked, which implies a middle-class status. What then of working-class lesbians? Where, and in what ways, are they 'located'?

2.4 This can be extended to the dangers and difficulties, both practically and emotionally, in navigating through different localities. John and Patrick's (1998) research on lesbian and gay poverty found that most respondents felt their immediate localities to be unsafe spaces. Sometimes the 'private' sphere can offer a degree of protection against the outside, apparent in Valentine's (1995) claim that the home can take on a vital role as a lesbian social venue in particular areas. But middle-class people may have more resources to protect themselves against discrimination - they can chose to re-locate to a more 'liberal', 'trendy' area, choose to enact their sexuality in a space they know is going to be more 'tolerant'[5]. This is not open to those who, like Lynn, lack the financial means to choose a different location and her anger and resentment at this 'easy option' is very clear. She is not staying put because of any notion of duty or pride, she is

keeping her head down because there is nothing else to do: It depends where you live as well, if you're in the West end and you're trendy it's fine. If you're in Cranhill it's no fine, you'll get your windies put in ... I'm very working-class and I know that probably in working-class there's hellish prejudices, people are intolerant, attitudes that stink, racist, sexist, you name it, homophobic. It's very strong and there's a very thin veneer of civilised behaviour down there. Even in the middle-classes there can be a thin veneer. Ideally as well if I was going to move I would like to live in the West End with Mary 'cause it would be fine. But I'm not going to be able to do that 'cause I don't have the money to go and live in the West End, get a trendy wee flat. There's a bit of, you can hear it, resentment and upset about that. I'm going to have to live somewhere where it's not cosmopolitan, you're not able to be open because of consequences, because of fear of prejudice. (Lynn, 44, Glasgow)

2.5 Here, the classed characteristics of homophobia are teased out; while working-class people are seen to be more blatant about discriminating, middle-class people are believed to more 'subtle'. Moran (2000) discusses the classed aspects of homophobic violence, and perceptions of danger. In his focus group research the working-class are presented as key perpetuators of violence causing him to issue a warning against 'producing problematic correlations between the lower class and violence, in the context of a new underclass' (2000: 214). I would reiterate this statement, while also pointing to the different 'classes' of middle-class homophobia.

2.6 Women discussed the classed aspects of homophobia in complex and conflicting ways. There is sometimes a desire to 'protect' even working-class voices who would condemn them because of their sexuality, while the middle-classes are perceived as displaying a liberal pretension - they may not voice their homophobia but it nevertheless remains evident and felt. For those living in proximity to middle-class people, the classed and heterosexual judgments are more overt, challenging the equation of middle-class with subtlety and decency. Still, it is working-class lesbians who are labelled as 'indecent', overt and imposing on heterosexual space.

2.7 Jill compares the respective attitudes towards herself in two differently classed areas and claims it is in the middle-class location where she suffered the most. The 'differences' in the respective areas mean different things - and it is in the middle-class area where her sexuality symbolises a lack of 'standards' and 'decency', leading to homophobic attack. Jill does not portray working-class areas as free from homophobia - but notes the multiple inequalities, tensions and hardships experienced here. These produce a more stressful, but also perhaps paradoxically, less introverted and less judgemental environment: It's funny, see where I live now, when I lived down in Morningdale it was £275,000 houses, all private, everybody else there apart from us owned their houses, we just rented and when I was down there I got all the kids giving me hassle on the promenade every fucking day, at one point there were 15 of them camped outside my house and I was ready to go out with golf clubs and smack them on their heads but my sister stopped me ... So I got that down there and then I moved to the schemie-ist place I've lived in for a long time, you know, just down the road from Newbank and Broomhouse and all these places and that was fucking cool, nobody says a word ... I think it's cause in schemie areas they just chuck lots of people together so there's loads of gay people up my bit. You see people during the day and you're just like 'Oh my God!', there's me and Max going 'She's gay!', it's quite funny. It's mad that thing, that exposure thing, you know, nice people live in nice houses with a nice promenade, they're exposed to fuck all, they're exposed to nothing, they don't know any other part of life apart from mummy and daddies parties, the people they meet there, they're quite extravagant. And then you go to schemie bam land where they couldn't give a shit as long as you dinnae steal their car. (Jill, 27, Edinburgh)

2.8 Homophobia does exist within working-class areas, but rather than it being confined within certain areas, it has to be seen to have multiple expressions, with differing effects and purposes. Like Jill, many respondents had to move from one area to another to get away from homophobia. Amy (29, Edinburgh) re-located, having been labelled as 'the lesbian' of the town. Interestingly, in this example homophobia is equated with 'small town (working-class?) mentality' and 'naiveté'. Some felt distanced from their own working-class communities as a result of re-locating. For example, although Kelly is currently living in a working-class area, it is not her area and she describes the alienation that can be produced through movement: But see you're a lot different Lisa 'cause you're still in your home environment, you come from Hull, you still hang around with your mum you know. I've, sexuality has moved me, I belonged in that group em, and what my class identity means as a woman, and as a straight woman it would have been assumptions that I would have got married, live close to my mum and have some babies, live in each other's pockets. But I'm alienated from that because I've felt myself actually moving further and further away and I don't really fit in this area, that's obvious on some levels to me. (Kelly, 23, Yorkshire)[6]

2.9 Kelly feels she has been 'moved', physically and emotionally, from her family as a result of her sexuality. Kelly is an active 'chooser' in this process but this does not mean it is an easy 'transition'. The tension is spatialised, affecting feelings of not/belonging in both places. Just as sexuality is 'felt' (Valentine,

1993) it can be argued that class can also produce feelings of being 'out of place', informing experiences and perceptions.

2.10 Valentine (1995) claims that heterosexism influences what urban areas lesbians chose to live in, avoiding areas where they think they will stand out, preferring areas where they can 'blend in'. This is perhaps fails to consider the structuring of housing 'choices'. Sometimes the area that we reside in is not a choice. In contrast to the women in my research, Valentine speaks of her interviewees as being able to avoid 'rough' and 'dangerous' estates. It is argued that the spatial concentration is a product of individuals coincidentally making similar housing choices: 'choices that reflect the fact that lesbians have different lifestyles and hence different housing needs from many heterosexual households' (Valentine, 1995:98). My research challenges the applicability of this to the housing 'choices' of working-class lesbians, confirming that 'Housing exists not simply as a means to satisfy a need, it embodies a set of social relations' (Bell, 1991: 323). Social relations of class are also embodied in housing 'choices'.

Negotiating the Ladder

3.1 There was some 'movement' between class locations, subject to financial factors and sexuality, which formed notions of comfort and safety. 'Movement' tends to be conceptualised in a straightforward manner - as up, down or across. However, the ways in which the some women 'moved' problematises this theorisation - movements were not easily, if ever 'achieved', in terms of objective and subjective factors. The ways this is achieved again challenge current notions of 'upward mobility' - does swapping council houses constitute an upward 'escape' or is it in fact possible to carry on moving and yet never 'arrive'? The retention of class locality, and the subjective investments and associated meanings, connects with Bourdieu's (1984, 1986) notion of 'habitus'. Bourdieu makes use of 'habitus' as a three dimensional space, defined by the volume of human capital, composition of capital and change over time. Objective limitations and a 'sense of ones place' leads to exclusion from places and as such Bourdieu speaks of 'trajectories' and fields, rather than mobility. 'Mobility', with its 'rises' and 'falls' is criticised as accepting a one-dimensional view of social space, ignoring conversions and reproduction strategies (Bourdieu, 1986:125). Lawler (1999) adds to the questioning of social 'mobility' arguing that such conceptualisations further pathologise those working-class 'deviants' who don't 'escape'. The difficulties, but also pleasures, in existing in working-class space suggests that the women should not be though of as potential, or actual 'escapees'. There is no need to go on the run when your home is not your cell.

3.2 Also, many felt more at ease in working-class locations, being 'out of place' in middle-class space, and accordingly did not want to move. Others were unable to move even if they wanted to because of their financial circumstances. Lisa expressed a desire to move away, aware of this as a class judgment - the joke she shares is based on Kelly's suggestion that she is displaying pretensions (her refusal to watch TV is seen by Kelly as a 'pretentious' class judgement, while her desire to 'move' is seen as realistic) and points to the idea that some of our needs are seen as more valid than others. Moving away, or the desire to move away, can be seen as a 'pretentious' attempt to move somewhere you don't belong; 'habitus' is ruptured, or at least uncomfortably experienced, by these articulated and disputed tensions: I would never move into a place like Brandon or anything like it again because I wouldn't want to live in that kind of environment in that kinda area. In our little street of 10 houses there's a drug dealer, there's this bloke who gets sectioned every few weeks 'cause he goes mad and throws things around, three out of ten houses are empty and the other's have got massive families and they're alright. But that's kinda the worst area I'd put myself in ... I don't know if that's a class attitude or what, 'cause you were saying that to me earlier weren't you? About what type of area that I'd live in, 'cause I don't want to live in a bad area, I don't want to move onto Brandon Road. You've got a problem with me not watching T.V but you haven't got a problem with me wanting to live in another area? (Laughs). (Lisa, 23, Yorkshire)

3.3 These processes also reveal how comfort, within location, is desired but not always achieved. These desires may also be subject to (self) ridicule (and laughter), as the classed significance is recognised. It is important to remember the objective constraints against movement and the enforced, subjective and objective, boundaries between areas.

The Means and the Motivation

4.1 Judgements about 'standards' and investments in making the areas look 'nice', produced in comparison to the 'dirty' other, reveals the inequalities and tensions within shared spaces. For example, Sharon makes explicit her 'investment' in the area - and is keen to present herself as a 'decent' member of the working-class, concerned with presentational standards, as against the indecent, lazy and incompetent 'other' (Skeggs, 1997). Living in Port Glasgow, Sharon 'invests' in the locality but her investments are compared with those who 'sell out'. Hers is the language of duty, of keeping up the standards that the 'others' may not be capable of maintaining: But usually what you find is that, see people who've bought their houses, ex-council houses so they've bought them at a reasonable price and then they'll sell them, make a good profit

and move on to a better area. Whereas if we all start to do that the area will just go down, it will be the people that are on low incomes, that are maybe struggling to maintain a good area, it'll be people who won't lift up the phone to the council and say 'Hey, come and sweep this street', things like that. I think we should try and stay in a working-class area to try and bring, to keep the standards up, you know. (Sharon, 47, Glasgow)

4.2 There has been long-standing criticism of working-class council tenants who 'sell out'.[7] This is significant in itself but can be contrasted with the 'fixing' of others who are unable to move and remain geographically and economically marginalised, as many reported. Kirsty's sense of frustration and despair is reproduced throughout in the women's discussions about their homes and areas: So I had no transport and when you're on £90 a week, you can't afford to get the bus but people don't understand these things, these problems, you know. Therefore me and my daughter, you know, are stuck in the house all the time or you just go to the local shops, which are like about 15, 20 minutes walk away. But, yeah, I mean, there is a big town, Ashton Town Centre, which is like a bus ride away. But like I say, it costs money to go there. I mean, some weeks I would have enough money at the end of the week for a loaf of bread. (Kirsty, 26, Manchester) She is quite literally stuck, geographically and economically, and going nowhere fast. Regardless of motivation the means are just not there.

The Homing Instinct?

5.1 Homes are more private and intimate locations but they are still subject to the same economic and cultural inequalities applicable to public spaces. They signify worth, or lack of, as housing 'standards' and 'tastes' are recognised as worthy and valuable based on image and location. 'Tastes' are all too often seen as innate, but Bourdieu (1984) reveals that these 'dispositions' fulfil a social function of legitimating social inequality. Those in powerful positions get to define what is 'tasteful'. This theorisation is useful in outlining the women's economic and subjective negotiation of housing 'standards' - it can be extended by a consideration of women's own understandings of these processes. Bourdieu claims that economic capital is at the root of all other capitals (eg: cultural capital) but their respective interaction, the emotional impact, and relative importance is more clearly teased out in the women's own accounts.

5.2 The women were conscious of the practice of symbolic investments and presentations, offering insightful critiques into the classed processes regulating 'tasteful' standards - their insights occurred through being marked as 'distasteful' objects unwilling to display the 'proper' standards. This was apparent on an interpersonal level, through contact with housing agencies and middle-class others. However, such critique did not exempt women from feeling insecure about their (housing) presentations and judgements could not easily be deflected ('When you were coming over I thought 'God she's going to look at my home interior!' (laughs). Kelly).[8] First impressions count and nobody wants to be cast in the role of the distasteful other.

5.3 The type of housing occupied is often taken as an indicator of economic status, a bricks and mortar version of your bank account. Similarly housing can symbolise investments in cultural ideals - both the house itself and its contents can function as a form of cultural and economic capital. A 'dirty' house is one which does not conform to presentational standards - however this is not just a subjective matter when the visible and 'objective' 'evidence' of poverty is clear; Sharon re-calls seeing this as a child: Eh, as a kid the notable things for me were the clutter and untidiness of other peoples houses. Not to have a lot of things, for it to be dirty as well, we were never brought up like that, the housework had to be done, it was clean. You went into other people's houses and their wallpaper was off the wall and the carpets were bogin and you kinda, you could see the poverty in some of it. (Sharon, 47, Glasgow)

5.4 Poverty, disorder and 'dirt' were 'obvious' in Sharon's landscape; the visual markers of poverty and class were also discussed in relation to housing 'standards', here Sukhjit describes her family's desire to present a positive image of themselves via the exterior and interior household. This shows that working-class people also have investments in presenting a positive image of themselves. When what you see is what you get, tidying the front garden can be quite important.

5.5 'Standards' are also displayed through recognition and acquisition of 'tasteful' household objects - working-class homes are not only viewed as dirty, but also tacky, failing to demonstrate cultural capital. Are car boot sale finds are only 'cool' when they have been re-christened as kitsch? Although not expressed in this language, Kelly and Lisa have an insightful concept of this operation. Notably, it is their sexuality that offers contact and familiarity with the middle-class area discussed (and ridiculed): K: Well there's a hippy thing going on in Hebden[9]. There's this big class thing going on with people's home decorations and minimalism and things like that. The hippy stuff, there's a certain way you have to have your house, have it cluttered andL: I have my house however I want to have it.K: You can actually tell from these houses, working-class, as well. It's stuck in the '80's with borders around it. You know, they just don't have the

'taste'! (Laughs). Middle-class try to be kitsch as well, I've got a few friends who are kitsch and that's very middle-class 'cause the irony of it would just be wasted on somebody who didn't, the thing is you have to have the knowledge to know it's irony. They've got Princess Diana plates and they think it's funny but somebody who's working-class may see that as, em, serious. I'm getting delirious now ......(Kelly and Lisa)

5.6 Kelly has an awareness of what constitutes dis/tasteful items and her knowledge of this may in itself form an element of 'cultural capital' - however, it is not an entirely confident assertion and she continues to feel insecure about her own presentations.

5.7 These concerns may seem less important when considering the financial hardship experienced, apparent in the struggles over housing necessities. But presentation and perception remain important factors in the women's views of themselves and their positions. That said, many interviewees lived in inadequate housing and/or experienced periods of homelessness[10], which replaced a concern with 'decorations', after all there is little point worrying about the kitsch value of plates if you haven't got a wall to hang them on. Financial difficulty is experienced, and debt incurred when renting accommodation, through rent charges as well as the required deposit. Many women rented privately while remaining on the council housing list - as they had done so for years.

5.8 Most experienced numerous housing shifts, as a result of poor living conditions. Fiona speaks of the negative effect poor accommodation had on her whilst growing up, effecting performance at school as well as her health and well-being. She experienced episodes of homelessness throughout her childhood - herself and her mother had to rely on help from relatives and were then constructed as unwanted dependents. Given these factors it is not surprising that Fiona's mother expressed such anger at the Council for failing to adequately accommodate her, or that Fiona was upset in recalling the following incident: She hated them so much and that emotional like *bitterness*, do you know what I mean, my mum was bitter with the council. The woman who run it was a real bitch to us, I remember when I was 9 her son got cancer and we read about it in the local paper and my mum was like 'Good, that woman deserves all the shit in the world', and at the age of 9 I was like 'mmm' 'cause my mum's not normally like that, I remember thinking 'Oh, is that right to feel that about her and her son'. (Fiona)

5.9 It would be easy to mis-understand the anger conveyed, instead presenting such emotion as evidence of pathology, as often occurs. This is life on the bottom rung of the ladder, hanging on by the fingertips, where 'home' is an aspiration rather than a given and 'fighting' becomes second nature. Here the concern with 'culture' and 'taste' becomes less 'real' - but women still have to 'present' an acceptable image of themselves to become eligible for 'decent' housing, a factor informed by their class as well as sexual identity. The women were well aware of, and angry about, the bureaucratic and inefficient systems operated by the councils. For others their 'movement' through social space occurred through swapping council houses, quite literally going round the houses.

Defence and Demarcation

6.1 The spatial, material and emotional boundaries erected between classed individuals ('Us' and 'Them') living in close proximity are highlighted by Southerton (2002), who argues that the process of becoming included, or belonging within classed 'communities' requires 'boundary work'. In my research, boundaries are enforced, and identities regulated, from within as well as out with working-class areas and this is clear in the accounts of 'differences' and inequalities in operation here. These classification hierarchies reveal that is no easy matter to locate the cause of class discrimination and judgements to a middle-class outsider - as these continue to be played out in close interaction with working-class peers and in working-class communities, affecting a sense of comfort and belonging. However, I would suggest that the ways in which the classifications operate between as well as within classed space serve different classed functions. For example, working-class areas are often denigrated in their entirety, without awareness of how different areas, streets and houses within such space are differently 'classed' by working-class occupants. Similarly, this points to the tensions in discriminating and drawing boundaries around the self and 'others' - and the dis/identifications involved in this process.

6.2 The women were aware of the classifications operating within and between areas. The feeling of pride and/or solidarity in the area could be produced from a feeling that everyone was in a similar position: 'everybody was in the same sort ofboat.' (Angela, 42, Glasgow), which can be quite a comforting thought. These feelings of 'sameness' were emphasised through shared communal decline and vulnerability - there were structural reminders of their shared class positions and a feeling of together we stand, divided we fall. In contrast, differentiations were produced on the basis of who lived where, down to a particular street, and who displayed what - the visual signifiers of class. Although the women generally ridiculed such differentiations as 'pretentious', distinctions were occasionally made on the basis of in/decency.

6.2 'Differences' were highlighted in their shared social space. For example, Kelly shows how her family

were judged as deviant when entering what initially seemed to be normalised middle-class space - this occurred through a classed reading of her mother's 'hyper' sexuality. Kelly's mum is judged to have had too many children, an accusation often thrown at working-class mothers (Lawler, 2002). However, what is interesting here is that the 'accusers' are also working-class, a fact realised on reflection - their distinctions are generated through fear and wanting to be 'something different' (other than working-class?), wanting to prove that they are 'not one of those':...they tried daily to differentiate themselves and they all turned into snobs. When we moved into the area my mum refused to do that, you know, it was ridiculous, I look back now and think 'God, they thought they were better than everybody else!' They were all working-class! ... Looking back I've realised that they were working-class as well just trying to be something different. (Kelly, 23, Yorkshire)

6.4 These are the daily divisions which individuals make clear in their occupation of space, whatever the real differences. Nonetheless, the women spoke of positive feelings and experiences within working-class 'communities' - for example, playing on the street in 'gangs'[11], leaving doors open and relying on neighbours for help, which produced feelings of security and belonging. Sharon describes, with great detail, the spatial aspect of communal belonging in her childhood. Within her emotional map this space is still real and as such her description seems to come alive: A housing schemie[12] kid! Em, I came from an area in Glasgow called Possil Park, commonly known as Possil and em, the drug capital of Glasgow I think, housing scheme. It was a tenement with a sort of back and front door and we stayed in the top flat. I think everybody, where we stayed you came into the street like this [picture] and the houses were all around there and there was a wee road there then there was another square so we stayed in a house there. That was called the first square, so everybody in the first square had rivalry with everybody in the second square, all the kids, right, with this street dividing us. We had a big grass area in the middle so all the kids used to play, me included, on the grass bit, football or kick the can or ropes or whatever. But out of this close here my mum was the only person who worked in this close and there was Mr. Sharp, he worked and Mr. Walker worked then I don't think anybody else worked, unless they worked casual. My mum she worked on the buses and she used to work shifts so my gran and my granda used to watch us a lot. Then when my sister was old enough to watch us without my mum getting into trouble with the police for having us on our own we went and stayed with my mum permanently. (Sharon, 47, Glasgow)

6.5 Sharon charts the positive and negative aspects of working-class space. The area is 'commonly known' (suggestive of an 'outsider' judgement) to be a container of social problems, she fears being 'caught out' and getting 'into trouble' - but the threat comes from out with the area rather than from within. Sharon draws her map while she talks, which indicates that it is still pervasive, as is the location of those without work. This is more suggestive of an awareness of vulnerability, rather than differentiation.

6.6 Similarly, Becky was, to a degree, 'brought up' by neighbours and friends in a place where everyone knew each other's business and where the offer of help was made accordingly. Her account is self-consciously sentimental and seems to hark back to a time and a sense of community which has since fallen into decay:...it was very kinda, something like the Broons[13], kinda very family orientated, everybody knew each other, everybody used to sit in their verandas, bellow to people, you know, it was really good, kinda protective. I suppose there was a very kinda old style working-class, everybody would look out for each other, everybody knew each other and helped each other out in times of trouble. I probably had about 50 grans and grandas as well 'cause I was this wee lost child! Everybody took to me. (Becky, 22, Edinburgh)

6.7 Unfortunately community 'decline' caused by unemployment can easily rupture such protection, such old style values. As such, it doesn't make sense to analyse Becky's response as a disassociation with those current members of the working-class, in fact Becky continues to daily 'defend' her area against the judgements of others. Such 'defence' was produced in response to the 'stereotypes' applicable to their areas, and to them.

Pride and Prejudice - Stereotypes, stigmas and mixed feelings

7.1 The women often spoke of being stigmatised or stereotyped when they 'reveal' where they come/came from. Where we come from says something about our (classed) selves. There is a concern to reject these stereotypes, sometimes at the cost of fully identifying with their 'communities' and 'homes', made clear through the desire to prove themselves as different - as members of the 'respectable' working-class as opposed to the less desirable 'others'. There is an awareness of the lack of value attached to their communities, but also a corresponding feeling that those outside the area hold a 'superficial' understanding, based solely in terms of poverty and degradation (Haylett, 2001). The overall feeling is one of anger and rejection of middle-class standards while remaining honest and pragmatic about the lack of resources, and lack of space, within the places to which they 'belong'. The feeling that what is ours is ours and while we can knock it, you definitely cannot.

7.2 The women were conscious of the value (or lack of) attached to their particular locations, they knew they were immediately recognisable and would be 'placed' as unworthy. Lynn angrily relates how such awareness affected her friends' ability to access and feel comfortable in social space - causing bodily changes and emotional reactions, highlighting the embodied aspects of class: I felt that, I'd met people at the dancing, when they knew where you came from and that you worked in a factory it was 'Goodbye!' My pals used to kid on they were from England, they were English, I would *not* do that, I thought 'Well if you don't like me then that's just tough'. They would kid on they were English and they'd invent a persona for themselves to get into the right circles ... Aye, standing, how you talk, how slang, assumptions made, where you live, definitely. I carried that with me 'cause I had the whole thing about living in Cranhill, guys from the better area wouldnae go with you and you knew they were attracted, you know you were put in a box. (Lynn, 44, Glasgow)

7.3 Here, Lynn emphatically refuses to 'pretend' or change her accent to avoid being placed but this still has consequences for her, as does seeing the devaluations of her area. Cathy, together with members of the Manchester focus groups show how judgments are made even by 'educated' people. Her account is very revealing of the way in which positions are denied and authority achieved and legitimated. As Cathy does not 'match' the classed expectations of coming from a specific area, she is told she cannot and does not 'belong' - it is a middle-class woman who refuses Cathy's working-class identifications. Cathy enacts the office scenario, exclaiming with disbelief about such misreading/erasure: C: ... she was a *fully trained psychologist ,* someone who's supposedly aware of people's prejudices anyway she says 'Oh, where are you from? I said 'I'm from Manchester' she said 'Oh, I know Manchester really well, what part of Manchester are you from?' I said 'I'm from Mosside' and then she said, know what she said? 'No you're not'. Honest to God she said 'No you're not'. I said 'Yes I am', she said 'No you're not, where are you from?' I said 'I'm from Mosside' she went, 'No you're not, you're joking'.E: Yes it's that idea that everyone has their proper place ... The ways that you just know that you're nobody at all, again it's where you come from. (Cathy, 37 and Emma, 56, Manchester)

7.4 This exchange also illustrates the pride and identifications the women felt towards their areas, the fact that nobody has the right to take that away from them, that no matter how bad it may be, it is still theirs and that to deny is to devalue. Others were conscious of the more 'subtle' ways this operated through 'postcode discrimination', an example which clearly shows how whole areas, and the individuals within them, are condemned by a few letters and numbers at the end of an address. If you are where you live, what happens when you want to be more than just a bad postcode? These judgements are perhaps more enduring and less easy to 'resist': it is almost impossible to escape from or deny a postcode and for a simple collection of characters its influence can be immense. Several women explained their long-term unemployment by having specific, devalued postcodes.[14] However, there are powerful vocal challenges to the automatic connection between location and assumed character, a digging in of the geographic heels: I think it's because people look down on it *so much a*nd there's an automatic assumption that people who live in the area and people who come out of the area are going to be a particular type of person, they're going to have low academic attainment, they're going to have no job prospects and it's like 'Up yours!' Yeah, that's the sort of feeling I've got 'I'm from Drumchapel, so what?' ... I don't know if it's a kinda pride thing, you know to say 'There's nothing wrong with coming from Drumchapel.'... it's like if I felt embarrassed about that then I would feel embarrassed about particular members of my family, that's *not* how I feel.(Becky, 22, Edinburgh)

7.5 Becky refuses to enact shame and embarrassment, her language is combative and her feelings clear. She recognises the negative associations from negotiating these in everyday encounters, and confidently challenges the automatic denigrations through positive assertions. At the same time, many women expressed mixed feeling towards the places they come from precisely because they symbolised contradictory things, were seen as problematic by wider society and because these places were also where they lived out and experienced inequality.

7.6 Their 'communities' remained vulnerable to structural decline producing feelings of bitterness and grief. For example, Jeannette (39, Glasgow) speaks of Clydebank as being a 'heartbroken' area, through decimation of shipbuilding and other heavy industries, which the area was once renowned for. Similarly, whilst identifying strongly with Liverpool and the surrounding areas, Jo regrettably asserts that it is 'the saddest place': Liverpool was just horrendous. It's just the saddest place. I mean, it's totally run down and it's horrible, it's really horrible. Even when we were there, it was getting more and more run down and there was less and less jobs, more and more people moving out of the city. But now, like where she was living recently like, you're not safe in the street and it's just derelict buildings and it's really sad to see. (Jo, 30, Glasgow)

7.7 The language used is remarkable, illustrating perhaps better than anything else the depth and strength of geographic emotion. To claim that an area is 'heartbroken' is to imbue it with an almost human

dimension; by doing so an area transcends mere bricks and mortar and becomes the mirror of its occupants, the personification of their sadness and lost hope. Such emotional descriptors and reactions rarely feature in research on social space but here they constitute a powerful 'structure of feeling' (Sennett and Cobb, 1977). The emotion and grief is easy to see in these accounts, also expressed by Michelle, who simultaneously asserts her happiness alongside pain and anger: Lots of drug problems and stabbings and kinda scary stuff going on. I loved it, I was happy. Well I've been in therapy for the last 3 years which proves I didn't actually like it, I wasn't that comfortable with it. But at the time I felt very secure, I got to run about the streets at night. (Michelle, 37, Edinburgh)

7.8 Such moving imagines and realities are disrespected by 'underclass' conceptualisations, which denigrate these spaces and fail to consider them as places of worth and (emotional) value. The women often experienced harsh realities in the areas where they lived, but this sense of reality, no matter how harsh was often valued, measured against a more 'middle-class' 'pretension' and unreality. Dis/comforts were formed through 'moving' about in, rather than moving away from, classed and sexualised spaces.

Conclusion

8.1 I have considered how the experiences and views of working-class lesbians offer new insights into how space is demarcated and 'defended', and the consequences this has for identity formation and enactment. The women's powerful voices counteract the denigration of them as members of a social, economic and spatial 'underclass', while the material and subjective tensions in negotiating space, and the 'mixed' feelings produced, highlight the continued barriers and boundaries erected around class and sexuality.

8.2 Class and sexuality have been combined in this article, to offer an overview of the women's 'sense of place' as working-class lesbians. Rather than attempting to make direct associations between being 'working-class' and 'lesbian', I have attempted to draw out how these categories are lived in, through space, with varying degrees of dis/comfort. Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' can be used to convey the women's entrenched identifications with classed space, challenging straightforward conceptualisations of 'movement' and 'mobility'. There are parallels to be made between the divisions and discriminations experienced as a result of class position and those arising from sexuality and I would suggest that they should be made, given their continued relevance to those who occupy both positions. This has been examined in relation to the work of Valentine (1993, 1995) and Skeggs (1999) whose useful analyses of lesbian and gay spaces may be re-thought, giving consideration to the class positions of lesbians, and the classed specificity of the territories which they outline. Working-class lesbians are neither 'under' class nor do they constitute an 'underclass'.

Notes

[1] I asked the women to self-define class. Their self-classifications were congruent with 'objective' classifications. Most women worked in low paid 'feminised' employment sectors. Fourteen women were unemployed. Fifteen women had children, ten of whom were single-parents. I am aware that class definitions are disputed and contested but I believe that definitions are not so diffuse and 'complex' that nothing can be said. Defining class is a controversial and emotive issue, that said, I will continue to tease out the meanings of the term - for those who live it, and thus 'know it'. It is precisely the women's own meanings and experiences of being 'working-class' which are explored here.

[2] I am familiar with the (classed) meanings of most of these areas, having 'moved' through these spaces in my own 'transition' from home (Glasgow) to undergraduate (Edinburgh) and postgraduate (York) education. These location can also be compared in terms of definable 'gay' space within them, and although this is not extensively covered in this paper it is worth noting that the women, wherever their location, did not feel 'at home' in gay space. Subjective discomforts co-existed with objective exclusion - 'scene' space was remote from the 'geographical fringes' and housing estates where they lived.

[3] The women labelled the expected, and received, negative evaluations of their communities as 'pretentious' and 'middle-class', which is suggestive of a superficial and false understanding of the area, in contrast to the 'real' understandings of working-class inhabitants. The spatial aspects of boundary making are explored in this article. The women knew they were working-class partly through comparison and exclusions generated by 'middle-class' 'others' in a variety of contexts, which cannot be fully developed in this short article. The point here is to chart the women's sense of space - and sense of place; being 'placed' also involves 'placing' others.

[4] Hebden Bridge is a small town in Yorkshire renowned for having a supposedly high lesbian concentration. It is also a relatively affluent area.

[5] 'Tolerance' leaves power relations intact as there remains a division between the 'tolerated' and the 'tolerator'. The boundary between un/assimilable still requires a 'threshold of tolerance' set by heterosexist; the 'tolerator' is in a position to 'put up with' or disallow the tolerated, which remains undesirable (Brickell, 2001).

[6] Women have been largely ignored throughout class analysis, the class positions of lesbians have been further ignored. Valentine (1993) asserts that the class position of many lesbians is 'complex', indicating the 'lifestyle' changes that women go through when they adopt a lesbian identity. The constraints upon these lifestyle changes need to be emphasised; Kelly still identifies as working-class even through she feels distanced from the particular associations it implies within one territory.

[7] Margaret Thatcher introduced the 'Right to Buy' scheme, covered in the 1985 Housing Act, through which council tenants could purchase their council houses.

[8] The majority of interviews were conducted at the interviewees' house. In the case of the focus groups they were conducted at the usual meeting place of the group. Several interviews were conducted in cafes and four interviews were conducted in my own house. I realise this may not be a recommended approach, but I felt that I should be willing to 'risk' as much as interviewees.

[9] Hebden Bridge.

[10] Five women had experienced homelessness and two of the younger respondents lived in hostel accommodation at the time of the interview.

[11] This could also be misread as evidence of deviance/disorder.

[12] 'Schemie' is a Scottish colloquial term referring to inhabitants of 'housing schemes', that is, council estates.

[13] 'The Broons' are a cartoon family, which appear in a comic strip in the Sunday Post.

[14] The areas also contain within them other classed markers, for example specific schools, or 'failing' schools - through attendance at these schools, individuals are often immediately read as 'failures (Furlong et al, 1996).

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