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Workplace friendships: exploring friendship development between gay and heterosexual men in the workplace

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Acknowledgements:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Beatrix Acevedo for starting me off on the research journey. Nick Rumens and Rob Willis for being patient and supportive supervisors. Sally Everett for being the guru I needed, Adrian McDonald for having to put up with me while I was writing up and Jess for her endless support.

Abstract:

This thesis explores dyadic workplace friendships between gay men and heterosexual men and women. I draw on the qualitative findings of twenty interviews undertaken with men who are all openly gay in their workplaces. The interview data sheds light on these friendships within a variety of work place contexts, examining how the context of the workplace can influence the forms of friendships gay men construct. The thesis covers three main areas: 1) how gay men develop workplace friendships and the forms that these friendships take in heteronormative workplaces; 2) the importance of workplace friendships and the meanings attached to those friendships; 3) the influence of workplace friendships on gay men's identities. In the discussion sections, queer theory is used to examine the discourses that gay men negotiate in a heteronormative workplace context. This study contributes to current knowledge on friendship development, and specifically, the issues associated with gay men developing friendships within a heteronormative workplace context. The research findings reveal the difficulties some gay men experience in developing friendships with heterosexual men, also noting how, in contrast, developing friendships with straight women was experienced as an easier process by the study participants. The study adds to current literature on the barriers to friendship construction that are faced by gay men, using queer theory to explore and analyse the findings.

Key words: friendship; gay, heteronormative, workplace, discourses, stereotypes, masculinity.

Contents

Introduction	1
Introduction to Literature Review	5
Chapter One: Literature Review	9
Part One: A History of Men's Friendships	9
Aristotle (Nicomachean Ethics, 350 BC)	9
Elizabethan England (1558-1603)	12
The Jacobin Revolution (1792)	14
The Trials of Oscar Wilde (1895)	16
What Is Friendship?	19
Part Two: Men's friendships	28
Gay Friendships and Gay Identity	33
Part Three: The Workplace Environment and Gay Men's Workplace Friendships	39
Introduction to Methodology	46
Chapter Two: Methodology	47
Methodology, Epistemology and Ontology	47
Subjective and Objective Approaches	49
Four Possible Paradigms for this Research	51
Discourses	55
Queer Theory	56
Methods of Collecting Data	60
Sampling Strategy	65
Limitations of using non-probability sampling	66
Eligibility for the study	67
Ethical Issues in Social Research	69

Validity	72
Reflexive Researcher.....	72
Recording and Transcription	74
Selecting quotations.....	79
Chapter Three (Findings) Friendship and workplace context.....	80
Introduction	80
Workplace friendships in context: the impact of heteronormativity on friendship development	81
Being out at work	92
Discussion.....	97
Chapter Four (Findings) Meanings associated with workplace friendships...	107
Introduction	107
Gay Men: the Importance of Workplace Friendships	108
Gay Men's Friendship: Trust and Support.....	111
Gay Men's Friendship: Nurturing	121
Gay Men's Friendships: Intimacy	125
Discussion.....	129
Chapter Five (Findings) identity and construction.....	135
Introduction	135
Gay men, gender censorship	137
Gay men: Camp identity	138
Gay men: Straight-acting	142
Gay men: identity and stereotypes.....	144
Discussion.....	156
Chapter Six: Conclusion.....	161
Appendix.....	190

Introduction

The motivation to explore gay men's friendships is based on my personal experience as a gay man in a predominantly straight workforce, and because the workplace for gay men can be a negative and stressful environment (Colgan and Rumens 2015; Day and Schoenrade 2000; Köllen 2016). I have both male and female straight friends at the university I currently work for, although my closest work friend is a straight male. This friendship is extremely important to me. As a friend, he is supportive of me as a person and a gay man. I know he has defended me to other members of staff when they have said derogatory things about my sexuality. However, the friendship is much more than that. We laugh together and find the same things funny; we talk to each other about issues we have in our personal lives, along with work-related issues. Without this friendship I would not be as happy in the workplace. I am not alone in finding it challenging to form friendships with straight men. I have spoken to other gay men who have struggled to establish friendships with straight men in their workplaces and these stories have inspired me to explore why and how. With some exceptions (Rumens 2010), there is a knowledge-gap in the literature that examines dyadic friendships between straight and gay men in the workplace, although there is an emergent scholarship on gay-straight male friendships more generally (e.g. Barrett 2013; Fee 2000; Gorman-Murray 2013; Price 1999). In one sense, this is surprising, as friendships, both in and outside work, are acknowledged by scholars as pivotal to thriving as a person (Fritz 2014). It is the paucity of research on gay-straight men's workplace friendships that I aim to address in this thesis.

Consideration is given to the premise that gay men do not always only want to be friends with other openly gay men in the workplace, as sexual orientation is not always a strong point of connection between gay men (Weeks et al. 2001). Alternatively, there may not be other out (or openly) gay men in the workplace with whom to form friendships (Rumens 2008), so they might have limited choices; in other words, if gay men want to form friendships in the workplace, they must do so with straight people. Therefore, this study will explore dyadic friendships from the perspectives of gay men, contributing to the scholarly knowledge on these forms of friendship (de Vries and

Megathlin 2009; Nardi 1999; Peplau and Fingerhut 2007; Shepperd et al. 2010). What we will see later in this thesis is that having friends can provide a high level of support for the individuals involved. Subsequently, one of the areas the thesis will explore is the importance of and the meanings associated with the friendships of gay men who have straight friends in the workplace. As the only out gay man (to the best of my knowledge) in a department of over seventy staff, my workplace friendships hold a great deal of meaning to me: having someone to laugh with, share issues with, ask for advice and to trust, and sometime just to relax with without being judged or excluded for being gay, enables me to remain productive and positive in my job. I consider myself fortunate to have a close straight male friend in the workplace who has been unfaltering in his support of me as a person and a colleague. With this in mind, how these forms of friendships are developed and the role these friendships play in the lives of other gay men intrigues me as a researcher.

In this thesis, I examine how gay men negotiate the norms that constitute male friendships; the normative discourses relating to workplace friendships; the possibility of creating alternative ways of 'doing' friendship between a gay man and a straight man; and whether such alternative forms of friendship can contest existing heteronormative friendship norms. The following research questions will be explored:

- How do gay men develop friendships with straight men in the context of the workplace?
- What are the meanings attached to these friendships in the workplace for the gay men?
- What influence does heteronormativity have on how gay men develop workplace friendships, in particular the types of friendships they are able to form with straight men and women?
- How do gay men's workplace friendships with straight men and women shape the kinds of identities they are able to form and sustain in the workplace?

The decision to explore friendship initially resulted in the identification of several areas and approaches relating to gay men at work as possible research topics, too many to cover in one PhD thesis. I spent a year reading, making mind-maps, and discussing the subject of gay men at work with colleagues and supervisors, before finally deciding

on the specific topic area of friendship. Once the topic was chosen, it was evident that it needed to be refined and a conceptual framework for the research was constructed. The final topic area was determined through the use of extensive mind-mapping, incorporating all the information that had been uncovered, along with my own ideas. I started with a basic research question: are friendships important for gay men in the workplace? From this starting position I conducted a literature review, exploring previous research undertaken in the general area of friendship and gender identity. This general area identified the history of friendship, why friendships are created, how they develop and why they are important. Firstly, I explored friendships in general, with no specific gender dyads identified. I looked at what friendships mean, how they are constructed and defined. Secondly, I undertook an exploration of workplace friendships, identifying the same areas previously explored in the general friendship section, to see if workplace friendships differed from non-workplace friendships. Additionally, attention was paid to how these workplace friendships provided support for the friends involved in the dyad at work. Thirdly, the focus turned to the friendships of gay people (often understood as a 'minority' group), to identify whether there are any relevant themes that differ from the two previous types of friendships explored, or if there were differences between the friendships of gay people compared to friendships between straight people.

What I discovered was that there are a number of forms of friendship construction: dyadic, network, deep, informal and formal (Allan 1989). All of these forms of friendship have their own structures, validity and place within society and the workplace. However, I have chosen the dyadic friendship structure to explore within the context of work and organisational settings. Dyadic friendship is a form of friendship between two people (Rumens 2011), and I chose to research this over other forms of friendship because I find dyadic friendship more intimate. I like the closeness of a dyadic friendship and feel it is easier to get to know the other person on a deeper level. Dyadic friendships, like all other forms of friendship construction, are subject to change in response to both internal and external factors and influences (Allan 1989; Adams and Allan 1998). Whether they are social, personal or work-based, movement on the part of one or both of the friends involved can dramatically change how the friendship is maintained and managed, resulting in new parameters being applied to

maintain the friendship (Allan 2008). Such changes can be a result of modern society, in which travel and geographical mobility is easier than it once was (Becker et al. 2009; Belot and Ermisch 2009). Thus, new methods of maintaining friendships at a distance are increasingly popular (Haythornwaite and Kendall 2010). With the ease of access to electronic methods of maintaining friendships (for example, social media, smartphones, email, Skype etc.), instant and regular contact can be made, regardless of the geographical location of friends (Haythornwaite and Kendall 2010; McEwan 2013; Reid and Reid 2004). While acknowledging that the ability to maintain friendships using electronic methods is an important and integral part of modern life, this research is interested in understanding the dyadic friendships of gay men that take place in a particular, localised setting (the workplace) on a one-to-one, face-to-face basis.

Structure of the thesis

In what follows, I will present the key concepts and current discussions on the topic of friendship, gay men's friendships and friendships in the workplace. This thesis is structured as follows. Chapter one explores a variety of friendships, through a review of the current literature, before providing an outline of the study's methodology in chapter two. Chapter three presents the study findings and discussion, organised into three separate sections: the first covers context, what influences the formation of friendships in the workplace and what they mean to the participants; the second looks at being out at work and struggles with friendship and intimacy with straight men; and the third considers how gay men construct their identities in heteronormative work places. Each section is preceded by a presentation of the findings from the interview data and concludes with a discussion of those findings. Chapter four, the Conclusion, articulates how the thesis contributes to current knowledge and understanding in the area of friendship and gay men.

Introduction to Literature Review

This chapter presents a review of the literature and empirical evidence to explore the subject of friendship. As friendship is not a homogenous construct and can be constructed in a variety of forms for a variety of different reasons (Bushman and Holt-Lunstad 2009; Deci et al. 2006; Shelton et al. 2009; Walker 1995) I have divided the literature review into four parts, to enable me to explore some of the different forms and constructs of friendship and synthesise how this literature review has influenced my research.

Part one will explore the historical aspects of friendship. Despite the concept of friendship being a common phenomenon, it is not universal in its appeal or form (Bell and Coleman, 1999). As such, a friendship is a difficult relationship to categorise, with different people putting differing emphases on the needs and reasons for constructing and valuing friendships. It is important to recognise where Westernised understandings of friendship have come from in order to analyse its current meanings. Accordingly, the historical context of friendship and how it has contributed to, and informed our understanding of, friendships today, both within the public and private spheres, should not be ignored (Adut 2005; Hoffmann 2001; Sherman 1987). The history of friendship will be explored here by taking four points in history where a significant transition or impact on the understanding or formation of friendship occurred. As a result of each transition, our current perception and understanding of what defines and constitutes a friendship may have changed. These historical moments are: 350 BC, when Aristotle wrote about friendship and its virtues; Elizabethan England, 1558-1603, when a great deal of unrest was taking place and the shape of friendship became more about political games than companionship; the Jacobin revolution in 1792, where once again friendship turned into a deadly political game, as it became difficult or impossible for people to know who their friends were and whom they could trust; and the trial of Oscar Wilde in 1885, when the public outcry against homosexuality had a profound effect on whom people chose as their friends.

These four points in time will be examined to identify the changes in how friendships were understood, perceived and constructed, not only from the individual's perspective, but also from the perspective of the society they were part of. This

historical examination will allow us to gain and apply insight as to where modern Western discourses on friendship have come from and whether these discourses have a significant effect on forming society's perception of and perspective on dyadic friendships between gay men and straight men in the workplace.

Following on from the historical evidence of friendship, a more general understanding of discourses and themes relating to friendships and how they are defined will be explored. The constituent themes of friendship are varied: love, kinship, respect, need, companionship and necessity, to name but a few. While it is often acknowledged that friendship consists of many attributes and behaviours, such as balance, mutual respect and voluntary relationships, from which members expect intimacy, companionship, responsiveness and reciprocity (Bell 1981; Hays 1985; Hartup 1996; Hartup and Stevens 1999; Bagwell et al. 2001; Allan 2008; Rumens 2011), what is not always clear are the themes that may underlie these attributes. The purpose of this section will be to investigate the current literature to help identify and define friendships, why people form them, the themes and meanings associated with friendship, and the perceived benefits friendship can bring to those involved. This will lead on to the second part of this chapter, where heterosexual and homosexual friendships will be explored to see if they differ in their meanings and forms.

Part two of the literature review will provide an overview of men's and women's friendships, exploring these from a social viewpoint along with the dominant discourses that are placed on these friendships by individuals in Western society. We will see that friendships are often expected to conform to heteronormative standards about how they should be formed and what role they ought to play for those involved. Both feminist and critical masculinity studies perspectives on friendship will be examined to understand the discourses and themes discussed in part one. This knowledge will assist in determining how friendships are judged and evaluated. The chapter will then go on to review the literature on gay men's friendships, identifying whether there is a difference in how they are formed and sustained in comparison to the dyadic friendships between heterosexual men.

Part three will focus on work-based friendships and whether the workplace is a 'gay friendly' context in which friendships can form and flourish. This section will explore

gay friendships in the workplace and how the identity of gay people is understood within a workplace setting. Workplace friendships can often differ from friendships constructed outside the workplace, but this does not make them any less valid. Rather, it means that these workplace friendships are constructed using common organisational experiences or work types, whereas non-work-based friendships frequently do not have those common attributes as a foundation for the friendship:

Workplace contextual factors in contrast, were unique to workplace friendships in that they derived from the workplace specifically. Such factors included shared tasks (e.g., working on projects together), physical work proximity (having desks or offices near one another), work related problems (e.g., dealing with a problematic supervisor), and slack time (e.g., significant amounts of “down” time on the job). (Sias et al. 2003, p. 323)

However, this does not rule out the possibility that aspects of friendships at work may be common to non-work-based friendships and vice versa. Therefore, it is important not to disregard Rumens’s warning that, ‘to treat workplace friendships as a separate category of friendship we risk creating a homogenous and fixed category, creating an artificial divide between work and non-work friendships’ (2011, p.12). With this in mind, this research will treat friendship as a fluid concept that can transcend these artificial divides and in which there are no fixed boundaries: only blurred lines. As a starting point, this research considers friendship to be a relationship between two people that is not specifically categorised as work or social, but just as a friendship. It is important to clarify that when the term ‘relationship’ is used in this thesis as it refers to a platonic relationship, as found between friends, rather than a sexual one. Although the word ‘relationship’ normatively means a sexual relationship (Kitzinger and Perkins 1993), for the purpose of this thesis, when intending to refer to a sexual relationship the word ‘relationship’ will be preceded with the word ‘sexual’. What this thesis aims to explore is what meanings are associated with friendship when it is conducted in the workplace that might differ from when it is in a social setting. Therefore, it will be important not to categorise or stereotype a friendship as being one that sits within the confines of the workplace only and subsequently dismiss the importance of friendships that transcend the workplace setting. As we will see in the findings chapters, many of the participants discussed how their friendships transcend the workplace context and cross over into their social and domestic spheres of life.

Part four will consist of a brief discussion of the literature review, identifying key topics that will enable a conceptual framework to be constructed. In addition, this review will aid in identifying how this research makes a contribution to the current knowledge in the area of friendship and the workplace.

Chapter One: Literature Review

Part One: A History of Men's Friendships

There is a vast span of time between the writings of Aristotle on friendship and contemporary scholarship on the subject. Below, I have chosen historical moments that I believe have had pivotal impacts on the understanding of friendship between men, which necessitates a discussion of the historical emergence of homosexuality and heterosexuality. Although the terms 'homosexual' and 'gay' were not adopted until late into the twentieth century (Chauncey 1994), I have used these terms in my historical exploration of friendship where appropriate. The purpose of historicising friendship in general, and men's friendships in particular, is to highlight the influence of culture and context on friendship development and the roles friends have variously been expected to play.

Aristotle (Nicomachean Ethics, 350 BC)

Aristotle discussed the idea of friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, written around 340 BC. Aristotle proposed that, 'living well and being happy cannot be achieved when one is without friends' (Sherman 1987, p. 596). We need others to share our enjoyment; if we do not have this, we will seek out others who are like-minded to share our experiences with (Sherman 1987). The emphasis that Aristotle places on friendship is clear: a means of providing value and happiness to one's life through companionship and kinship.

Aristotle's definition of friendship typically means the mutually-acknowledged and reciprocal relation of good will and affection that exists among individuals who share an interest in each other. Different types of friendship are categorised hierarchically, with virtuous friendships at the top, followed by friendships of pleasure or utility. Aristotle's understanding of friendship is not dissimilar to the definitions and meanings associated with modern friendship in the works of several researchers (Sherman 1987; Linton 2008; Rumens 2011). According to this body of research, friendship requires friends to engage in interactions and behaviours that constitute a mutually-acknowledged and reciprocal relationship. Aristotle identified that friendship includes 'motives of attachment'; friends are important as part of our 'help and aid', but not at

the cost of our virtue and happiness. In simple terms, it can be argued that friendships require a mutual understanding of the rules and obligations attached to them, to prevent the friendship from impinging on the virtue and happiness of one or the other of the friends involved. As long as these rules go unbroken and are respected, the friendship can flourish.

Furthermore, Aristotle explored the idea that the long-term survival of a friendship depends on a willingness to exhibit loyalty. Friendship needs to take into account not only the happiness of the individual, but also an extension of the individual's needs to include the happiness of others (Sherman 1987). However, these rules are individual to the friendship and are subsequently created and applied internally by the friends; they do not have to conform to external expectations, paradigms or definitions of what constitutes a friendship. Nevertheless, society's understanding and the paradigms associated with acceptable and deep friendships could be a contributing factor to their construction, whether these paradigms are adhered to consciously or unconsciously. One of the paradigms that can be seen in the work of Aristotle is the theme of mutual respect being evident between the friends involved. Aristotle believed that there has to be respect for the friendship to be fulfilling and the friendship can only achieve this state through reciprocally friendly motives. If the motives of the friendship from either side are malevolent, then the friendship cannot be deemed to be fulfilling. Therefore, these motives must satisfy the needs within the 'permissible constraints' (or rules) of the friendship, at the same time respecting the autonomy of a friend and not neglecting our duty to others. Thus, according to Aristotle, friendships are about virtue, which is to say they are of great worth, rather than being about self-interest, as this would be seen as a violation of living a good and virtuous life (Sherman 1987; Hughes 2013). It is understanding what Aristotle means by *virtue* that matters here. In a broad sense, he can be read as saying that virtuous living is about living a worthwhile and fulfilled life, one that is high in merit and not one that is achieved through the detriment of others. To undertake an act of kindness for a friend, simply because he is a friend, is enough in itself to lead a virtuous and fulfilling life for a man. Crucially, Aristotle thought that virtuous friendships were only possible between men (Hughes 2013), a proposition that accords male friendship a culturally privileged position.

Aristotle considered that for a friendship to be virtuous and a 'coherent pattern of good living', it must be interwoven into some coherent pattern of good living. To be able to weave friendships into their lives, the friends must have a similar mind-set, arriving at the same decisions about practical matters. Equally, if a negative outcome arises as a result of a friendship decision, then both friends take equal responsibility for the outcome, rather than apportioning blame (Sherman 1987).

Aristotle thought that friendships develop over time through mutual activity and as a result a sense of the 'common good' will be achieved. However, this common good can only be achieved over time if there has been a pre-existing friendship based on his notion of virtue (Sherman 1987). The more exclusive and intimate the friendship, the better able friends are to provide for each other and to identify with their friends' joys and needs, feeling empathy for and understanding the joy and pain of friends. When entering into a friendship we are, according to Aristotle, selecting another self who shares our commitment and loyalty (Brewer 2005; Flowers 1998; Sherman 1987). However, this other self is still a separate entity, so each self is in a privileged position to know how to help the other: 'For if friendship extends the self, then one is not so much sacrificing oneself, as acting in the interests of this new extended self' (Sherman 1987, p.608). Thus, the notion of living a virtuous life can be maintained through the extension of our behaviour with the extended self, with the intention to develop and nurture it and increase our own fulfilment. Aristotle's themes of companionship, commitment and loyalty will form part of the investigation in my thesis.

Elizabethan England (1558-1603)

Different cultures in diverse historical periods have constructed different meanings for friendships, particularly homosexual friendships. The concept of 'homosexuality' did not exist in Elizabethan England, so I am using the modern term to help analyse the past, referring to the types of relationships between men that we would today consider to be 'homosexual'. In Elizabethan England, 'sodomy' was a more influential and contentious concept, which shaped how friendships between men were organised (Bray 1982). For instance, in Elizabethan England, sodomy, which included behaviour that could be understood as homosexual and other deviant acts such as bestiality, was regarded as a sin against nature. As Bray (1990) points out, to be seen as a homosexual was a horror. Homosexual activity was a 'political and religious' crime with particular overtones that filled people with dread at being identified as homosexual (Bray 1990, p.3). This horror would have had a detrimental impact on friendships in which a male friend was thought to be intimate with another man.

Homosexual men were seen as rebels against nature, society and truth. James I said he could never forgive men who participated in sodomy and it was seen as an act of treason (Bray 1990). It is hardly surprising that, with this much fear surrounding homosexuality, friends were careful to respect the social conventions that showed their relationship was not homosexual. In the early Elizabethan period, public displays of affection, for example, embracing in public and greeting each other with kisses, were regarded as signs of a close friendship rather than a sexual relationship. These open displays of affection protected men, as acting this way in public indicated that they had nothing to hide in private. Such public displays of affections towards other men were a clear indication in Elizabethan England that you were not a sodomite.

It was also common for some Elizabethans to share a bed with someone of the same sex. Having a bed was considered a luxury, as the design of houses were such that bedrooms were uncommon, and these typically male companions were called 'bedfellows'. People shared beds and mixed freely with servants, and meaningful friendships resulted from this form of behaviour, which was acceptable at the time. Bedfellows often became close, as the bed was a place for talking and sharing, making business deals, as well as sleeping. Bray (1990) suggests that, as a result, the

bedfellow could influence his or her companion. However, it is important to note that this influence was not sinister, but friendly, similar to the 'virtue' that Aristotle identified. The Elizabethans placed a great deal of emphasis on the expression of friendship and its genuine bonds and emotions. Hence, if such friendships were withdrawn or lost, it could mean ruin for the people involved as these friendships were integral to work and business status (Bray 1990).

It is evident that the Elizabethans made a sharp distinction between male friendship and homosexual relationships, the first being a civil relationship and the second a subversive one. However, Bray (1990) suggests that these distinctions were not as clear-cut as the Elizabethans would have us believe. Treachery was common and during this period people started to use their friends or bedfellows as a means of climbing the social or political ladder. There was a danger that the code associated with these non-sexual intimate friendships as bedfellows could be manipulated by one of the bedfellows, through the manipulation of the meanings associated with the public and private behaviour (Bray 1990).

As the Elizabethan era progressed, it was becoming increasingly difficult to see the distinction between Platonic friendship and homosexual relationships (Bray 1990). The reasons for and meanings attributed to friendship became ambiguous, where previously men were merely bedfellows with no suggestion of homosexual behaviour provided the friends involved maintained their public displays of friendly behaviour. People's behaviour changed: instead of greeting each other in public with a kiss, a handshake was used.

This fear of inappropriate emotional attachment is still, in part, the discourse surrounding men's friendships and male intimacy today (Nardi 1999; Vernon 2000). This is an area I explore in this research on friendships in the workplace: whether there is a cultural discourse that influences how gay men shape their friendships with straight friends in the workplace, and how gay men feel that these friendships are viewed within the workplace by others. As will be presented in the next section, the political implications of male friendships can be perceived as potentially subversive.

The Jacobin Revolution (1792)

Friendship has not always been seen as a virtuous concept. The Jacobin revolution in eighteenth-century France also turned the previous Aristotelian understanding of friendship on its head. As in Elizabethan England, this shift was a direct result of political change. Rather than a trusting, virtuous commitment to friendship, attitudes became more ambiguous (Linton 2008). This ambiguity is in direct opposition to Aristotle's belief of virtue underpinning friendship. Additionally, this ambiguity prevented friendship becoming an extension of one's self, as to treat friendship as ambiguous could harm the other self. Linton suggests that 'the public face of revolutionary politics mingled inextricably with the private lives of revolutionaries, with friendship, loyalties, suspicion and betrayal' becoming common themes of once close friendships (2008, p.52). As a result, the French Revolution broke down the social conventions of friendship, bringing together people from a range of social and political circles, who previously would not have mixed. Once these conventions of friendship had been broken down, space was made for a new form of friendship to take its place. Not unlike in the Western world today, the normative boundaries influencing how friendships ought to be developed between certain types of individuals were blurred and brought to a point of collapse (MacFaul 2011).

The Jacobean notion of friendship was paradoxical at best. On the one hand, friendship was linked with similar qualities of virtue, applying the same meanings to virtue as Aristotle, in the sense that one would sacrifice oneself for one's friend. In fact, to be seen to do otherwise was to go against the ideals of the republic. 'Indeed in the ideal republic there would be no place for anyone who did not believe in sincere friendship' (Linton 2008, p.55). On the other hand, there was false friendship, in which one of the friends in the dyad was encouraged to reveal the secrets, intentions and beliefs of the other, to betray them for their own ends, or for what would be seen as the betterment of the new social order. False friends took advantage of the victim's trust and virtue (Linton 2008). As a result, it became difficult to trust one's friends, leading the once-understood notion of friendship to break down as it became difficult to know which friends were genuine. Friendship became a business arrangement, rather than an extension of oneself. Virtue, reciprocity, trust and balance were no longer the dominant themes and purposes in the formation of friendships. Social

climbing, acceptance in the new order, betrayal and personal gain were increasingly the motivations for forming friendships. Consequently, friendship now became about

the public good rather than the good or good life of the individual, similar to friendship in Elizabethan England. People who had wanted to progress in the new regime had to put aside the ties they had with their friends if those private ties conflicted with their public ones (Linton 2008, p.58).

It is important to clarify that these revisions of the Jacobean and Elizabethan perceptions of friendship cannot account for changes in the understanding and meaning of friendship across the entire Western world. Rather, the meanings and understanding of the Jacobean and Elizabethan friendships can be used to help us to understand the fragility of friendship when there are extreme external pressures placed on it, or when friendships are not built on respect for the morality and rules applied to friendship, as Aristotle suggests. The key issue highlighted in this literature review is that friendships and the morality of friendship can be regarded as something that can be sacrificed for the perceived greater good of society. This was clearly evident during the Elizabethan period. Moreover, problems within the friendship will occur when the friendships are not constructed through a genuine commitment and loyalty to each other that is outside the social order or expectations of that society. What this historical account demonstrates are the problems such acts can encounter when only one person, as Aristotle would say, is 'virtuous' in the friendship. Perhaps a better understanding of problematic friendships can be determined from this historical account of friendship. As Linton states, 'The study of revolutionary friendship helps us reconstitute some of the complexity of human motivation' (2008, p.70).

The Trials of Oscar Wilde (1895)

The trials of Oscar Wilde during the late Victorian era contributed to (re)shaping the discourses associated with close friendship and male homosexuality. The works of Adut (2005) and Schultz (1996) on the trials of Oscar Wilde are explored here, with the intention of identifying how this public scandal could have contributed to how friendship and homosexuality were perceived during this era.

Wilde was arrested for sodomy and gross indecency. Wilde's trials and subsequent conviction for gross indecency, and his two-year hard labour imprisonment, affected how friendships between men were conducted within the public sphere (Schultz 1996). Prior to Wilde's trial, the laws on homosexuality had seldom been enforced. However, the public trial and conviction of such an eminent member of the elite, a respected author and public figure, had repercussions for men who publicly exhibited close relationships with other men, whether that relationship was sexual or not: 'By making homosexuality explicit, the labelling process threatened to undermine traditional male camaraderie' (Weeks 1977, p.21).

The nature of the norms of Victorian society changed when the Wilde scandal broke. Prior to this public scandal, homosexuality was mostly ignored as long as it was conducted in private (Schultz 1996). However, once the act became external to the private domain, the transgression had to be publically abhorred. When the scandal broke, previous norms associated with appropriate moral behaviour were once again enforced. The Victorians 'held homosexuality in horror' (Adut 2005, p.214). The 'horror' of homosexuality is a discourse that can be traced back at least as far as the Elizabethans, as previously discussed. The Elizabethans preferred not to mention homosexual acts at all, which is why homosexual offences were, prior to Wilde's trial, ignored or even tolerated. Why bring something as abhorrent as homosexuality to the forefront of the public consciousness when it may corrupt or even tempt the young? It was seen as best left alone (Adut 2005). This is supported by the order of the Director of Public Prosecutions in 1889 that 'no unnecessary publicity be given to cases of gross indecency' (Weeks 1981, p.103).

Suspicion of homosexuality could be a problem for genuine heterosexual friendships between men during the Victorian era. If the public perception of homosexuality was

one of horror, and the intense interest in scandals of the era had become part of the public norm (Adut 2005), then fear was an implicit result of that public interest through the possibility of being accused of being in a homosexual relationship. This is evident through the perceived 'contamination' of those people who, prior to Wilde's trials, were his friends (Adut 2005). Understanding this notion of 'contamination' would undoubtedly have had an adverse effect on friendships that could be misinterpreted as homosexual relationships. This idea of 'contamination' created what could be seen as a moral panic, which in turn proscribed male friendship. Close friendships between men became politically subversive through the public scandal of the Wilde trial. Once this contamination surfaced, friendships needed to be regulated to prevent them polluting the social order.

When homosexual friendships were placed in the public sphere, the transgression could no longer be tolerated: once a transgression becomes public, it challenges the social norm (Adut 2005; Foldy 1997). However, privately there is no challenge and the public norm is maintained. If this public challenge is ignored, it could be seen as legitimising the challenge, allowing a new discourse to be created around the acceptance of (in this case) homosexuality (Adut 2005; Schulz 1996). After the trial of Oscar Wilde there was rigorous enforcement of the laws against homosexuality (Adut 2005). The majority of Wilde's friends vehemently turned against him, refusing to support him or sign a petition calling for a more lenient sentence. For Wilde's male friends, supporting him publicly could have resulted in public perception of them as supporters of deviant behaviour. Clearly they needed to disassociate themselves from Wilde and his lifestyle to prevent disgrace by association.

While the works of Adut and Schultz do not specifically relate to friendship, they explore negative attitudes towards homosexuals in the Victorian era. They are relevant for this research because their works explore the negative connotations of being publicly associated with or friendly with a known or suspected homosexual. These cultural constructions of gay men are still prevalent today, where it is perceived that being friends with gay men reflects negatively on straight men (Hill 2006; Clarkson 2006; Ward 2000). These negative connotations then impact on the potential of friendships being formed between straight and gay men. In a similar manner to the Elizabethans, people's public behaviour and performances of their behaviour

changed. Elite men were more careful in public to avoid greeting each other with bodily contact, kissing or hugging for fear of being regarded as homosexual.

The discussion above has identified particular moments in history when the perception of male friendship shifted. These changes occurred for a number of reasons: political and social constructions of moral panic, such as those related to homosexuality. When approaching male friendships in modern times, it is possible to argue that the legacy of these historical perceptions extends to the perception of dyadic friendships between gay and straight men by others, and possibly within the dyad itself.

Modern friendships, like historical friendships, are constructed in a variety of forms: sexual, supportive, personal, social and workplace, to name but a few (Bell 1981). There are various reasons and needs for the formation of friendships, such as mutual affection, intellectual aspects, religious beliefs, and common experiences. As Aristotle suggested, to say we have a friend is in fact to declare that we are not by ourselves. Perhaps the most common theme that runs through the historical account of friendship explored above is the meanings that friends placed on the friendship.

Another important aspect to consider is how, through a clearer understanding of the concepts and discourses associated with friendship, dyadic friendships function when one of the friends is a gay man. Common themes associated with friendship and how friendships are judged and understood, not only by the dyadic partnership, but also how the friends position themselves in the social structure they are part of, will all be key to the discussion. The following sections will explore the myriad of discourses associated with our modern understanding of close friendships, drawing upon the historical perceptions described above.

What Is Friendship?

Friendship has a long history, as explained. Philosophers have pondered what friendship is and its different forms. For example, Skorza contemplates the notion of tenderness and how this, if treated as a norm, can assist in a respectful friendship: 'Constrained by the norm of tenderness, relations of friendship are provided with an element of civility' (2004). Different disciplines have been interested in the question of what friendship is. Psychologists are interested in what makes a good friendship and what the qualities of friendship are (Wright 1982; Pahl 2000). For example, Duck describes how friends get to know each other:

Thus at first encounters individuals gather factual, descriptive information which allows them to make preliminary estimates of the partner's [friend's] personality, and, when they know one another well enough to have a reasonably reliable model of each other's personality, individuals begin to explore the various layers of personality. (1978, p.44)

Understanding how my study participants develop and form friendships within the workplace environment as both a work space and a social space is an important part of this research, as is understanding why and how gay men develop friendships with straight people. The development of friendship, according to Morrison and Nolan (2009), depends on the friends' needs: 'Friends evaluate the relationship in deciding to maintain it at its current level, make it more or less intense, or change the types of activities they engage in' (2009, p.43). Psychologists explore how friendships are acted out and what the underlying motives and meanings of friendships are; what the friendship reveals about the individuals involved and friendships as a whole. Morrison and Nolan go on to explore the motives for forming friendships: 'Several motives were put forward to explain these relationships: the first being the prospect of a better, more enjoyable working environment, with friends providing social support at, for example, times of stress' (2009, p.51). Sociologists have more recently studied friendship as a serious topic of study and have developed a sociology of friendship that focuses on how friendships are embedded within different, shifting social contexts as both social friendships and personal friendship relationships (Allan 1989; Adams and Allan 1998; Pahl 2000; Walker 1994).

The literature on friendship indicates that attributes frequently associated with the notion of friendship include reciprocity, equality, voluntariness, spontaneity, trust and intimacy (Allan 2008; Bagwell et al. 2001; Hartup and Stevens 1999; Ingram and Zou 2008; Jehn and Shah 1997; Shelton 2009). These qualities can be found in some guise or other within the construction of close modern friendships. This section explores these themes along with the discourses surrounding friendship and how we conceptualise these themes and discourses in the West, to help us understand and define friendship, with special attention to scholarship regarding the workplace.

In management studies, Rumens (2011) offers a comprehensive approach to the topic of friendship. He states that the meanings ascribed to friendship vary across cultural contexts. This means that friendship means different things to different people depending on place, time and the needs of those involved. It seems that friendships are ambiguous to all but those involved in them. Wright (1982), Pahl (2000), Allan (1989), Adams and Allan (1998) and Bagwell et al. (2001) support this notion of the indistinctness of friendship; friendship is a broad and ambiguous structure, allowing many subjective and variable definitions to be placed on it. Therefore, friendship is not a universally fixed concept and does not have criteria that must be met to define it, as each friendship may have its own criteria. Therefore, when exploring the idea of friendships, they should not be judged or benchmarked against a set of criteria to validate them: validity comes from the meaning attributed to it by the individuals involved.

The sociology of friendship

For the purposes of this study, I intend to draw on the sociology of friendship to conceptualise friendship, and how it may be developed in the workplace (Allan 1989, 1998, 2008; Adams and Allan 1998; Pahl 2000). Pertinent to this thesis is Allan's (2008) argument that individuals have increased flexibility in how they construct their friendship networks, and how the boundaries between friendship and work have become blurred and permeable. Allan's work additionally supports the notion of ambiguity in the understanding of friendship structures and purposes. Different people will experience the structures of friendship differently. Thus, friendships may have common themes, but the meanings are particular to the friends involved.

The meaning associated with these friendships is one of the areas this research intends to explore. While it is important to understand friendship in modern times, it is equally important to look back to where the discourses and paradigms associated with friendship originate. Understanding the history of friendship allows us to identify how it has changed and developed into our understanding of the meanings behind modern friendship. For example, Allan describes 'the degree to which the boundaries between family and friendship have become increasingly blurred' (2008, p.2). If we take Allan's example, in some instances friends are now judged to be as important as family (or even more important in some cases). Allan identifies that we can negotiate the types of friends we want to consider as family: 'In comparison to family relationships, ties of friendship are inherently more open to individual negotiation' (2008, p.4). Through identifying friends in this manner, there is a whole new set of paradigms and discourses associated with the relationships of family members. As Pahl and Pevalin found, 'It appears that some friends are loved and feel a family-like responsibility for each other and some family members are not always loved and do not provide the help and support that may be normatively expected of them' (2005, p.434). What we are seeing is a whole new form of friendship emerging within society, where friends are becoming surrogate family members. For gay men, their friends may be in a better position to identify with their sexuality more readily than their family: 'as people focus more and more on sustaining and maintaining distinctive identities that are not formally provided by family or employment, so the social meaning of friendship will continue to increase in salience' (Pahl 1998, p.115). Therefore, if friends are to be seen as family,

freedom and control over who people choose as friends is ever more important, as evident in studies in which gay men and lesbians have 'promoted' friends to the status of family members (Weston 1991; Weeks et al. 2001).

It can be argued that Britain in the twenty-first century allows a far greater freedom for people to have control over their lifestyles and choice of friends and friendships than ever before (Allan 2008; Budgeon 2006). People can exert more freedom over making lifestyle choices, although constraints still exist (Allan 2008, p.3.). However, there are different sets of freedoms and constraints than previously experienced. Friendships exhibit flexibility as relationships of choice, entered into voluntarily (Allan 1989), a quality that is often used to distinguish them from other forms of relationship. Friendships are understood to be individualised and personal because of the changes in life courses and personal circumstances that can happen. It is also now common for cross-sex friendships to occur (Rawlins 1992; Reeder 2000; Rubin 1985). Among the many reasons for this could be that there are now far more cross-sex activities than in previous generations. In addition, workplaces, at all levels consist of mixed genders. Historically women were excluded from many of these activities until changes in the labour market and wider society allowed women to enter paid work (Oliker 1998). Additionally, this can also be attributed to the fact that women now have far greater sexual freedom than in the past and the boundaries of sexuality and friendship are less defined by expectations to follow a particular discourse (Allan 2008, p.6).

Scholars of friendship have drawn on the sociology of friendship as a resource for conceptualising friendship in specific contexts. For example, Rumens suggests that workplace friendship is a 'voluntary, spontaneous human relationship between people that involves the reciprocation of good will, and is shaped by contextual factors within the workplace' (2011, p.6). Similarly, Bell (1981) defines friendship as a voluntary process that is not one-sided, and in which there is a quality of exchange between the people involved. 'Friendship is a voluntary, close and enduring social relationship. How enduring is difficult to answer, but it can go on for years' (Bell 1981, p.402). Nonetheless, formulating a clear definition of friendship is difficult, as there are no clear external grounds for characterising people as friends, and the meanings associated with friendship differ through time, context and culture (Bell 1981; Wright 1982; Allan

1989; Pahl 2000; Rumens 2011). This research is most interested in how and why friendships are formed and why are they important.

There is an abundant literature describing the benefits of friendship, why it is important, the benefits that can be gained from friends, and how friendship can promote a sense of growth and well-being (Allan 1989; Hartup and Stevens 1999; Pahl 2000; Bagwell et al. 2001). On the other hand, a few other authors suggest that friendships can be viewed as ambivalent, detrimental and obligatory, where there is no trust or support and the friends are unpleasant about each other behind their backs (Lepore 1992; Hess 2000; Ingram and Roberts 2000; Bushman and Holt-Lunstad 2009). The terms often used for these friendships ('frenemy' or 'toxic') have become commonplace in modern language (Bushman and Holt-Lunstad 2009).

Reciprocity is also an important factor in friendships. A reciprocal friendship can be both positive and negative. Positive reciprocity leads to a positive action being followed by an equally or even more positive reaction from the other party, a like-for-like relationship. However, a negative action will result in an equally or even more negative reaction. What concerns this study is the positive aspects of friendship, and as such it will explore the literature on this subject.

It is my belief (and that of many other researchers) that friendships are an important part of an individual's self-development and growth, from a very early age right through to death (Allan 1996; Hartup and Stevens 1997, 1999; Bagwell et al. 2001). Close friendships can allow for a better understanding of the self by providing a support structure that helps people deal with stress (Wright 1982; Hartup et al. 1997; Bagwell et al. 2001; Oswald and Clark 2006). 'High quality friendships promote self-esteem, may ward off feelings of loneliness and may provide a buffer against the negative effects of stress' (Bagwell et al. 2001, p.39). Loneliness can be a painful experience and can lead to negative self-perceptions and limited social involvement (Peplau and Perlman 1982; Boivin and Hymel 1997). It would seem that combating loneliness can be a clear motivator for seeking out friendships and could be a clear motivation for those individuals within an organisational context.

If the benefits of being in a close friendship, as discussed above, are important to our individual personal well-being, how are these friendships formed? Some evidence

suggests that people will seek out friends with similar interests and values to their own (Bell 1981; Allan 1989; Rumens 2011). In accordance with Aristotle's views on friendship, these interests and values can be based on a variety of commonalities, such as religious beliefs, hobbies, work and personal circumstances. These common areas can be seen as appealing to the people in question when initiating friendships, because fundamentally humans need to belong and be accepted by others (Erikson 1963; Rokach 1989; Baumeister and Leary 1995). By making friends with people who have common interests, friends can share their own knowledge and experiences. When people have friends they 'generally feel better about themselves and others than do people who do not have friends' (Hartup and Stevens 1999, p.76).

Friendships require balance between the people involved to provide this positive outlook for both members of the dyad. This balance contributes to the voluntary nature of friendships and encompasses the notion of reciprocity in friendship. The notion of balance between friends can clearly be seen in the work of Bell (1981), who explores the responses of four groups of people and their feelings on loneliness and friendship. Bell examines the general constructs of friendship, identifying that friendships need to be balanced and that the choices made within a friendship must be voluntary, rather than through 'coercion' or 'manipulation'. When the friendship is constructed voluntarily, it tends to last longer, and provide the people involved with a sense of belonging and value. This is supported by the findings explored throughout this literature review that friendships are beneficial to the individuals involved, and this is achieved through maintaining and fostering a sense of value and belonging.

Wright's (1982) early research explores friendships between different genders. His ten-year study developed a conceptual model of friendship, using a quantitative methodology, with data collected through questionnaires. His model is based on the self and four behavioural tendencies that function as self-referent. Wright's model 'specifies two separate but correlated criteria of friendship strength, four benefits or direct rewards of friendship and a variable concerning the degree to which the relationship is difficult to maintain' (Wright 1982, p.4). Perhaps the best way to discuss Wright's research would be to look at his overall findings on friendship. He suggests, not unlike Rumens (2011) and Bell (1981) that friendships can provide many different things depending on the friends involved: self-affirmation, ego support and help

maintaining a feeling of importance, for example. For instance, stimulation value is also an important part of friendship, by fostering expansion of an individual's knowledge, ideas or perspectives and helping develop personal growth. There is also a utility value in which one friend uses their time or resources to help the other meet their goals. This is not necessarily a selfish one-sided friendship as both friends enter into this willingly and receive fulfilment, but in different ways. Wright (1982) also discusses how friends address problems, as not all friendships run smoothly, when changing goals, motives or momentary wishes conflict between the dyad. When this happens 'soothing' and 'repair' of the friendship needs to take place and 'patience' and 'restraint' need to be exercised to keep the relationship intact (1982, p.6).

A comparison can be made between the early findings on friendship of Wright (1982) and Bell (1981). Both were able to identify the meanings people placed on friendship and that friendships should be two-way relationships. More importantly, they found that when friends are able to maintain a sense of individuality, balance and uniqueness in the friendship through a voluntary approach to friendship, they are better able to grow and become more supportive of each other. This idea of friendship as a voluntary act is further supported by the research of Hartup and Stevens. (1999), who had similar findings. It is also corroborated by Bagwell et al. (2001); Deci et al. (2006); Hartup and Stevens (1999) and Rumens (2011), who used qualitative rather than quantitative methodologies to explore the concept of friendship, which supported the idea of friendship being voluntary and unique to the individuals involved.

It is this sense of respect and voluntary action that creates a sense of importance for the friendship and binds the people involved in the friendship together. Respect for each other's needs and the voluntary nature of the dyadic relationship affords a feeling of 'we' and not 'I', making the friendship something special and important to the people involved. Bell (1981) discovered that: 'There must always be a quality of exchange between friends. While who gives what and how much relative to the other may often vary in different friendships or even a given friendship over time, it cannot be too one way.' (p.403).

Several authors have drawn similar conclusions. Bell (1981), Hartup and Stevens (1997, 1999) and Deci et al. (2006) examined autonomy within friendships as a means

of providing balance within a friendship. Deci et al. recognised that: 'One is autonomous to the degree that one experiences choice, willingness, and personal endorsement of one's actions' (p.315), in which '[a]utonomy support is defined in terms of one relational partner acknowledging the other's perspective, providing choice, encouraging self-initiation, and being responsive to the other' (p.313). Deci et al.'s (2006) research focuses on the effects of mutual support and autonomy support between friends. They discovered that when a person felt autonomous in a relationship (that is, he or she felt free to be the person he or she is, rather than feeling pressured to be a certain way), the person reported greater attachment security with the relational partner and more satisfaction with the relationship. The results of this study explore the idea that if close friends have autonomy within the friendship and are free to be themselves, there is a deeper and healthier relationship formed within the dyad. Furthermore, 'mutuality of autonomy support also appears to bode well for each partner's healthy psychological functioning' (Deci et al. 2006, p.326). This idea of a 'healthy psychological functioning' is further supported by the work of Erickson (1963), Peplau and Perlman (1982), Rokach (1989), Baumeister and Leary (1995) and Boivin and Hymel (1997) on the need for humans to feel a sense of belonging and value to prevent feelings of isolation, loneliness and stress.

In contrast to these findings, Hartup and Stevens (1999) identify issues associated with the life span of friendship and how a 'dark side' can have a mixed developmental benefit. Friends who are 'problematic, that break promises, invade privacy, are conflict ridden, exhibit anti-social behaviour' or take advantage can cause problems within the friendship (pp.78-79). Their research identifies that problems can occur with the friendship if there is a lack of balance. Their findings support the idea that a healthy, strong friendship needs to be constructed and maintained on an equal and voluntary basis to be supportive and promote well-being. This research is not designed to explore the concept of a 'frenemy' or of a destructive non-productive friendship. Rather, I seek to understand the meanings and themes that friends in the workplace can identify that make their friendship a positive experience, resulting in a positive impact for them and the organisation.

Hartup and Stevens (1999) explore three distinct areas: whether a person does or does not have friends; the characteristics of the person's friendships; and the quality

of these relationships. The expectations of a two-way support system between friends are also identified. For instance: 'Most people do not describe the relationship between friends narrowly as a *quid pro quo*, but rather describe the relationship broadly as *mutuality* – that is, friendship involves social giving and taking, and returning in kind or degree' (p.76). This is similar to the findings of Bagwell et al. (2001), Wright (1982) and others discussed above, who discovered that friendship needs to be reciprocal to be valued equally.

Hartup and Stevens (1999) identified that the principles and idea of friendship change very little from early childhood into adulthood and old age. However, 'the actual exchanges that occur between friends change greatly with age' (p.76). These exchanges are 'play' (when very young), 'socializing and social disclosure' (adolescents), 'work and parenting' (young adults) and 'support and companionship' (older persons) (pp.76-77). Those with supportive friends tend to be more resilient to problems and change than those who have unsupportive friends or who lack friendship. Furthermore, Rumens (2011) builds on the premise of friendships being beneficial to those involved. He explores how friendships between those that identify differently can be important for 'self-growth', 'understanding' and acceptance. If this is so, then friendships are capable of growth and development, depending on the stage at which the friendship presents itself to the friends involved. Therefore, the needs of individual friends within the dyad can be met through a quick change from nurturer to nurtured, depending on what is required at any given time, regardless of whether the friend is straight or gay. It is the act of being supportive and understanding through 'self-growth', 'acceptance' and 'empathy' that makes this possible.

In the following section, particular aspects of gendered friendships will be explored thus advancing the scope of this research.

Part Two: Men's friendships

As mentioned earlier, it is difficult to give a clear definition of friendship, since individual friendships are complex interactions, varied in their intimacy and meaning. There is a cultural assumption that men's and women's friendships are different (Allan 1989; Way 1997; Nardi 2000). Indeed, men's friendships are often defined in relation to women's friendships, and vice versa (Walker, 1994). Because friendships are different and have different meanings for those involved, it is pertinent to identify the themes that can help to explain friendships and their diversity of meaning for the people involved.

In the 1960s, women's friendships played an important role in the feminist movement. The idea of the power of women's friendships centred on the validation of female identities and subjectivities: 'Adopting feminist principles supposedly helped women to develop more friendships, resulting in greater support and intimacy and enhancing a sense of personal power' (Rose and Rodes 1987, p.243). Feminist research suggests that women's identities are embedded in relationships with other people (Way 1997, p.704). Interestingly, one finding was that feminists preferred the friendship of other feminists, sometimes to the exclusion of other women who were not feminists (Rose and Rodes 1987). However, within these friendships there still had to be similarity and like-mindedness between the friends for the friendship to succeed and be maintained. This idea of identities being embedded in relationships with other people, is not unique to women. Men's identities are equally invested in their friendships, as Migliaccio identifies: 'A man's friendship is more than simply a product of being a man. It is a performance of masculinity that is influenced by gendered expectations' (2009, p.226). It is these gendered expectations and performances of masculinity within male friendships that embed their identities within their friendships, with the 'like-mindedness' goal of informing their friends and others that they are not feminine, therefore affording them 'personal power' over how they are perceived by others (Migliaccio 2009; Doyle 1995; Connell 1995; Kimmel 1996). The idea of male performances of masculinity to avoid appearing feminine will be integral to my findings chapter in which straight men avoid friendships with gay men because gay men are not perceived as masculine. Therefore, befriending a gay man could disrupt their

understanding of male masculinity and, in turn, bring into question their own masculinity and sense of 'self'. In contrast, research shows that women are inclined to seek the company of other people rather than being autonomous or individualistic (Rose and Rodes 1987; Way 1997). This is not to say that women do not consider the 'self' important, but, as we will see, my study findings show that gay men believe that women are concerned with establishing and maintaining relationships and friendships. Further research suggests that women's friendships are based on the meanings associated with intimacy (Gottman 1994; Kirsch 2005). However, men are also capable of intimacy with their friends (Rose 2000), and intimacy can mean different things to different people. Intimacy takes the form of talking with their friends about personal issues, relationship issues, daily activities and anxieties (Rose and Rodes 1987). In fact, this could be viewed as women looking after their 'self' interest through meaningful relationships providing them with a sense of worth.

As discussed earlier, a sense of worth and self can be achieved through friendships; however, the way in which the different genders approach friendship can differ. Way (1997) implies that men find it difficult to trust their male peers. This can be explained by their process of socialisation, encouraging masculine behaviour from an early age, resulting in men avoiding intimate friendships, as this would be seen as a feminine behavioural trait, undermining their masculinity (Walker 1994). This fear prevents men from forming an intimate relationship with other men if they wish to maintain the socially-constructed ideal of masculinity.

The findings in Way's (1997) research suggest that, because of this fear, men find it easier to trust and talk to women about their feelings without having their masculinity judged or compromised. Men talking about their feelings would be seen as feminine behaviour and many heterosexual men do not want to be perceived as 'gay', or feminine, which would challenge their ideals of masculinity. However, this is an over-generalisation: the literature explored here clearly suggests there are exceptions to the notion that men are incapable of intimacy (Diamond and Dube 2002; Duncombe and Marsden 1993; Walker 1994). Perhaps what we are seeing in Way's research is a confirmation of the stereotypical expectations of Western society, in relation to male behaviour and that of gay male behaviour by essentializing sexual and gender differences. If gay men are seen as less than male or masculine by a heteronormative

society, then to be perceived as a gay male would indeed challenge the heteronormative idea of masculinity (Connell 1995; Mac an Ghaill 1994; Ridge et al. 2006; Plummer 2001). However, if the heteronormative workplace is challenged within the workforce by friendships between gay and straight men, then potentially these heteronormative arenas can be challenged, along with the stereotypes surrounding notions of hetero-masculinity. Once these challenges are made, a new norm can form and along with it a paradigm shift in relation to friendships that contain people who, as Rumens suggests, identify differently to those norms (2011, pp.57-58).

With this in mind, Way's (1997) findings are still relevant in our current sociological setting: men seen as intimate or emotional with their other male friends are inherently at risk of being seen as less than masculine. Displaying intimacy or emotions (stereotypically feminine) would result in a fear that to do so would not conform to the norms of hetero-masculinity. This male fear of being perceived as feminine, then, creates an imaginary boundary between two heterosexual men, preventing them from creating a deep and meaningful intimate relationship, as only women can claim this form of friendship. Contrary to Way's findings, however, Walker (1994) found that men are indeed capable of sharing feelings within a friendship with other men. Men share their feelings within friendships more often than the literature suggests, and women less often. It is clear that a great deal of the literature available seems to pander to and reinforce the stereotypes surrounding masculinity, femininity and homosexuality. It is important to understand where these stereotypes of behaviour have come from, to avoid essentializing differences between men and women and straight and gay men. Therefore, we must avoid falling into a similar trap, making assumptions about friendship and those who 'identify differently'.

As mentioned earlier, the traditional beliefs and stereotypes that surround men and masculine ideals is that men are less interested in disclosure and intimacy with other men, as this could be perceived as feminine (Coltrane 1994; Connell 1995; Way 1997; Migliaccio 2009). Male friendships would then become more concerned with the performativity of masculinity. If the above is taken as 'correct' behaviour for men who want to safeguard their masculinity, then men would need to comply with masculine ideas to remain confident about their (real or perceived) masculinity. This implies that friendship can be divided into masculine and feminine categories, depending on

whether the friendships encompass forms of intimacy (feminine) or are based on social interactions (masculine), and it is these notions of friendship that this research will be problematizing. Therefore, part of this thesis will explore how friendships created between gay and straight men fit into this categorisation, and why gay men are stereotyped as feminine and heterosexual men as masculine through the social discourses they are subjected to. This in itself is an unstable premise, as if the gay man is only 'out' to his straight friend then society would judge theirs a 'normal' heterosexual male friendship, binding them with the expected masculine ideals associated with the heteronormative friendship ideals. Anderson believes that failing to comply with these ideals results in possible punishment: 'The hegemonic understandings of masculine construction that requires cultural and institutional punishment for those who fail to meet the mandates of the dominant form, in whichever form it currently exists' (2005, p.350). Allan believes that: 'through the dominant images of masculinity and what it means to be masculine... it is not surprising that friendships are based around sociability rather than intimacy' (1989; p.63).

However, the notion of men's friendships can be considered to be moving towards a state of flux. Anderson's (2015) later research identifies examples of straight men displaying intimacy through their actions of 'cuddling' and 'spooning' each other, which contravenes the idea that men are not comfortable with (or able to display) intimacy: 'it is in these nonhomohysteric settings where multiple archetypes of masculinity coexist that it is most accurate to conceive of a range of heteromasculinities' (Anderson and McCormack 2015, p.225). Therefore, if there is more than one way to perform masculinity, but these options are not being adopted as the 'norm' to 'coexist', straight men are still at risk of judging masculinity through a very narrow lens of masculinity performance.

Ideas of masculinity are to do with how men are judged to be 'manly' (Coltrane 1994; Connell 1995). To perform masculinity is to adhere to the social discourses expected of male behaviour (Shepperd et al. 2010). The avoidance of feminine traits of behaviour becomes important when maintaining a masculine persona if masculinity is synonymous with heterosexuality. Migliaccio (2009) believes that masculine

performance is as much about the performance of being 'accepted as a man' as it is about 'a performance to inform others that he is not feminine' (p.228).

Thus, this implies that women are more able to develop intimate friendships with other women, as this form of intimate behaviour is socially and personally acceptable. However, another possible explanation is the attributions to gender-associated behaviour as the understanding and discourses surrounding intimacy are interpreted within the limits of gender binaries (e.g. male/female, masculine/feminine). As a result, intimacy could be constructed differently by men's and women's understanding of the behaviour with differing meanings attached to intimacy. For example, Reid and Fine (1992) found that closeness can be achieved through shared activities, rather than 'self-disclosure' to others, which does not suggest that this shared behaviour is not intimate in nature. Undertaking shared activities is in itself a form of intimacy. According to Swain (1989), intimacy can also take the form of sharing activities, trust and conversation. Therefore, under this premise, men who undertake shared activities are in fact displaying intimacy, as intimacy is about more than verbal communication.

Consequently, men who participate in joint activities will contribute to creating a bond between them. Nevertheless, this does not mean that there are still no parameters relating to this form of intimate disclosure: 'as long as their masculine performances overshadow the feminine' (Migliaccio 2009, p.229). What this suggests is that as long as they are seen by the men to whom they are disclosing their feelings as masculine in other areas, this will 'overshadow' the feminine traits. What is not clear is what these other 'masculine' areas are and who defines them as such. These areas are therefore subjective, leading to possible confusion as to which specific areas could be deemed masculine or feminine, or a combination (Anderson and McCormack 2015; McCormack 2012).

I have already touched on the literature surrounding women's friendships and how they are categorised. Women's friendships, stereotypically, are constructed as soft and gentle, where deep intimate feelings are discussed; in contrast with men's friendships, which are portrayed as tough, including shared activities and in which feelings cannot be expressed unless they are counterbalanced with typical masculine behaviour or a show of strength (Migliaccio 2009; Reid and Fine 1992; Shepperd et

al. 2010). Contesting this stereotype, Walker argues that: 'the notions that women share intimate feelings whereas men share activities in their friendships are more accurately viewed as cultural ideologies than as observable gender differences in behaviour' (1994, p.246). Further, Walker notes that 75% of the men interviewed in her research broke the stereotype not engaging in intimacy with their male friends: often friendships do not conform to stereotypes (Walker 1994). Wood identifies the dangers of using gendered benchmarks to judge the feminine and masculine elements of men's and women's friendships (1993). I agree with Walker and Wood, and believe that men are capable of intimacy within a friendship, regardless of whether they are gay or straight, and that to think otherwise would be setting stereotypical benchmarks.

Gay Friendships and Gay Identity

The social assumptions of the differences in men's and women's friendships, surrounded as they are by stereotypes, provoke questions for this research: first, whether gay friendships would also be considered to be 'different' again from those of heterosexual men and women; and second, how these differences are conceptualised. Because gay men are living in both worlds, they have a better understanding of the gender ambiguity, tensions between bodies, and contradictions around masculinity than their straight friends (Connell 1995, p.41).

This notwithstanding, regardless of whether a gay friendship might differ from that of a heterosexual man and woman, the underpinning principles of the attributes of that friendship remain the same, as discussed earlier in this chapter. Deep, close friendships for gay men are still about balance, mutual respect and voluntary relationships, from which members expect intimacy, companionship, responsiveness and reciprocity (Allan 1989; Bird 1996; Fee 2000; Nardi 2000; Rumens 2011).

However, it is important to acknowledge that friendship is normally conceptualised through the dominant (heterosexual) gendered dimensions of friendship (Fee 2000). This view is supported by Bird: 'Hegemonic masculinity is maintained as the norm to which men are held accountable, despite individual conceptualizations of masculinity that depart from that norm' (1996, p.120). These views alert us to the perception of masculinity as a dominant social construct within heteronormative society. In this scenario, any attempt to challenge this social construct of masculinity is called into

question. Gay men, for instance, are perceived as exhibiting feminine traits. These traits are stereotypes arising from the notion that gay men embrace intimacy, flamboyance, camp behaviour and so on. These traits and behaviours are seen as feminine, but are performed by men, therefore subverting the heterosexual norms of masculinity. Consequently, men who wish to identify as masculine and be seen through the guise of masculine norms in a heteronormative society have to exhibit behaviour that supports their internalised understanding of the socially constructed ideals of masculinity, which is not to be feminine. If intimacy is seen as feminine, then these men avoid engaging in intimate behaviour and conversation, and will seek other men with whom to display their non-feminine traits to perpetuate these ideals of masculinity (Bird 1996). On the one hand, as noted by Walker (1995), intimacy is not only about conversation: it can also be achieved through engagement in activities. On the other, does it become easier for society to dismiss these joint activities as a form of intimacy and treat them as illegitimate to allow a heteronormative society to conceptualise gendered behaviour cleanly?

Heteronormative society is one in which a common belief is held that people fall into specific gender and sexual categories: 'male' and 'female', 'heterosexual' and 'homosexual'. In particular, heterosexuality is ascribed privilege and a normative status as 'natural' and 'normal' (Warner 1993). Heteronormativity has played a major role in shaping and organising social relations within society so that, for example, marriage is seen to be the most idealistic and desirable relationship between heterosexual men and women (Jackson 2006; Priola et al. 2014; Rosenfeld 2009; Sharma 2009). Relatedly, heteronormativity favours certain ways of conceptualising and expressing the gendered dimensions of male friendship through a heteronormative understanding of friendship that may conflict with how gay men conceptualise their own understanding of friendship as a relationship that may, for example, contain romantic and sexual components (Fee 2000; Pahl 2000). Heteronormative ideas about men's friendships can contradict, undermine and obscure how gay men understand and experience friendship (Nardi 1999; Weston 1991). As Pahl (2000) points out, people rely on others to affirm their identities. A friendship based on fear does not exhibit the qualities of a close friendship, as discussed earlier. This leads me to assume at this point that a genuine friendship

between a gay man and a straight man would not be based on fear. These friendships would be subject to the stages of friendship development, in which fears and anxieties are worked through in the initial stages of the friendship. Therefore, the straight man must be confident in his own masculinity and sense of 'self', to overcome or dismiss possible assumptions and negative connotations of his sexuality that other people may place on him or the friendship.

By understanding where these dominant heteronormative discourses of friendship come from, differences in sexuality can be used to challenge the construction of gender that has informed the distinction between heterosexual and homosexual friendship discourses (Fee 2000). However, it is important to be aware of the 'danger of falling into an un-problematically hetero-defined existence' (Fee 2000, p.46). Fee has uncovered a dichotomy between the understanding of the 'straight friend' and the 'gay friend'. According to Fee, heterosexuals know little about what it is to live the life of a gay man, such as issues related to marginalisation and identity. Because gay men are living in both worlds, they have a better understanding of the gender ambiguity, tensions between bodies and contradictions around masculinity than their straight friends (Connell 1995). For this research, this difference suggests that there is reason to think that gay men's friendships more easily bypass the remoteness and relatively anxious quality that accompanies straight men's friendships, and that they form an important part of their understanding and construction of gay identities, masculinities and cultures (Nardi 1999; Fee 2000). Nardi identifies that for gay men:

Friendship networks are the avenue through which gay social worlds are constructed, the sites upon which gay men's identities and communities are formed and where the quotidian dimensions of our lives are carried out. (1999, p. 13)

What we are seeing is an assumption that seems to be based on the stereotypical categorisation of what constitutes a gay man and his friendship. Not all gay men are effeminate or camp; not all gay men want to be intimate with their friends in a vocal manner; and not all gay men need gay friends to build an identity. Bird (1996) identified that certainly in some 'homosocial' groups being feminine was inappropriate and most highly stigmatized, and 'feminine expressions of intimacy (e.g., talking "feelings")' were

unacceptable (1996, p.125). Additionally, Nardi (1999) found that some straight-acting gay men avoid other feminine gay men to prevent being categorised as being gay.

Gay men can additionally enjoy a break from being intimate with their gay friends through friendships with straight men (Fee 2000). However, not all friendships of gay men are limited within a gay milieu. Galupo's (2007) research shows that it is considered 'novel' for gay people to transcend this and form friendships with heterosexual men. It is suggested that this is because friendships between gay people can act as a buffer against being devalued as a sexual minority (Galupo 2007). Friendships, according to Galupo, are an opportunity to share aspects of daily life and can be used as role models for other gay people. Friendships between gay men can offer an underpinning of knowledge surrounding sexuality that would otherwise not be available from a straight man. However, this form of friendship then eliminates the knowledge and understanding of heterosexual culture and norms that a straight man can bring to the friendship (Galupo 2007). As will be seen from my findings, some interviewees welcomed insight into the straight world of heterosexual men and women.

Interestingly, it would appear that straight men have to settle for being unable to express intimacy, because of the socialisation of masculine behaviour. This is a stereotype that this research will seek to problematize. Gay men, in contrast, are able to transcend these socialised boundaries and enjoy greater closeness with their friends, as society is not expecting them to live up to heterosexual ideals of masculinity (Fee 2000). It is evident that gay and straight men want the same things from friendship, as discussed earlier in this chapter. It is clear from the earlier discussions in this chapter that the important qualities of a close friendship (reciprocity, equality, trust and so forth) are mediated by gender norms and stereotypes, and it is these norms and stereotypes that I am interested in exploring. Gay men's friendships can reinforce the positivity of their sexual identity within a heteronormative society (Rumens 2011). There are many challenges associated with developing cross-sexuality friendships between men, as Price (1999) identifies through a collection of stories on how friends deal with issues in their lives, such as coming out and managing emotions. Barrett (2013) and Beasley et al. (2015) also identify that conflict can occur for gay men if they do not reproduce the heteronormative practices that straight men are accustomed to within same-sex male friendships. However, gay men who

embrace their sexuality have high levels of trust, intimacy and respect with their friends (Anderson 2002; Barrett 2013; Muraco 2005; Price 1999). This is supported and developed by Gorman-Murray (2013, p.220) who found that gay men could have meaningful friendships with straight men and that these friendships can help: 'reconfigure masculinities and subjectivities and equalities, and therefore should be nourished and fostered. Interestingly, Price (1999) found that gay men who are open about their sexuality are less likely to be concerned by the heteronormative expectations of masculinity, resulting in fewer conflicts and power struggles associated with straight male friendships. However, both Price (1999) and Barrett (2013) found that men who come out to their existing straight friends, who then struggle to accept their friend being gay, can find that their straight friends act in ways that cause the gay friend to feel shame and other negative emotions. This can result in the gay friend feeling like an outcast. As Barrett (2013, p. 62) identifies, 'occupying the position of a "real man" comes to depend upon the establishment of social and symbolic distance between the heterosexual-masculine self and the gay-effeminate other.' Barrett found that friendships 'between men across sexual orientation do exist, [but] they are relatively uncommon' (2013, p.63). Gorman-Murray (2013) would argue that friendships across sexual orientation can in fact help straight men to identify that hetero-masculinity is perceived as the privileged norm and therefore they are able to reconstruct their understanding of masculinity. Once this has been recognised, the straight men are able to use their position to, 'promote gender and sexual equality in ordinary encounters in everyday spaces' (Gorman-Murray 2013, p.220).

Friendships for gay men can help other gay men come to terms with their sexual identity, as Nardi (2000) suggests, through the common ties and understanding of the issues surrounding coming out as a gay man and re-negotiating a new identity, when gay men are vulnerable to homophobia. As Rumens (2011) observes, this is not a one-off occurrence, as gay men risk this happening every time they come out in a new situation or to a new person. The decision to disclose one's sexual identity in the workplace is investigated by Ward and Winstanley (2005). The authors deal with the stress and worry associated with people contemplating coming out in the workplace, along with the change this will create in the individual when his or her personal identity needs to be re-negotiated after the disclosure. This can also affect how gay men build

friendships in the workplace, as will be discussed later in this chapter. In summary, friendships between gay men, according to the above research, help them support each other and reinforce the existence of a gay subculture, in which help can be provided to deal with the stress and worry of constructing a new identity.

The gay community and subculture, according to Nardi (2000), does indeed constitute a community with a collective behaviour and history and can reproduce the complexities of a society through being involved in a public life beyond its own interests. Gay friends can help other gay people reproduce notions of 'gay community' and 'gay culture' through friendship. Newcomers can be integrated into the gay community, which provides them with a sphere and the space and skills to enact their gay identities, which is only one identity gay men manage in their lives (Nardi 2000). 'Gay friendships can help bolster gay men and others from external dangers such as homophobia' (Rumens 2011, p.36). Rumens goes on to suggest that, 'it is within friendship that gay men find the fortitude and courage to resist the threats (for example homophobia) to demolish and discredit sexual identities and subjectivities' (2011, p.39). Friendships provide a level of protection against the heterosexual social norms and defend their lifestyle choices.

Following this, it is possible to argue that gay friendships as subcultures can help to disrupt the heteronormative discourses associated with friendship and masculinity. These discourses then can be challenged through their own understanding of friendship and masculine behaviour and the implications and associations of their behaviour within those friendships. These can then possibly lead to a deconstruction of the traditional assumptions of how friendship should be conceptualised. I will be adding to debates on friendship from the perspective of gay men in the workplace, specifically on the difficulties they experience with the construction of friendship with straight men and the power plays surrounding the perception of masculine ideals. I will be adding to the understanding of friendships in the workplace and how they are conceptualised and considered when a gay man is part of the friendship. Currently, the conceptualisation of friendships promotes a stereotypical underpinning to gay men's friendships through these heterosexual norms.

Part Three: The Workplace Environment and Gay Men's Workplace Friendships

Workplace and/or business friendships have been defined in several ways. For Ingram and Zou (2009) these friendships are about relational exchange and are formed as a method of interdependence, often being about commerce or to, 'facilitate exchanges that are hard to conduct within arms-length markets' (p.181). Unlike Ingram and Zou, Sias et al. (2003) found that friendships at work could enable bonds to develop between the friends involved and that these bonds can lead to support, intimacy and nurturing of each other, benefitting both the organisation and the individuals involved. Somewhat similarly, Dickie (2009) identifies that the workplace is a 'crucible' for friendships to develop on both a personal and workplace level, blurring the lines between work life and social life. However, as discussed earlier, friendships can mean different things to different people. There is a growing body of literature on how workplace friendships are important in ways that transcend organisational perspectives that value the potential role friendship can play in improving the productivity of the organisation. Rumens (2016), for example, agrees with Dickie (2009), arguing that friendships are important in their own right, and in particular for the individuals involved, and that they function as social and personal relationships. Workplace friendships can develop for a manner of reasons, such as close proximity to another person, looking for people that are like-minded, addressing the need to be part of a social group or to have someone to exchange ideas and converse with (Andrew and Montague 1998; Day and Schoenrades 1997; Riordan and Griffeth 1995; Rumens 2011, 2016; Sias et al. 2003). Whatever the reason for the friendship development in the workplace, these relationships develop by choice but are, importantly, shaped by contextual factors in the workplace as above (Sias et al. 2003).

As discussed earlier, friendships can provide a sense of meaning for individuals, and a support network for the people involved. If there are no other openly gay men in the workplace, a gay man might have limited choices, such as trying to construct friendships with his straight colleagues or opting out of befriending colleagues altogether. Day and Schoenrade's (1997) research implies that if there are established groups of gay men in the workplace, they may feel more comfortable with the social position they hold in the workplace. This is supported by the idea that if there is an integration of gay and lesbian sexual identities into the workplace culture, a possible

outcome is that gay men will feel happier to join social groups and friendship networks populated by heterosexuals. Also, there is evidence that friendships in the workplace can contribute to the meaning and sustained sense of identity and the place that gay men can claim as their own in the wider social world (Andrew and Montague 1998; Rumens 2011). Therefore the balance of dominance in the workplace could be displaced if friendship networks are not organised around heterosexual norms (Capper 1999). However, if there are no other gay men in the workplace, this may result in gay men consciously having to make concessions in how they portray their identity to others to be accepted within the heteronormative workplace. Possibly, they might create a sexual and gendered identity that is not 'authentic' and detached from the types of identities they form outside work. The significance of studying gay men's identities is revealed by Clarkson:

Studies of gay male identity construction also offer a unique opportunity to understand how subjects can construct identities that resist and sometimes oppose hegemonic expectations of sexuality and gender. (Clarkson 2006, p.194).

People are reluctant to lose their social position (Day and Schoenrade 1997; Capper 1999). The concerns associated with disclosing one's sexual identity and possible exclusion from the dominant group can create a sense of trepidation for the gay employee. It is apparent that disclosure of sexual identity can be perceived as detrimental to career development and progression, through the possible marginalisation and rejection of a person who has come out as gay (Ward and Winstanley 2005; Raggins et al. 2007; Lugg and Autumn 2010). If, by declaring one's sexuality, discrimination may result, then, according to Efraty and Sirgy (1990) marginalisation can occur, which is a contributing factor to a poor quality of work life. However, Button (2001) believes it is important to explore the levels of discrimination, work commitment, biases, exclusionary behaviours and job-related inequities within the workplace, from the individual's personal experience and knowledge.

There are no doubt workplace contexts in which heteronormativity would probably not be prominent, such as LGBT organisations, feminist organisations and workplaces in which the majority of the employees are gay (Rumens 2011). However, the participants for this research all work within in workplace contexts they understood

and experienced as heteronormative. Worsnop (1993) suggests that if employers or co-workers have a distaste for gay identity, behaviour and lifestyle, they may develop a taste for discrimination. If it is the case, that homosexuality is perceived with distaste, then gay men in the workplace are more likely to be reluctant to expose themselves to this form of discrimination (Ward and Winstanley 2005; Lugg 2010; Lewis 2010; Tejeda 2006; Smith and Ingram 2004), and possibly decide to conform to the typical straight male masculine performance of masculinity to avoid discrimination.

Discriminatory behaviour in the workplace originated from several areas, such as homophobic colleagues, managers and employers. Based on the research of Buddel (2011), Day and Schoenrade (2000), Einarsdóttir et al. (2015), Williams and Giuffre (2011) and Willis (2012), gay men who perceive their employers to be homophobic are less likely to believe that those organisations would accept gay men in their workforce. To try and prevent this discrimination and maintain their gay identity, acting straight could be seen as an option: 'Straight acting describes men who are masculine rather than effeminate stereotypes' (Clarkson 2006, p.191).

However, straight-acting gay men could be seen as neglecting their feminine side (Edelman 1994). This neglect can be viewed as an adaption/change in how gay masculinity is performed because, historically, men who exhibit feminine behaviour have been identified as gay, which in turn has defined and contributed to the discourses of the social construction of homosexuality (Edelman 1994; Nardi 1999). The term 'straight-acting' implies that these men are conforming to certain discourses surrounding masculinity (Clarkson 2006). Therefore, acting straight for some gay men may be the only option available in terms of feeling accepted as 'normal' in the workplace (Rumens and Kerfoot, 2009; Rumens, 2008). Gay men who are purposefully changing their normal behaviour and acting straight are complying with and supporting a heterosexual definition of 'normal' as a way of being accepted within a workplace (Rumens, 2011). This behaviour poses a problem for the acceptance of other gay people in those workplaces who are not willing to conform to the established norms. Therefore, when gay men need to define themselves as gay using a heteronormative discourse that only allows them to act straight, these discourses are restricting them from being who they are. As a result of gay people complying with and accepting the heteronormative workplace discourses, it becomes more difficult for gay

people to problematize those dominant heterosexual workplace environments to allow for differing performances of masculinity to be accepted within those workplaces.

If heteronormative society and workplace constructs of gay men are influenced by negative stereotypes, this may influence colleagues' decisions as to whether to befriend a gay man if they perceive him as a feminine rather than a masculine friend. 'The lack of analysis of gay masculinities can be read as affirmation of the perceived threat the very existence of homosexuality poses to heterosexual masculinity' (Clarkson 2006, p.194). This threat to heterosexual masculinity could then become a barrier to friendships between gay and straight men in the workplace, if the gay identity does not match the expectations of perceived heterosexual masculinity (Clarkson 2006; Nardi 2000; Ward 2000). Therefore, gay men who are working under heteronormative workplace discourses have little choice but to use those to construct their work identity.

Rumens and Kerfoot (2009) explore how and why certain discourses might be used by gay men to construct identities and subjectivities within the heteronormative organisational discourses surrounding gay men in the workplace, and the normalisation of gay identities. The authors explore how gay men self-identify alongside the gender base for gay men to conform to that of a heterosexual masculine ideal (hetero-normalisation). In addition, Griffith and Hebl (2002) and Rumens (2010) explore self-acceptance, the centrality of one's personal identity, how 'out' one is to friends, family and employer, identifying whether these factors affect job satisfaction and quality of work life. These are important issues to consider when thinking about friendships between gay men and their straight friends in the workplace. From one perspective, when a gay man chooses not to disclose his sexual identity to a straight friend, issues of personal integrity and honesty are brought to the fore. This could possibly lead to an issue for both members of the dyad if the gay person decides to come out, as with coming out, a new identity will be seen to form. Everything that the straight friend thought he knew about the gay man could be viewed as 'untrue', putting strain on the relationship. This is at a time when the gay man might be more inclined to be looking for support from his friends to help with the transition in the workplace (Humphrey 1999; Rostosky and Riggle 2002; Lugg and Autumn 2010).

Worsnop's (1993) early research recognises the detrimental effects that being openly gay in the workplace can have on an individual, and discrimination against people who are, or are perceived to be, gay in the workplace. The research demonstrates the realities of homophobia that can exist for gay men in certain workplace situations and the possible effects associated with disclosure of sexual identity at work. The decision to disclose sexual identity in the workplace can carry fear and anxiety about being discriminated against. Ragins et al. (2007) examined the fears underlying the disclosure of gay identity at work and whether past experiences with sexual identity are related to the fear of disclosure in the workplace for gay employees. They conclude that many employees with invisible stigmas leave part of their identity at home when they come to work each day and live in fear that their true identity will be discovered. However, organisations can lessen this fear by providing supportive environments that allow employees to bring their full identities to work and feel accepted. Ragins et al. (2007) add to a body of research examining gay men's and lesbians' experiences in the workplace. This study also demonstrates that disclosure was related to job satisfaction, but not to job anxiety. These findings explore motivations for people who feel they need to belong and have social support and how this motivation has profound implications for them in the workplace and on their identities.

Rumens (2010) explores the construction of friendships in the workplace and how these relate to identity construction and personal well-being. Rumens questions, through an examination of gay friendships, how friendships can help prevent feeling of marginalisation and discrimination in the workplace for gay men. The importance of friends supporting gay men when they face discrimination or coming out in the workplace cannot be denied, as the earlier evidence in this chapter has shown. The heteronormative workplace can be viewed as a challenging arena for sexual minorities if they wish to establish a meaningful sense of self-identity and belonging.

Part Four: Discussion

The above review of the literature leads me to question the impact of sexuality and gender on how a friendship is formed between gay and heterosexual men, and the forms of interaction considered acceptable between them. Discourses on masculinity can have a limiting effect on the development of friendships between straight men and gay men, which in turn can motivate for gay men to befriend straight women. This leads to another question about whether there is an element of fear associated with a gay man and a straight man becoming friends due to heteronormative friendship expectations being enforced through behaviour expectations.

I will be contributing to current understanding and knowledge of workplace friendships for gay men. This will be achieved in part through understanding the fear and concerns of the gay friend when forming a dyadic friendship. In addition, this study seeks to deepen knowledge about gender and sexual barriers for the development of friendships between gay men and straight people at work, noting the effect this has on other types of friendship development, such as befriending straight women (Elesser and Peplau 2006; Reeder 2003; Russell et al. 2015; Torre and Manalastas 2013). It appears that in some circumstances gay men may find it easier to befriend straight women, as these friendships are less controversial within heteronormative contexts (Nardi 1999; Galupo 2009). Galupo identified that straight women could provide a unique type of support for gay men through their 'increased sensitivity to sexual minority perspective and an increased flexibility in understanding their own personal sexual identity' (2009, p 814). Reeder (2003) identified that overall women were happier to be in cross-sexed friendships than straight men. Perhaps if straight men are not seen to be traditionally masculine, but perceived as feminine, this can act as a barrier for straight men and gay men to develop friendship. It is important to understand how mixed sexuality dyadic friendships can be formed and whether there are impenetrable boundaries in a heteronormative workplace that prevent friendships being formed between gay and straight men. Furthermore, it will be significant to address the situation where some gay men perceive that by being friends with a heterosexual man may impact on the heterosexual man's masculinity, leading to the gay man feeling compelled to adapt his behaviour to accommodate the expectations and fears of the heterosexual friend (Barrett 2013; Price 1999). Way's (1997) research

explores the perception of heterosexual men and how gay men are seen as less than masculine or male, and that gay men exhibit female traits. This will become a key point of discussion below when analysing the interviews, to identify whether gay men believe this is how they are perceived by their straight friends.

It is evident from the literature review that friendship is complex and difficult to define. Friendships are constructed for many reasons. The clear themes that can be identified here are that for a friendship to provide a benefit and a sense of value, it needs to allow for autonomy, be voluntarily entered into and have balance, as can be seen from the work of Hartup and Stevens (1999). If there is no autonomy, or the friendship is unbalanced, it can become problematic. It would seem that for the friendship to have meaning and longevity there has to be equality, understanding, trust and intimacy. According to the above literature, once this is achieved, friendship can provide feelings of belonging, well-being, personal growth, support, companionship and social acceptance between the two members of the dyadic relationship.

One observation germane to this thesis is the paucity of sustained scholarship on gay men's workplace friendships. As such, we do not know enough about the gender and sexual dynamics within, for example, gay-straight friendships at work. The heteronormative bias of the organisational literature on workplace friendships, noted by Rumens (2011), is problematic because we do not know enough about the deleterious influence of heteronormativity on these friendships, and what organisations can do to alleviate the harmful outcomes for gay men and, presumably, their straight friends. Additionally, studying gay-straight workplace friendships has the potential to provide insights into how workplace friendships can transcend heteronormative discourses on friendship, noted elsewhere in the research on men's friendships (Migliaccio 2009; Shepperd et al. 2010; Walker 1994). There are clear gaps of understanding around gender and sexuality in the workplace friendship literature (Migliaccio 2009; Rumens 2011. 2016). At the same time, because gay men are often vulnerable to sexual and gendered stereotyping (Weeks 1977; Weeks et al., 2001), it is important to examine how such stereotypes and discourses can discursively fix gay men within stereotypes that subsequently affect whether they are seen as suitable friendship material by straight men and women. As this thesis will explore, identity plays a crucial role in shaping people's expectations about what forms

gay men's friendship might take and what role it might potentially play in their lives. Indeed, how study participants understand 'straight' identities is also pertinent to how gay men approach friendship with straight men and women, in particular shaping their expectations about what forms these friendships take and how they might be valuable in the workplace.

Introduction to Methodology

Chapter two focuses on the methodology of this study, exploring the most appropriate method for researching the meanings and themes that gay men place on their dyadic friendships with straight men in the workplace. Understanding the reasons for and meanings behind these dyadic friendships is one of the objectives of the research. I position myself as an anti-positivist, subjective and interpretive researcher. The reasons for this will be discussed throughout this chapter, through consideration of various methodological approaches. This chapter will inform my thoughts about research previously undertaken in the area of friendship. Throughout the chapter, decision points will be identified with an explanation of each one. The decision points will mark when I chose the appropriate method to adopt and the logic behind the choices made in relation to the purpose of the research

The methodology chapter will be divided into three sections. Section one explains the conceptual framework and explores the challenges associated with the complexity of identifying the most appropriate research method; section two deals with how this method will be adopted and put into practice. It will discuss the sampling method adopted and the critical theory (queer theory) that will be used to help understand the findings. I will also explore the possible issues associated with qualitative non-probability sampling. Section three will discuss the ethical implications when undertaking research in which human participants are involved and how I ensured the safety of my own wellbeing and the wellbeing of the participants. After undertaking this review, why the approach chosen is the most suitable approach for this research is discussed in more depth.

Chapter Two: Methodology

Methodology, Epistemology and Ontology

It is important to establish the basis and boundaries of what will be researched and how knowledge of that subject can be acquired. These two questions are fundamental in the philosophical enquiry pertaining to a doctoral journey. This section will present some definitions of philosophical enquiry and locate the research within certain paradigms for social research.

Ontology is the study of being, and of the nature of reality. Whether social reality is constructed through the meanings placed on it by the individual (subjective), or whether social reality complies with a set of pre-determined rules and laws as in the natural world (realist), are both part of the ontological approach. Every approach is underpinned by ontological assumptions about the social world and its causal relationships (Burrell and Morgan 1979; Geels 2010). Therefore, 'ontology is the consideration of being what it means for something – or somebody – to be' (Packer and Goicoechea 2000, p.227). The ontological approach for this research is clearly a subjective one, which assumes that reality is an output of human cognitive processes (Johnson and Duberley 2003). The positivist and anti-positivist approaches are explored further in the methodological considerations section of this chapter.

Epistemology is concerned with the grounds of knowledge and the rights to the beliefs we have (Burrell and Morgan 1979; Bryman 2000). Epistemologies 'seek to explain and predict what happens in the social world by searching for regularities and causal relationships between its constituent elements' (Burrell and Morgan 1979, p.5). The French philosopher August Comte explored social reality through a positivist paradigm and believed an understanding of human behaviour could be achieved through observation, reason and experimentation. A positivist researcher uses this method to generate knowledge and understanding through the assumptions of science. A positivist approach disregards anything considered intangible or subjective and concentrates on the testing of theories in a 'hypothetical-deductive fashion' from an observable external world (Gill et al. 2010). Researchers who want to explore the intangible or areas considered to be subjective, where human behaviour is not

considered to be controlled by external factors, adopt an anti-positivist or naturalistic paradigm approach.

An anti-positivist approach considers that social reality is seen and examined by the individual according to the ideological stance of the researcher. As a result, the knowledge is experienced personally, as opposed to being imposed from the outside, as with a positivist approach. Anti-positivists believe that reality is multi-layered and complex (Cohen and Musson 2000) and a single phenomenon has multiple interpretations. The anti-positivist will examine a phenomenon from various unexplored areas of the situation being researched. Positivism and anti-positivism are methods of exploring and understanding two concepts of social reality. While positivism stands for objectivity, measurability, predictability and controllability, and constructs laws and rules of human behaviour, anti-positivism emphasises the understanding and interpretation of phenomena and making meaning from processes.

There are many methodological approaches and philosophical paradigms that can be used when undertaking research. For example, the interpretivist, positivist, anti-positivist, critical or realist and critical theory paradigms are all commonly used. This research on gay men's friendships in the workplace will be situated within the subjectivist paradigm, which locates the epistemological as anti-positivist: 'The epistemology of an anti-positivist may take various forms but is firmly set against the utility of a search for laws or underlying regularities in the world of social affairs' (Burrell and Morgan 1979, p.5). What this means is that as an anti-positivist, I will be examining the lived experiences of workplace friendships from multiple perspectives within the diverse identity category of 'gay men'. How we view the world influences how we approach our research. For example, unlike an anti-positivist, a positivist researcher would explore realities and their meanings through a lens of scientific objectivity that insists on deploying a highly structured methodology to maximise objectivity throughout the research process, eliminating subjective elements and anything that is intangible. In contrast, an anti-positivist 'sees the world as an emergent social process which is created by the individuals concerned' (Burrell and Morgan 1979, p.28).

It is the meanings and the understanding and interpretation of those meanings that is important in this research. The meanings attached to workplace friendships with

straight men and women is, in the context of this thesis, a major focal point and will be analysed in a critical way that considers not only the information received from the participants, but also incorporates observations of behaviour during the interviews. One of the methods I will use to enable the incorporation of observations will be to adopt a reflective approach when analysing the interviews (this will be discussed further later in this chapter). Equally, it is important to demonstrate an understanding of other paradigms and why I am not using them. It is useful to understand other paradigms that are possible to use when studying gay men and friendship at work.

Subjective and Objective Approaches

Prior to exploring the possible paradigms for this research and how my own position fits into these paradigms, it is important to understand the differences between a subjective and objective approach to research, as the paradigms discussed later in this chapter will fall into one of these categories.

To adopt a *subjective* approach, the researcher must be aware that what we see and how we understand a situation is influenced by our prior knowledge and experiences of the world around us, and that we use this knowledge and understanding to make sense of what we experience (Burrell and Morgan 1979; Gill and Johnson 2010). According to Gill and Johnson (2010), the researcher is an active participant in the process of research, through their experiences and interpretations of the world, so what we see as being external to and separate from us is just as much an expression of our subjective processes as what is actually going on. Identifying as a gay man, I have an insight into the particular experiences of negotiating a gay identity in the workplace. However, it is important for me to recognise that while this insight into what it is like to be a gay man may influence how I make sense of the world around me, these are my understandings and part of my subjective interpretation of what is happening. It is important to acknowledge that there is no single gay experience and different gay men will have experiences different from mine.

In contrast to the approach taken by a subjective researcher, an objective researcher adopts a deductively tested approach or inductively generates theory through a

positivist approach to the research. The *truth* can be identified through the passive, theory-neutral approach of the researcher, which is not located in the preconceived knowledge and experiences of the researcher (Burrell and Morgan 1979; Gill and Johnson 2010). Positivist research would claim that human behaviour can be rationalised, even if this behaviour goes against the expectations of what is deemed 'normal'. Thus, the researcher is not part of the research, as a positivist approach does not take into account the personal knowledge or feelings of the researcher. This means that the researcher's knowledge and understanding has no part in the process of understanding and therefore has no influence on the chosen area of study.

Unlike a subjective researcher, an objective researcher would view the world as a logically ordered objective reality that we can come to know, and where there is only one valid social structure which we must all arrive at (Babbie 2011). Because an objective researcher is looking for order within pre-defined social structures, the information and outcomes they identify become social, imposing a valid order onto life experiences that complies with the set rules of that social structure (Babbie 2011; Burrell and Morgan 1979). An objective researcher is therefore implicitly a realist (discussed later in this chapter). An objective researcher approaches research through the belief that 'the social world is made up of hard, tangible, and relatively immutable structures which exist independent of the mind of the individual and operate whether or not the individual is aware of them' (Hudson and Murray 1986, p.343). What we think we know about cultures, genders, race, sexuality, social groupings and relationships cannot be grounded in objective reality.

It is my belief that we can only see and experience things through our own eyes and anything we see that is unusual or unexpected can shape our further understanding and knowledge of that situation and social structure. Although the external world imposes itself on the individuals that reside in it, the meanings associated with that external world are not fixed. Therefore, my intentions are to interpret what I see and hear in relation to gay men's friendships, and then come to a conclusion on what this tells me. As a result, my approach is a subjective one, as the data that comes from this research will need to be interpreted to find meanings.

Before continuing further, it is important to identify the epistemological and ontological approaches of this research. The highlighted sections in Table 1 illustrate the approach used for this research. As can be seen, this research is situated in the subjectivist approach, which locates the epistemological positioning, according to Burrell and Morgan (1979) and Morgan and Smircich (1980), as anti-positivist. 'The epistemology of an anti-positivist may take various forms but is firmly set against the utility of a search for laws or underlying regularities in the world of social affairs' (Burrell and Morgan 1979, p.5). What this means is that an anti-positivist researcher will be taking a far more personal view, examining things from multiple perspectives. The way in which we view the world influences how we approach our research. For example, unlike an anti-positivist, a positivist researcher would explore realities and their meanings through a distinct structure, eliminating subjective elements and anything that is intangible. An anti-positivist 'sees the world as an emergent social process which is created by the individuals concerned' (Burrell and Morgan 1979, p.28). Therefore, the anti-positivist is not confined by pre-conceived, fixed structures.

Four Possible Paradigms for this Research

The four paradigms that will be briefly discussed below will demonstrate why I locate myself within a subjective interpretivist paradigm. The four paradigms discussed are derived from the work of Burrell and Morgan. Their text has been widely used since 1979 to help researchers understand and choose their methodology and their research philosophy (see Hudson and Murray 1986; Johnson and Cassell 2001). A paradigm provides a conceptual framework for seeing and making sense of the social world. Burrell and Morgan (1979) identified and explored four possible sociological paradigms which can be used when undertaking organisational analysis. They believe that '[e]ach set identifies a quite separate social scientific reality; to be located in a particular paradigm is to view the world in a particular way' (p.24).

The functionalist paradigm, according to Burrell and Morgan (1979, p.25), provides the leading framework for sociological research and the study of organisations. The functionalist paradigm approaches the subject matter being researched from an objectivist perspective that is pragmatic in design. '[A] realist view of the world [is]

focused on producing statistical models that would explain, for example, the different effects of organisation change on different groups of managers.' (Worrall 2004, p.164).

The radical humanist paradigm deals with the sociology of radical change from a subjectivist perspective. According to Burrell and Morgan (1979, p.32), it is similar to an interpretative approach as it deals with the world from an anti-positivist approach. However, it deals with trying to overthrow the limitations of the existing social reality. The radical humanist approach believes that human consciousness is dominated by the ideological structures within which humans have to interact.

The radical structuralist paradigm advocates a 'sociology of radical change from an objectivist standpoint' (Burrell and Morgan 1979, p. 33). It explores these from a realist, positivist, determinist and nomothetic point of view. A radical structuralist believes that radical change is built into the structures of society and explores the structure of power relationships, or political and social change and conflict. The interpretative paradigm examined by Burrell and Morgan is informed by concern with the fundamental nature of the social world at the level of subjective experiences. The interpretative paradigm sees the world as an emerging social process created by the individuals involved. An interpretative researcher attempts to understand the basis and source of social reality through a subjective approach. For the interpretative researcher, reality is something that is socially constructed (Henwood and Pidgeon 1992; Irvine 2006; Babbie 2011).

The interpretivist or anti-positivist researcher, according to Gill and Johnson (2010), deems that imposing an external frame of reference onto the area of study is inappropriate if the phenomena being explored have subjective capabilities, as one cannot make prior assumptions about the nature of the subjective world. The positivist paradigm is the polar opposite of the interpretivist, anti-positivist paradigm. A positivist researcher is concerned with only directly observable phenomena, rejecting anything considered to be intangible or subjective as meaningless (Gill and Johnson 2010).

An interpretivist approach is often categorised, according to Gill and Johnson, as postmodern: 'characterised by a profound scepticism regarding the idea that language can neutrally represent reality' (2010, p.202). Postmodernists recognise there is no absolute truth, that different people and different social groups can construct their identity, either as an individual or as a group, differently to other individuals and social

groups (Inayatullah 1998; Tompkins 1998; Humes and Bryce 2003; Gill and Johnson 2010). A postmodernist combines everything available to them in a single, continuous act of interpretation

The table below has helped me to identify where I am situated in my approach to understanding the world around me. I believe that reality is a human construct and as such the study of people's behaviour can help us understand how social reality is constructed. This places me firmly in the area of a subjective, anti-positivist paradigm.

Table 1. Approaches to Social Science Research

	Subjectivist Approaches to Social Science			Objectivist Approaches to Social Science		
Core Ontological Assumptions (Reality)	Reality as a projection of human imagination Nominalism	Reality as a human construction	Reality as a realm of symbolic discourse	Reality as a contextual field of information	Reality as a concrete process	Reality as a concrete structure Realism
Basic Epistemological Stance (Knowledge)	To obtain phenomenological insight, revelation Anti-positivism	To understand how social reality is created	To understand patterns of symbolic discourse	To map contexts	To study system, process, change	To construct a positivist science Positivism
Assumptions about Human Nature	Man as pure spirit, consciousness, being Voluntarism	Man as a social constructor; the symbol creator	Man as an actor the symbol user	Man as an information processor	Man as an adaptor	Man as a responder Determinism

Source: Adapted from Morgan and Smircich (1980)

Alongside the presence of the two major paradigms discussed above, another trend, developed since the 1960s, gave rise to the third paradigm of research: critical theory. A critical theorist approach usually adopts methods using a combination of observational and interviewing techniques that encourage conversation and reflection

to question the natural state and challenge the devices that construct and maintain order. A critical theorist attempts to demonstrate the practical, moral and political meanings relating to communicative behaviour. Furthermore, critical theory examines how a social structure may perhaps construct and strengthen distorted communicative actions which characterise its members' lives. '[C]ritical theory therefore aims to empower and emancipate people who are disadvantaged and disenfranchised in organizations and wider society' (Gill and Johnson 2010, p.208).

The above has led to another decision relevant to the intended research methodology. Having previously identified myself as an advocate of a subjective perspective, from the above it can be inferred that I will be using an anti-positivist, interpretivist paradigm. The reason for this is the intention to explore the subject of friendship from multiple perspectives, engaging with the emergent social process rather than a fixed view of social reality. As part of this approach, I have deployed a discursive analytical strategy to analyse what workplace friendships mean to the study participants.

Foucault (2009) explores discourses through the analysis of the lexical content and the meaning available of the speaking subject. He states: 'in analysing discourses themselves, one sees the loosening of the embrace, apparently so tight, of words and things, and the emergence of a group of rules proper to discursive practice' (2009, p.54). It is important, according to Foucault (1979), to analyse what has been done historically to understand what is happening now. These rules define the ordering of objects and the systematic construction of the meaning of the object and thus the meanings associated when communicating. Foucault identifies that discourses have a unique meaning; they are methods of applying meaning to objects, subjects and other announcements. This meaning then becomes a sequence of relationships to these objects, subjects and announcements, and the relationships then become part of the discursive formation of the discourses. Foucault (2009) proposed that these relationships could be used to analyse large bodies of knowledge, such as political economy and natural history. This process constitutes a formal way of understanding and thinking, created around the language applied to the subject or object relating to the discourse in question.

Discourses and paradigms help us to make sense of the images, actions and language of the social world. It is at this point that we must explore the role of discourses within the emergent social process. Gaining an insight into the discourses that surround gay men will help us to understand the meanings that are placed on them through the social process.

Discourses

Discourses are a formalised way of thinking about and understanding something. It is through the application of discourses that we communicate meanings, whether those meanings are correct or not. The meanings associated with a particular discourse derive from previous experiences, or are obtained through blocks of knowledge through our interaction in various cultural situations (Gill and Johnson 2010). An anti-positivist will look to deconstruct the discourses associated with the examples above and re-construct the assumptions and understandings associated with them to allow for a contradictory understanding of the knowledge to be applied and understood as 'norms' in relation to and by individuals and social groups (Davidson 1986; Grant et al. 1997).

To understand the discourses applied to a particular meaning, the information that constructed those meanings needs to be de-constructed. This research will draw on conceptual resources from queer theory (which will be discussed later in this chapter), using a Foucauldian conceptualisation of discourse. It is important for this research to understand and deconstruct the dominant discourses created by a heteronormative society and applied to gay men and their friendships. Locating oneself 'outside' the borders of the dominant heterosexual discourse is in itself an attempt to declare oneself as 'other' in relation to those who declare themselves inside the borders of heterosexual norms. The combination of the qualitative approach (discussed later in this chapter) and the use of an unhindered interview structure will help this research explore how the paradigms of the perceived construction of heterosexual friendship norms are embodied. Alongside this, heteronormative friendship paradigms will be explored to identify how friendship discourses that sustain heteronormativity can be challenged and subverted by non-traditional friendships.

This is where queer theory can help understand and problematize the social norms that reproduce heteronormativity. From a Foucauldian point of view, social norms and the boundaries and hierarchies they reproduce are a fictional 'production rather than a natural condition' (Jagose 1996, p.80). Foucault states that: 'It is as if a fundamental resistance blocked the development of a rationally formed discourse concerning human sex, its correlations, and its effects' (1998, p.54). Therefore, the construction of heteronormative sexual behaviour by the dominant social order produces a set of norms. If these norms go unchallenged, they hold a repressive power over those people, constraining the lives they are able to live inside and outside these norms (Butler 1990; Ready and Butler 2004). This set of 'norms' works to maintain the dominance of heterosexuality by preventing homosexuality from being taken for granted, going unmarked or seeming 'right' and 'natural' as heterosexuality can.

Queer Theory

Queer theory has its origins in feminism, poststructuralism and gay and lesbian studies (Jagose, 1996). In this study, queer theory is deployed to examine what is normative. Indeed, queer theory is a critique of what is perceived as normal and the regimes of normality (Edelman 2004; Halperin 1995; Warner 1993, 1999), and is heavily associated with LGBT theorists, theorising LGBT lives within and beyond normative regimes such as heteronormativity (Berlant and Warner 1995; Eves 2004; Giffney 2004; Green 2007; Nameste 1994; Seidman 1994; Valocchi 2005; Watson 2005). However, queer theory is far more than a theory created by LGBT people for LGBT people; rather, it is a mode of critique that problematizes what we understand as normal and the normalising processes by which normative standards are reproduced (Halperin, 1995).

Queer theory is a valuable conceptual resource in this study because it enables me to interrogate the social constructed nature of sexuality, as a contextually contingent and historically patterned category of knowledge (Foucault, 1979). Queer theory is used to challenge the supposed naturalness and coherence of heteronormative discourses: 'For queer theorists, heteronormativity means the set of norms that make heterosexuality seem natural or right and that organise homosexuality as its binary opposite' (Valocchi 2005, p.756). It deconstructs categories of sexual orientations,

alongside disrupting the normalising tendencies of the sexual order (Beemyn and Eliason 1996; Goldman 1996; Giffney 2004).

Queer theory explores these boundaries and norms in relation to sexual identities, communities and politics. How these boundaries are demarcated, how they can be contested, and how sense is made of the dialectical movement between inside and outside heterosexuality and homosexuality can be examined using queer theory. Sedgwick argues that:

Inarguably, there is a satisfaction in dwelling on the degree to which the power of our enemies over us is implicated, not in their command of knowledge, but precisely in their ignorance. The effect is a real one, but it carries dangers with it as well. The chief of these dangers is the scornful, fearful, or patheticizing reification of ignorance... (1990 p.7)

Sedgwick's use of the word 'enemies' is too harsh a term to describe the relationships between the gay men and straight in this research. However, as the study findings suggest, gay men often describe straight men as not understanding them, highlighting 'ignorance' of gay men and their lives. Queer theory explores how homosexual subjectivity is at once produced within and excluded from heteronormative culture, both inside and outside the borders of sexual norms created by heterosexual discourses (Namaste 1994, p.224). Queer theory recognises the impossibility of moving outside current conceptions of sexuality, focusing instead on how subjects can disrupt and resist the norms that govern how sexuality is currently organised, categorised and consolidated as a binary formation.

According to Namaste (1994), we cannot assert ourselves to be entirely outside heterosexuality, nor entirely inside, because each of the terms achieves its meaning in relation to the other. What we can do, queer theory suggests, is negotiate these limits and boundaries and consider how they are regulated, created and contested. By moving beyond these boundaries of 'inside' and 'outside' we can better understand how the cultural discourses of being inside or outside are valued in the workplace.

More generally, queer theory has helped to reconceptualise and understand sexual and gender identities as shifting and unstable, shaped by discursive structures rather than being properties of individuals (Butler, 1990, 2004). The logical link and correspondence between biological sex, gender and desire has been challenged by

theorists such as Butler (1990) and Seidman (1994), so that all gender is seen as necessarily performative, suggesting alternative ways of examining the particular ways in which gay men perform gender (Bettie 2003). Bettie refers to performance as part of a 'conscious manipulation of these norms and systems' (2003, p.192). The idea of performativity and performance is a multifaceted area:

Butler does claim that gender identity is a sequence of acts (an idea that has existential underpinnings), but she also argues that there is no pre-existing performer who does those acts, no doer behind the deed. Here she draws on a distinction between performance (which presupposes the existence of a subject) and *performativity* (which does not). (Salih 2002, p.45)

Eves (2004) suggests that gender is constructed and enacted through everyday social and cultural practices, through the negotiation of a mixture of shifting and sometimes contradictory cultural arrangements and gendered resources.

Despite queer theory's widely recognised association with the anti-normative, it is difficult to define precisely. This is because queer theory resists classification and categorisation (Halperin, 1995), leading some scholars to suggest that it is better to speak about queer theory not in terms of what it is, but what it can do (Rumens, 2017). Different researchers use queer theory for different reasons, but they all seem to tap into its anti-normative impulse, and this is part of its theoretical appeal for me as a researcher. Queer theory can be used to explore and understand a variety of subjects, performances and literature. Therefore, it has a multifaceted use. For me, queer theory is about taking what is considered to be normal within a society, whether that is a personal, public or workplace society, and deconstructing what is 'normal', by asking why it is normal, which group constructed these norms and how (Edwards 1998; Lorber 1996; Seidman 1994). As quoted in Rumens and Tyler (2016.): 'Hall (2002) suggests there is no singular queer theory, just a cacophony of competing and sometimes contradictory voices and perspectives that articulate queer'. Queer theory for me is not about trying to destroy heteronormative social structures: it is about challenging them to allow for a better understanding of what being gay is about within that structure, to create possibilities for new norms where homosexuality is not understood and experienced as 'abnormal' (Nameste 2000; Sullivan 2003).

Queer theory has developed into a commanding body of literature over the last three decades or so with works such as Sedgwick's (1990) *Epistemology of the Closet*, which explores homosexuality through the discussion of queer theory. The early shapers of queer theory such as Berlant and Warner (1995), Butler (1990), Sedgwick (1990) and Seidman (1994) sought to disrupt and explore the paradigms and discourses prevalent within heteronormativity, specifically relating to LGBT groups and individuals. Over the decades, scholars have introduced queer theory into disciplines outside the humanities and arts, such as sociology (Seidman 1994), law (Leckey 2011) and organisation studies (Parker 2002; Rumens 2012, 2016). Indeed, Green suggests that, 'queer theory has spread like wildfire, catching the attention of some of the most esteemed scholars throughout the humanities and social sciences' (2002, p.521). Queer theory allows me to explore workplace contexts as heteronormative and to examine the implications this has for gay men when forming friendships with straight men, using it to disrupt understanding of the hetero-norms that can dominate these spaces and shape these friendships.

For the analysis of my findings, it is important not to think about what queer theory is, but rather what queer theory does (Eves 2004; Green 2013; Watson 2005; Valocchi 2005). I treat queer theory as a verb, *to queer*. This research will engage in the practice of queering, whereby what is seen as the norm is subject to critique, allowing for an unpacking of the assumptions made by a heteronormative workplace about friendship and gay identity (Metcalf et al. 2008; Giffney 2004; Green 2013; Watson 2005; Rumens 2012, 2013).

Turning the queer lens on texts, subjectivities, social practices, public policies, and moral panics, queer theorists complete their critical task, exposing "queer" cracks in the heteronormative facade (i.e., "queering"), and "decentering" those regimes of "normality" that bear on the sexual and gender status quo. (Green, 2002, p.522)

I have chosen to deploy queering as a conceptual resource because it allows me to explore how, for example, the participants are reproducing the heterosexual-homosexual binary in their workplace friendships with heterosexual men. Unlike any other theory, queer theory has a crisp focus on heteronormativity (Berlant and Warner 1998). It is interested in how norms enable and shut down the opportunities for people to live their lives as they want through their self-identified sexuality and gender, and

how hetero-norms can constrain the lives of subjects (Butler 1990, 1997). The second focus is on how the binary of homosexuality and heterosexuality is constantly reproduced, often unconsciously and unintentionally, in how people understand heterosexuality and the kind of status they ascribe to it and to women and men (Rumens 2012; Sedgwick 1990). A third element of queer theory is about rupturing the sexual and gender binaries associated with heteronormativity (e.g. heterosexual/homosexual; masculine/feminine), in order to 'do' gender, sexuality and friendship differently, in non-normative ways. Thus we can examine how gay men might contest heteronormative norms by deploying a queer theory lens. Queer theory sheds light on how some people are complicit in reproducing heteronormative discursive constructions of friendship (Rumens, 2010, 2012).

This is another decision point for me as the researcher, as the identification and understanding of the discourses associated with gay men will be a key focal point of my analysis. This will be achieved through identifying the discourses associated with gay men in the workplace, which emerge from the semi-structured interviews (discussed later in this chapter) and recognizing what influence they have in shaping workplace friendships between gay and heterosexual men. Additionally, queer theory will be mobilised in this study as a resource to examine the sexual boundaries and meanings of gay friendship and to challenge the validity of heteronormative discourses. A queer theory approach, which has anti-positivist qualities, will help conceptualise the meanings and other significant findings from the fieldwork.

Methods of Collecting Data

There are three approaches that need to be considered when collecting data for research: qualitative, quantitative, or a mixture (mixed methods). A simplistic definition of a qualitative approach to research is that it uses data that is not numerical, often from case studies, interviews and/or focus groups, where the information has to be conceptualised, and interpretations made of the meanings and cultural significance of the behaviour observed; whereas a quantitative approach uses numerical data and clear outcome variables (Punch 2003; Ghauri and Gronhaug 2010; Babbie 2011). Way (1997) believes that by using a qualitative methodology and listening to what men have to say (which is often considered to be a feminist approach), a more accurate

understanding of men's lives and friendships can be achieved. Using qualitative methodology is directly opposed to the traditional methods previously been adopted, using questionnaires and quantitative data to identify the behaviours associated with friendship. Way believes that this change in approach to research, and 'using unstructured interviews rather than a "blank slate" of a quantitative questionnaires, allows for the interviewer and interviewee to follow new and unexpected pathways' in the research on friendships (Way 1997, p.713). Bryman (2000) suggests that the distinction between qualitative and quantitative research is really a technical matter whereby the choice is to do with their suitability in answering particular research questions. Using a qualitative research methodology depends on the conviction of the researcher, the nature of the problem to be investigated and the desire to obtain a new perspective on the research area that can be difficult to convey using quantitative methods. The method of data collection is accumulated through fieldwork using in-depth open-ended interviews and direct observation (Irvine 2006; Blumberg 2011).

With this in mind, it would be difficult to find the required depth of meaning expressed by the interviewees associated with gay friendship dyads if the data collection did not involve fieldwork, observations and interviews. Obtaining data through questionnaires, using a quantitative approach, would prevent interpretation and inclusion of the social context of the data, as mentioned earlier, through an interpretative paradigm (Henwood and Pidgeon 1992; Walker 1994; Way 1997; Whittemore 2001; Davies and Dodd 2002; Irvine 2006).

As explained earlier, the interpretive paradigm approach allows for meaning and understanding to be applied to the qualitative findings and for theory to be generated from this meaning and understanding. According to Henwood and Pidgeon (1992, p.101), 'qualitative researchers make explicit what tends to be only implicit in much scientific practice'. As Irvine (2006) points out, a qualitative approach is about more than numerical analysis: it is about the people, their surroundings and their experiences. The idea of making explicit the meanings associated with friendship is what appeals to this researcher. The methodology of scientific research has mostly focused on techniques for justification as a means to verify or criticise its findings and as a result neglected those means of discovery (Henwood and Pidgeon 1992, p.101).

A qualitative approach enables researchers to get close to the participants, and to interpret and explore their subjective logic and meanings, and their understanding of their reality. It is important for this contact to be undertaken with the minimum of inconvenience to both the interviewer and the interviewee, with the maximum benefit in providing rich data, as interviews offer a unique opportunity to explore the points of view of others (Miller and Glassner 1997; Denzin and Lincoln 2003; Irvine 2006).

After considering the different options available, and drawing on previous research techniques, I decided to adopt a qualitative approach to the primary data collection for this research. Using a qualitative method will allow me to gain a clear in-depth understanding of the participants' feelings, and the meaning and reasoning behind why gay men have constructed friendships with straight men in the workplace. Qualitative research acknowledges the contextual nature of inquiry as the research looks for depth over breadth, in an attempt to understand the subtle nuances of life experiences, as opposed to collective evidence (Glesne and Peshkin 1992; Whittemore 2001). This has been described as 'watching people in their own territory interacting with them in their own language, on their own terms' (Kirk and Miller 1986, p.9). The most suitable approach is to use open-ended interviews, according to Pringle (2008), who adopted a subjective approach to exploring information from the perspective that gender identity is socially constructed. Sánchez et al. (2009) used open-ended questions effectively when they undertook an exploratory study to analyse what gay men associate with masculinity and femininity, how they feel masculine ideals affect their self-image, and how masculine ideals affect same-sex relationships.

It is important to reiterate here that the interview questions did not have a clear, highly-structured, clearly-planned framework. The collection of the data favours a semi-structured approach to interviewing, whereby the participants play an important role in the co-construction of data/knowledge, so that information will emerge and unfold as the interviews progress. If one were to adopt an unambiguous structure and a rigid set of interview questions, the interviewer will be hindered from exploring in depth anything that is of relevance to that interviewee that may not have been considered important when writing the questions (Punch 2003; Ghauri and Gronhaug 2010; Blumberg 2011; Babbie 2013). This researcher is concerned that information that has not been previously 'considered' will be missed if predetermined research questions are used.

Additionally, constructing specific questions to be asked in interviews can be difficult for the researcher. For instance, the meanings associated with the participants' definition of friendship may differ. I did not start the interviews or analysis of the data with a fixed definition of friendship. The intention is to see how individuals define their own friendships and the meanings associated with them. The language used by the interviewer may differ from the meanings appropriated to the language by the interviewee, resulting in a lack of understanding and clarity in the answers provided. It is important for this research for the candidates to feel free to tell their story and define their friendships without the impediment of having to answer and think about specific questions or definitions imposed by the interviewer. This approach should make interviewing 'an easy task' as the candidates will be asked to tell the interviewer their experiences in relation to their friendships (Noy 2008, p.328).

After taking the above into consideration, another decision was reached: closed questions or questionnaires would not be used as a method of data collection. This research depends on avoiding the limitations that this type of data collection can create. Henwood and Pidgeon (1992) suggest that survey studies in the general population that rely on closed questions are inherently limited. They may yield little understanding of the phenomenon under study, which is particularly problematic when exploring new fields or phenomena, as, 'qualitative researchers make explicit what tends to be only implicit in much scientific practice' (Henwood and Pidgeon 1992, p.101). To prevent this, open-ended questions were used when undertaking the fieldwork. When interviewees went off at a tangent unrelated to the research area, I guided the interviewee back towards the area of discussion.

It is important that the fieldwork, as an empirical approach, allows the researcher to be open to the unexpected. This approach should allow the candidates to tell their stories, providing a narrative including examples of friendship and the meanings they place on their friendship to the interviewer. Blumberg (2011) suggests that the interviewer must be a good listener, but at the same time able to probe the candidate for more depth in their answers and subtly direct the flow of the conversation to remain within the topic area.

Several researchers have chosen similar methods to that proposed here to obtain their data. To give credibility to the approach taken in this research, further analysis of the literature reviewed in Chapter One illustrates the methods and approaches used by those researchers in the area of friendship, both in and out of the workplace. Authors such as Bell (1981), Walker (1994), Bird (1996), Hartup (1996), Hartup and Stevens (1999) and Rumens (2010) applied qualitative approaches to primary data-collection.

Bird's use of personal interviews and observations of the interviewees when researching homo-sociality allowed the meanings of the topic area to be explored. These meanings were then classified, demonstrating how they are sustained and suppressed in homo-social interactions. Similarly to Way (1997) and Rumens (2010), in-depth interviews, using a semi-structured open question technique, were used to allow candidates to elaborate on specific areas. This method of data collection was chosen in order to provide the richness and complexity of the participants' experiences 'that are often missing in quantitative accounts' (Way 1997, p.704). Walker (1994) suggests that when undertaking interviews, it is important to understand that asking general questions, which allow the candidates to interpret their own meanings, can lead to knowledge of those meanings. However, when asking specific questions, the depth of knowledge does not always emerge because of the individuals' differing notions or understanding of the social world.

However, while it is clear that using a qualitative method of obtaining data can provide a greater depth of meaning from the answers provided, this is not the only method that has been used to explore the topic of friendship. Other researchers have used surveys or questionnaires (such as Hays 1985; Deci et al. 2006; Galupo 2007; Migliaccio 2009) as a means of obtaining quantitative data for their research. Galupo's (2007) research identified patterns of friendship across different sexual orientations. Questionnaires asked specific questions about location, number of friends, number of cross-sex friends and number of same-sex friends. The questionnaires used by these researchers asked the candidates to score their responses, rate a number of variables, or to provide yes/no answers. These researchers were not looking for depth of meaning from an individual interviewee's perspective: they are looking at patterns and variables within their quantitative data on behaviour or demographics.

Additionally, whichever method of data collection is chosen, a sample needs to be located. The qualitative researchers discussed above used a referral method (snowball) to obtain their candidates. After each of the interviews, the candidates were asked to refer people who would be happy to participate in the research project (discussed in more depth later in this chapter). This method saves the researcher time trying to find suitable people to participate in the research, and it is notoriously difficult to find people who are willing to participate in lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered communities. The researchers who used quantitative methods of collecting data sent out questionnaires either randomly or to specific groups of people.

The above information demonstrates that to explore in-depth the meanings associated with friendships between gay men and straight men in the workplace, the most appropriate method for obtaining the data required will be a qualitative method using semi-structured interviews. Hence, this leads to the more practical aspects of this research, exploring the methods and techniques adopted when collecting the primary data. As mentioned, qualitative research is contextual and subjective, as opposed to generalizable and objective, because it is based on a different ontology and epistemology, making it difficult to compare the validity and rigour of quantitative research with that of qualitative research.

Sampling Strategy

Snowball sampling is an ideal method to access hard-to-reach populations. According to Faugier and Sargeant (1997), social barriers created by ignorance combined with prejudice and discrimination have meant that many of these populations remain marginalised. As this research is looking at gay men's friendships in the workplace, I am aware that potential participants may well be difficult to identify, as they may be hidden in their workplaces. Hence, the potential participants who will be asked for interview may not wish to be identified openly as being gay in the workplace. Snowball sampling should help eliminate this problem. Each candidate was asked for contact details of two other people he thinks would be ideal participants in this research. The referrer was asked to inform these two people that the researcher will be making contact with them, initially through email (far less personal than a face-to-face) or telephone conversation, making it straightforward for people to opt out if they wish.

Snowball sampling is now one of the most prevalent methods of qualitative research in social sciences, providing invaluable knowledge (Noy 2008). Snowball sampling allows access to hidden populations where readily available lists or established samples are unavailable (Faugier and Sargeant 1997). This method of sampling should provide rich data from candidates who are willing to discuss their friendships openly, safe in the knowledge that their sexual identity will remain concealed from all but the researcher. Snowball sampling is a tried and tested method for identifying hidden segments of the population (Bowring and Brewis 2009; Cronin and King 2010; Rumens 2005, 2010; Smith 2002). These studies used snowball sampling and specifically looked at the LGBT community, exploring friendship, workplace or identity. For example, Bowring and Brewis (2009) used this method to explore how lesbian and gay men manage their identity in the workplace. They started with two gay men known to one of them and their sample grew from there. A similar approach was taken by Cronin and King (2010) when researching diversity and intersectionality amongst older gay men; they also advertised on their social media sites for additional interviewees. All these studies successfully obtained relevant data using this method to add to the current understanding of gay people.

Limitations of using non-probability sampling

When undertaking qualitative research, it is important to understand the potential limitations associated with the approach chosen. As discussed earlier, the snowball method is a qualitative, non-probability sampling method. Therefore, there will be groups of gay men who will not be covered in my sample and that have no chance of being selected for interview, such as those excluded for geographical reasons, specific age range or those working in particular workplace contexts. The nature and convenience of the research approach makes it extremely difficult to collect data covering all workplace contexts. Consequently, the data found may not be relevant to all gay men in all work contexts. Stehman and Czaplewski identify that: 'it is virtually impossible to assert with any confidence that these convenient sources of data have the same attributes as the entire region' (1998, p.336). When using a non-probability sampling method the limitations of that method need to be considered to help understand the validity of the findings. Conversely, there are issues of validity with all approaches to research, but that does not mean that the approach I have taken is

invalid or lacks credibility. According to Tansey (2007, p.766), non-probability sampling is a highly relevant method, allowing for corroboration of what has been identified from other sources, establishing ideas about what a set of people think. However, it is important to be aware that with non-probability sampling the findings are a snapshot of the data received from the people interviewed and are not representative of the whole group. Therefore, while they can indicate to the researcher the possibility of the feelings of the whole group, the findings should not be generalised to the thoughts, acts or behaviour of the whole group (Faugier and Sergeant 1997; Noy 2008; Stehman and Czaplewski 1998; Tansey 2007).

Eligibility for the study

All participants had to be 18 or over, open about being gay and in fulltime employment for an employer (rather than self-employed). Geographical location was not part of the criteria, as I was not looking at a specific location other than the United Kingdom. I was also not interested in a specific workplace as I wanted a wider, more holistic view of workplace friendships.

However, there has to be a starting point from which the snowball can grow, which came from my own vast network of gay associates and friends. Three people were chosen to start the snowball rolling, each of whom I knew had a large network of friends; had been working for more than six months in their current job; had expressed interest in my research; and worked in various jobs. These people were contacted, and an outline of the research provided to them. All three agreed to be interviewed and to recommend for further participants by passing my contact details onto people they thought would be interested. Once they had contacted me via email, I then contacted them to check on their eligibility and book an interview. I interviewed twenty gay men in different geographical locations and each interview took 45-60 minutes. The following is a list of prompt questions I used during the interviews:

- Did you come out to the friend prior to or after the friendship formed?
- How do you believe you are viewed by your straight friend? Are you just 'one of the lads', or something different?
- How important is the support you receive from your straight friend?

- How was your friendship formed? Did you look for someone who had similar interests to your own, or did the friendship just happen?
- Who is the nurturer of the friendship? Or is it an equal balance?
- Would you consider your friendship to be intimate, in a non-sexual way?
- Would you consider your friendship to be different to that of a heterosexual friendship or a friendship between two gay men?
- Would you say the friendship has commonalities or not?
- Do you feel the friendship is a mutually respectful one?
- What are the benefits to you as a gay man having a straight friend and vice versa?
- Are there any topics you would not discuss with your straight friend that you would discuss outside of the work environment with gay friends or vice versa?
- How far do you trust your friend?
- Do you feel you are being 'the real you' or true to yourself in the way you behave and interact with your straight friend?
- How would you characterise your friendship?
- Would you consider your friendship to be one-sided, equally balanced or as a give and take, meaning sometimes you are taking more from them and at others they are taking more from you?
- If one of you left the company, would you still maintain the friendship at the same level or do you think it would change? If so, why would it change?
- What sort of things do you share with your friend? Laughter, gossip, problems, fears?
- Do you feel that having this friendship makes your work life more tolerable and helps your levels of morale and productivity? Would you be less productive if you had no workplace friends?
- If you had to make a decision, would you choose straight men or straight women as friends in the workplace?
- Would you consider yourself 'one of the girls', 'one of the lads', or something different?

The details of the interviewees can be seen in Table 2 in the Appendix. The participants' names have been changed.

Ethical Issues in Social Research

Ethics is a discipline that recognises the engagement of morality and 'values for the regulation of human behaviour'. Adopting an ethical approach to research also lends credibility and legitimacy to a research project (Homan 1991, p.1).

It is clear from the literature on ethical practice that, when dealing with sensitive topics where human participants are involved, the researcher should have an understanding of the sensitivity of the ethical considerations and be socially responsible (Wray-Bliss 2003; Wilson 2010; Babbie 2012). The researcher should be fully aware of and sensitive to ethical issues beyond their own personal self-interest and needs. The researcher has a moral responsibility to make sure the rights of the participants are not jeopardised. Any problems or harm that could come to the participants from the researcher's enquiries must be identified and minimised prior to the start of the research, and providing a list of the formal methods and approaches to satisfy the requirements of the ethics committee reviewing the application is not enough to ensure the well-being of all involved (Wray-Bliss 2003). This research dealt directly with human participants. The nature of the snowball approach to obtain candidates for interview in itself helps provide future candidates with understanding and reassurance from the referrer, provided the researcher can ensure adequate protection 'regarding the information they give about themselves' (Faugier and Sargeant 1997, p.795). If the referrer has a bad experience with the researcher, he is far less likely to recommend future interview candidates. Additionally, implicitly, referrals also inform the researcher whether his or her approach is ethically responsible, as the referrer is obviously happy with the way he has been treated if he makes a referral.

When thinking beyond this process, it is imperative for researchers to remember their position as researchers and how they may be perceived by others. Wray-Bliss (2003) discusses the importance of understanding the power relationship and the 'embodiment' of power the researcher could be seen to exert over candidates. If the researcher is seen as an authority figure, then implicitly he or she is holding a form of power. Foucault suggests that individuals 'are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power' (1979, p.83). By being aware of the perceived power a researcher may hold, measures can be taken, through reflection on the

researcher's intended approach to prevent candidates being unethically coerced or manipulated to take part in the research, because they are perceived as subordinate by the researcher. As a researcher, avoiding coercion and manipulation is extremely important, not only from the standpoint of maintaining high levels of ethical practice and sensitivity, but also to maintain high levels of validity of information. If study participants feel obliged, manipulated or coerced, they may feel unhappy with providing information, or obliged to say what they think the researcher wants to hear. Understanding the steps that need to be applied to maintain a high level of ethical sensitivity is important in preventing this and ensuring validity of information (Homan 1991; Irvine 2006). I was careful not to give my opinion or to inform the candidates about my own experiences in my workplace. Additionally, I allowed the participants to tell their own story in as much depth as they wished, prompting them where needed through open questions. I found that a couple of interviewees were reluctant to provide too much detail or to break down the barriers they had erected to protect themselves in their workplace. When this happened, I did not push these participants, to prevent them feeling manipulated into giving answers they thought I was looking for.

Social research, depending on the nature of the enquiry, can lead to participants questioning their behaviour, during or after the interview. For example, if the candidates are asked to reveal (as part of research into deviant behaviour, for example) demeaning personal characteristics or other unpleasant issues or circumstances, this could lead to psychological problems for the candidate (Babbie 2013). Most importantly, this research is not asking people to reveal the types of behaviour that could lead to psychological issues, as it is primarily concerned with the candidates' understandings of and the meanings associated with workplace friendships. However, I will keep in mind that the candidates could reveal something that could be problematic for them. If this is the case the candidates will already have been informed on where they can go to get help, or discuss their concerns further.

It was important, at the outset, to ensure that the participants were fully aware why they were being asked to interview. Prior to the interview, each participant was provided with a written overview of the topic area, details of the research and its purpose. Furthermore, the candidates were informed how the data will be stored, and most importantly how the data will be kept confidential.

With the above information, the candidates should understand the process they are engaging with and be reassured that their information will not be misused or used for any purposes other than that stated. Candidates can thus make informed decisions as to whether they are happy to participate. After they read and had the information explained to them, they agreed to take part by signing an informed consent form, stating that they are aware of any risks but chose to take part. It is important to make sure that the candidates understand that their participation is completely voluntary (Homan 1991). Additionally, the candidates were informed that at any time they can withdraw from the research without any repercussions and that all their information will be destroyed and not used in the study. Without these precautions, candidates would not have suitable knowledge of their role in the research to consent (Homan 1991).

Bell and Bryman recognise the importance of providing suitable information to candidates as 'the protection of human subjects through informed consent remains a fundamental principle in most ethics codes in the social [sciences]' (2007, p.68). Nevertheless, informed consent can sometimes be problematic; as Bell and Bryman point out, it is not always practical or possible to inform participants fully of the precise nature of the study. For example, when there are experiments involved, if deception is used as a method to investigate something covertly, the truth or real purpose of the research may be concealed from the participants. However, this research does not involve any experiments or a need to deceive the participants. Therefore, informed consent is appropriate to protect for both researcher and candidates. Consequently the participants will sign consent forms and informed that the consent forms will be securely stored in a safe at the researcher's home, which will be passcode protected.

Interviews took place at a time and location convenient for the participants. However, the personal well-being and safety of the interviewer also needed to be addressed when interviews took place outside of working hours in the candidates' homes. All interviews took place in a mutually-agreed safe location, with full details of the location and time given to a third (safe) person. Additionally the third (safe) person was contacted at the commencement of the interview, an estimated timeframe for the interview was given and a telephone call made once the interview had finished.

The information above demonstrates the importance of protecting the subjects involved and the ethical aspects that need to be considered when undertaking research. Moreover, it is imperative that candidates are protected and not harmed, or left questioning their own behaviour or beliefs. With this knowledge, research can be undertaken as safely as possible for both the candidates and the researcher.

Validity

When adopting a qualitative method of data collection and using subjective and inductive approaches, validity and academic rigour must be considered. However, this research is not aiming for objectivity and neutrality: rather, it seeks to explore the findings from interviewees, which will consist of their opinions, experiences and feelings. I will be adopting the tried and tested snowball sampling method. Whittemore suggests that '[q]uality in research is dependent on honest and forthright investigations. Searching for alternative explanations and a self-critical attitude is imperative' (2001, p.534). A self-critical attitude can be achieved through a reflexive approach by the researcher towards his or her own role in the process.

Reflexive Researcher

The reflexive practitioner is aware that he or she is not 'outside' the research process, but an integral part of it. I have already identified that this is the case earlier in the chapter when discussing the subjective inductive nature of this research. Reflexivity is 'the monitoring by the researcher of his/her behavioural impact upon the social setting under investigation created by the deployment of particular protocol and associated field roles so as to eradicate methodological lapses' (Johnson and Duberley 2003, p.1285). In other words, constant vigilance must be maintained by the researcher to make sure the approach for each interview is consistent. However, this is difficult to achieve when different candidates may have differing understandings of the language used and terminologies applied. It is the researcher's responsibility to understand and be aware of this, and to use a reflexive process to provide clarity. 'Truth or reality becomes a socio-linguistic artefact where justification lies in the discursive hegemony

culturally-specific to a “form” of life’ (Johnson and Duberley 2003, p.1286). As part of this process the researcher’s own philosophical beliefs must be considered. ‘[B]efore anything is observed in an organisation, the researcher has already formed opinions about what constitutes reality, what is worth study and what is an appropriate means of conducting that study’ (Irvine 2006, p.125). Therefore, it will be important to maintain the anti-positivist approach identified earlier in the chapter consistently, which understands that social systems are socially constructed and can be altered by the individuals positioned within a specific social context and as a result the researcher becomes an integral part of the research (Darlington and Scott 2002; Ryan et al. 2002):

Our behaviour will always affect participants’ responses, thereby influencing the direction of findings. Meanings are seen to be negotiated between the researcher and researched within a particular social context so that another researcher in a different relationship will unfold a different story. (Finlay 2002, p.531).

Likewise, it is important to recognise that, as a qualitative researcher, one will inevitably shape and represent the subject under examination, as the researcher and researched are characterised as interdependent in the social process in qualitative research. As an out gay man, I believe this influenced the research process, as the participants felt more comfortable disclosing their experiences. I consider that being openly gay made it easier for me to build relationships and trust with the participants.

Through the adoption of a reflexive approach, changes that emerge around areas that had not previously been considered can then become an important part of the ongoing research design. This does not mean that reflexivity is a method for changing the research plan because of poor test results or vague findings; on the contrary, it provides an opportunity for me to examine my ideas, allowing for open discussion and comparisons to be made of the research experience (Davies and Dodd 2002, p.286). Making these comparisons allows the researcher to maintain accuracy of data collection and academic rigour throughout. Rigour is defined by Davies and Dodd as ‘strict enforcement of the rules’ (2002, p.280) and that rigour is also about the systemised, ordered and visible approach to research. ‘There are no methodological criteria capable of guaranteeing the absolute accuracy of research. However, a number of good practices have been suggested by qualitative researchers and their peers’ (Henwood and Pidgeon 1992, p.105). The method used to obtain the candidates as the sample for the interviews also needs to be appropriate for the

research. Using a suitable and justified sample can help to maintain rigour and validity in the research. In the case of this research, access to participants will be achieved through a snowball sampling technique.

Recording and Transcription

It was vital to make a digital recording of the interviews, to allow the interview to be transcribed at a later date. The digital recording was transcribed verbatim in Microsoft Word after each interview. Transcribing the interview prior to undertaking the next allowed the researcher to identify any interesting or important issues arising from the interviews that may need to be incorporated into the research design.

The outcomes and findings from this data have been explored and incorporated into the final write up of the thesis.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data was analysed using Attride-Stirling's (2001) method of thematic coding to identify patterns that emerge from the qualitative interview data. The Attride-Stirling method is as follows: once the interviews have been completed, basic themes were identified by going through the transcripts and theming together common textual data identifying simple characteristics of the data. This was followed by organising themes, by clustering the basic data into groups of similar issues. This is the point at which the principal assumptions are made, allowing for a dichotomy of those ideas to take place. The third stage is identifying the global themes, which allows for the grouping of sets of organising themes to be assembled together to put forward an argument from the findings, allowing for the text as a whole to be contextualised and interpreted. I used NVIVO to assist me in identifying all the stages of Attride-Stirling's method. Once this was complete, I then went back through these themes to categorise them into three areas, which have formed my findings chapters.

When I analysed the data, identifying themes, I identified discourses that emerged from the data analysis process on sexuality, professionalism gender, friendship and heteronormativity. Initially I explored all the transcripts and placed information into

categories on NVIVO at a micro level, as suggested by Weatherall (2000). I then re-examined those categories and recoded the information at a more macro level whereby I identified the specific discourses identified above, creating a semiotic order to the categories (Fairclough 2001; Potter 2003; Weatherall 2000). In particular, I was interested in how these discourses are used and drawn upon by study participants to make sense of their friends as heterosexual men and women during the friendship development process. In other words, I was interested in and sensitive to how discourses on heteronormativity can, for example, open and foreclose opportunities for gay men to form friendships with straight men and women.

Figure 1



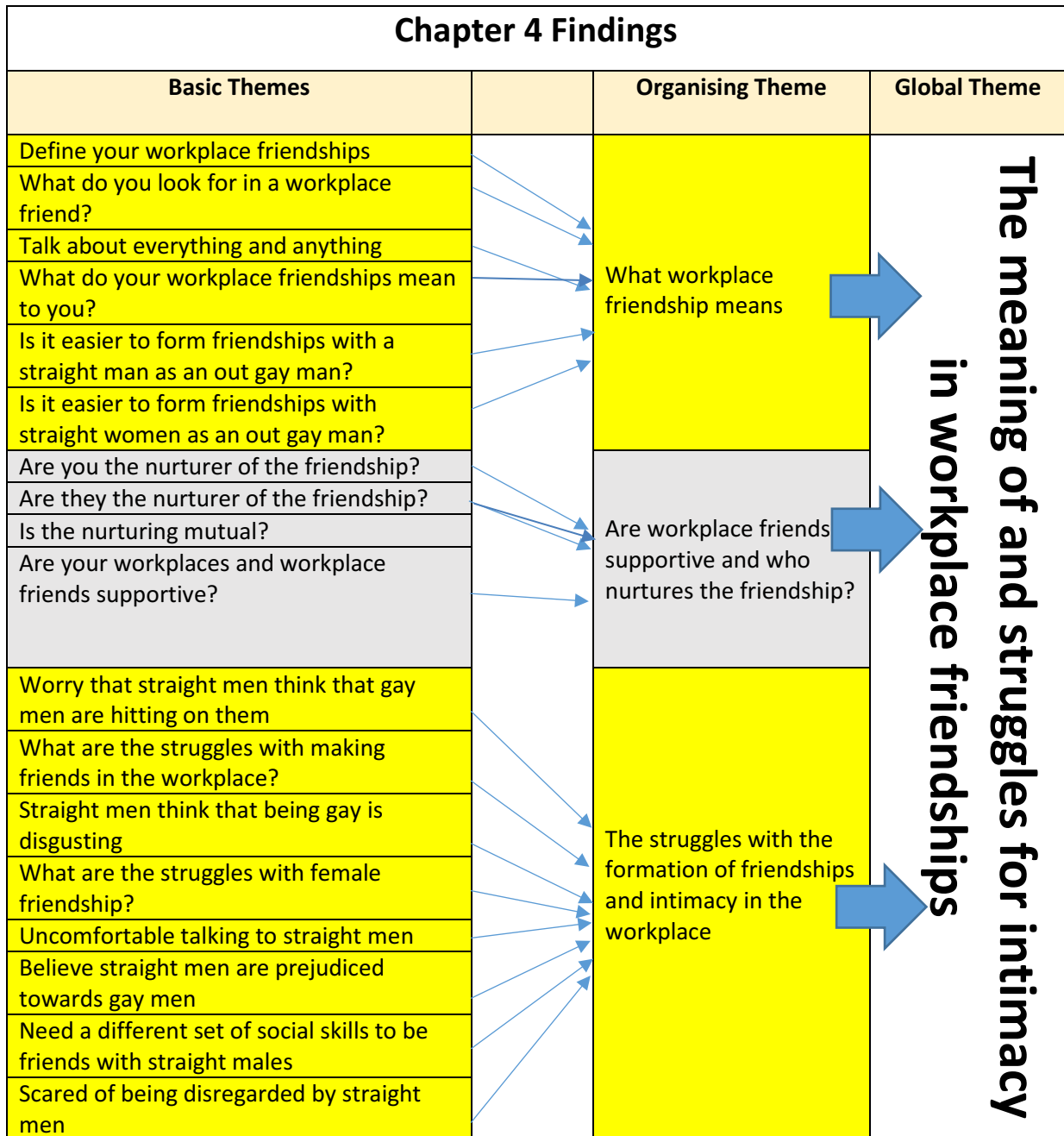
(Attride-Stirling 2001)

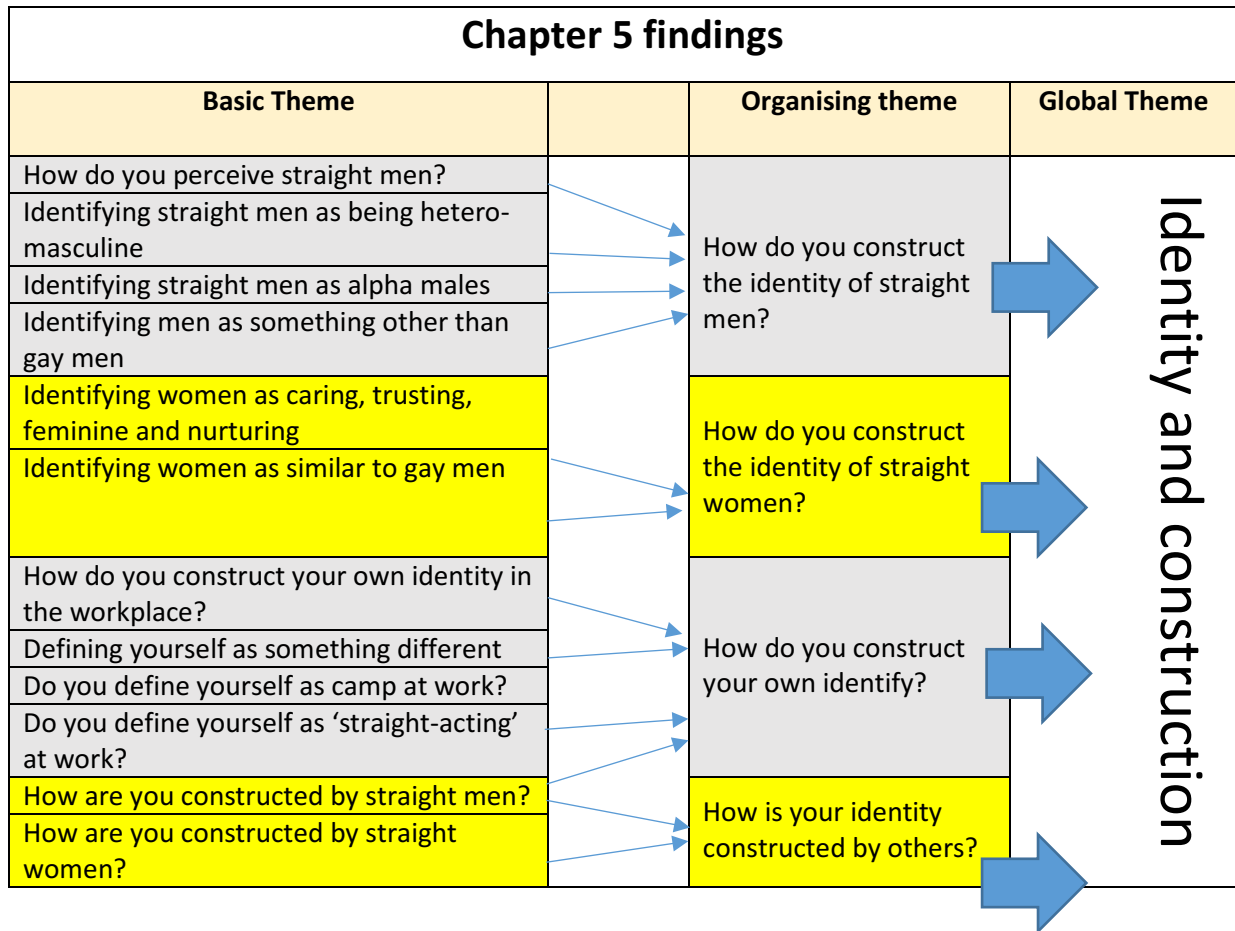
Table 3 demonstrates the basic themes identified, followed by how these were grouped into organising themes and then into global themes, which have formed the basis for the findings chapters. Findings chapter 1 covers the following organising themes: heteronormativity in the workplace; the workplace context and barriers to friendship; preference for straight male or female friends; and being out at work. This all comes under the global theme 'workplace context and friendship'. Findings chapter 2 covers the following organising themes: what workplace friendships mean; the supportiveness and nurturing of workplace friendships; and the struggles with the formation of friendships and intimacy in the workplace. This all comes under the global theme of 'the meaning and struggles of intimacy in workplace friendships'. Findings chapter 3 covers identity and construction of both themselves and the straight men and women in the workplace, under the global theme 'identity and construction'.

Table 3: Thematic Analysis

Chapter 3 Findings			
Basic Themes		Organising themes	Global themes
Do you believe straight men see you as less than male/masculine?		Heteronormativity in the workplace and fears of being gay in the workplace	
Can't relate to sports, no common interests with straight men			
Straight men don't make an effort to be friends with gay men			
Are straight colleagues accepting of gay men?			
Experience of homophobia in the workplace			
Is it important to be out in the workplace?		Workplace contexts and barriers to forming workplace friendships	
What is the context of the workplace?			
Do you have friends in the workplace?			
Is an understanding of diversity in the workplace important?			
What are the barriers to making friends in the workplace?			
Straight men talk about sex all the time			
What do you bring to your workplace?			
How were your workplace friendships formed?		The importance of workplace friendships and having something in common with workplace friends	
How important are workplace friends?			
What do you look for in workplace friends?			
Are you friends outside of work?			
Do workplace friends make you more productive?			
Are you friends outside of work?			
Common traits with straight women			
How do you choose your friendships?		Do you prefer straight males, females or both as workplace friends?	
What's important to you?			
More straight female friends			
More straight male friends		Being out at work and the method of coming out at work	
A mixture of straight female and male friends			
Are you out at work?			
How did you come out at work?			
Allowed people to guess			
People were told by other people			
Left clues for people			
Told everyone			

Workplace context and friendship





Selecting quotations

It is important to state that the quotations I have selected to support my findings are in no way exhaustive. The selection process was to demonstrate the diversity apparent in the data. I have selected quotations that illustrate extreme situations that typically represent the sentiments and view expressed by the interviewees. The quotations represent my interpretation of the data. Additionally, I have tried to show where there are surprises in the data, while at the same time acknowledging my subjectivity in the process of data collection and analysis. This is a partial, not definitive process, as I am sure that other researchers exploring my data would identify different themes and areas to those I have found.

Chapter Three (Findings) Friendship and workplace context

Introduction

This chapter examines the work contexts in which gay men develop and sustain workplace friendships, drawing on the interview data to demonstrate how these work contexts affect the forms those friendships take, and the various meanings attributed to them. As discussed in the literature review, this chapter proceeds on the understanding that organisation, work and friendship are mutually constitutive, which is to say that work contexts shape friendships and vice versa. The empirical data reveals how the workplace is not a mere container for gay men's friendships, but instead an important context that influences how gay men construct friendships with both men and women. As this chapter demonstrates, the gendered and sexual dynamics of workplaces influence the friendship development opportunities available to gay men to befriend both men and women. For example, one argument developed in this chapter is that heteronormativity can block the development of gay men's friendships at work, in particular with straight men. However, at the same time, the lived relational experiences of heteronormative work contexts can also incite gay men to form friendships that provide them with emotional support and protection from the inimical effects of heteronormativity. Accordingly, this chapter addresses the different ways interviewees negotiate such barriers, how they disclose their sexuality to colleagues, and how this is linked to the importance of developing friendships at work. The empirical data shows that while gay men experience the benefits of workplace friendships in ways similar to heterosexuals, documented in more general studies of workplace friendships (Sias and Cahill 1998), there are meanings attributed to the role of workplace friendships by the interviewees particular to gay men.

This chapter seeks to contribute to extant studies on gay men's friendships in the workplace (Rumens 2010, 2011; 2013; 2017), providing new empirical insights into how gay men understand and respond to contextual factors within their work

environments as barriers to, and opportunities for, developing friendships that help them thrive in the workplace (Fritz, 2014). This chapter begins by discussing the impact of heteronormativity on workplace friendship development and how this influences the options available to gay men. The next section examines how the gendered and sexual dynamics of specific work contexts shape the opportunities for gay men to befriend heterosexuals. The final empirical section focuses on the meanings attributed to workplace friendships by the interviewees, in particular the value accorded to the role and place of friendship at work that contributes to whether the interviewees flourish in the workplace. The chapter concludes by analysing the main findings in regard to the wider literature on workplace friendship development, as discussed in earlier in the literature review.

Workplace friendships in context: the impact of heteronormativity on friendship development

As discussed in the literature review, work contexts shape and are shaped by the discourses that circulate within and around organisations (Rumens 2010, 2012; Sias and Cahill 2008). Sias also draws on a social constructionist approach, but does not take into account the heteronormative account explored in this study. What this study does is add to the current understanding of the implications of heteronormativity and the impact this can have on friendship development for gay men in the workplace. I believe it is important to understand the importance of friendships and the impact they have for the individuals involved. The study findings illustrate that discourses on heteronormativity can open and close friendship development opportunities for gay men, typically exerting a negative effect on the capacity of gay men to befriend straight men. Just as straight and gay men appear to struggle to strike up close friendships outside work, not least due to heteronormative constructions of male intimacy as a proxy for homosexuality (Nardi 1992; Fee 2000), study participants felt that their straight male colleagues put up barriers to protect themselves from intimate friendships. As George pointed out: “[straight men] have this guard put on when they meet a gay man.” It is this guard that gay men appeared to be cautious and fearful of broaching, in case their offer of friendship is rejected. George works for an airline as an occupation team leader, a female-dominated environment with a few straight men.

He believes that the straight men at his workplace are not interested in being friends with him due to the barriers they erect. The airline industry is stereotyped as a gay-friendly workplace and thus one might expect organisational masculinities to be more inclusive, although localised accounts of organisational masculinities in the airline industry are far more contingent (Ashcraft 2007; Tiemeyer 2013). Research bears out this barrier to gay-straight male friendships (Price 1999), and some interviewees seemed to accept that straight men were inherently and inevitably cautious about befriending gay men. One assumption that emerged from the interview data was that hetero-masculinity performed by straight men was always structured by a concern to meet its ideal characteristics: confidence, controlling emotions, maintaining rationality and distance from femininity (Kerfoot and Knights 1993; Seidman 1992; Kimmel 1994). As Knights and Kerfoot note, 'these binary oppositions have traditionally been inescapably hierarchical — elevating, for example, men over women, masculinity over femininity, the heterosexual over homosexual' (2004, p.442). Interviewees such as George tended to draw on heteronormative gender and sexual discourses that reproduced binary oppositions: hetero/homo, male/female and masculine/feminine.

The discourses around typical masculine behaviour in the workplace appeared to shape interviewees' assumptions about masculine (male) friendships being different from feminine (female) friendships (Allan 1989; Way 1997; Nardi 2000). George and Gary commented that friendship is normally conceptualised and judged through the dominant (heterosexual) gendered dimensions of friendship (Bird 1996; Fee 2000; Pahl 2000) and not through a homosexual understanding of friendship in their workplaces. Introducing a new dimension of a gay male friend would problematize this tradition for both members of the proposed dyadic friendship between a gay man and a straight man. I note that gay men frequently believe that they are perceived as feminine by straight men, but almost always perceived by straight men as non-masculine in the same way as straight men are perceived themselves as masculine. George believes that in his workplace, "the straight guys have preconceived perceptions of what a gay man is. Yeah some people didn't realise what I was because I am straight-acting and I didn't wear pink and throw glitter." In other words, George feels that as he behaves in a heteronormative straight manner, he is perceived as masculine. In contrast, Gary notes how he is treated as feminine at work:

it's like this gay best friend kind of bracket that you fall into, straight men just love it because you can basically... you are essentially seen as a woman in a man's body almost and it helps them to understand their wives and girlfriends and when they come in and say, 'oh, my wife was a bit of a bitch because I did this', I kind of go, 'well, actually you were being a bit of a dick because of that'.

Gary's workplace as a carer for vulnerable children is one where there are no real issues evident in the straight men about his sexuality. His job requires him to reside at the home for up to five days at a time with other colleagues. However, despite this closeness, he still feels that he is treated differently from the other (straight) men. Gary's statement shows that he believes he is being discursively positioned as gay through a heteronormative lens by straight men. They see him as different to them, who are attracted to women; therefore, he must be feminine if he is attracted to men.

Forming a dyadic friendship between a gay and straight man becomes problematic in the workplace if the employees define gay men as something different to heterosexual femininity and as non-heterosexually feminine. Consequently, if being masculine means not being feminine, gay men would be categorised (by the heterosexual concept of gendered dimensions of friendship) as something different to or other than heterosexual ideals of femininity and masculinity. Traditionally, a factor contributing to the ideal of being masculine is that masculine straight men are less interested in disclosure and intimacy with other men, to avoid being seen exhibiting what has been defined as a feminine character trait/behaviour (Coltrane 1994; Connell 1995; Way 1997; Migliaccio 2009). Therefore, if straight men witness gay men exhibiting traits considered female/feminine, and straight men do not consider this type of behaviour likely to be exhibited by men, it is not surprising that they categorise such men as stereotypically feminine.

Gay men who exhibit traits attributed to female and feminine behaviour in a heteronormative context are complicit in reinforcing the gender and sexual binaries of masculine and feminine. To subvert the discourses that surround the notion of traditional heterosexual masculine ideals, gay men would need to perform an array of masculine and feminine behaviour to erode the binary between masculine and feminine, keeping gender binaries open to contestation and multiple meanings. Gay men are still men: they are just men that are performing 'male' differently to heterosexual men (Connell 1995; Doyle 1995; Kimmel 1996; Migliaccio 2009;

Sedgwick 1990). Therefore, they are reinterpreting the ideals of what it means to be a male/masculine, under the heteronormative understanding of the traits attributed to being male/masculine. This reinterpretation would then provide a rationale for the straight men to construct barriers as a defence mechanism against developing a friendship with someone who reinterprets their understanding of what it means to be masculine. Thus, for the interviewees, performing an ambiguous interpretation of masculine constructs and traits expected of male/masculine behaviour in the heteronormative workplace environment could result in a fear of the unknown for both gay and straight men when attempting to form friendships and, as Pahl's findings show, friendship cannot be based on fear (2000). Friendships based on fear would be problematic for gay men like Gary. His job as a care provider in a home for problem children requires him to be intimate with his colleagues:

the nature of my job is quite intense, working with these children, they obviously have behavioural difficulties, so they are prone to having episodes of heightened emotions, where they attack staff members and although they are only little, the staff still do need to be supported, um, and in that situation you need to know that your colleague/friend is behind you one hundred percent, because that support is paramount in this job, because there is the risk of allegation and also the risk of being hurt, so you need to have these kind of intimate relationships with the people that you work with.

Gary's experiences of intimacy with his straight male colleagues is unique among the interviewees. However, if the straight men see him as different/other, then the level of intimacy he can form with them would also be different/other to the level of intimacy he has with his straight female friends, who accept him: "The female friend I am close to just accepts me for being me, she don't expect me to be anything other than me, a gay man" (Gary). His straight female friends see him as an equal. This is in part due to the workplace context he is part of, which is by its nature caring, emotional at times and intimate between the children and staff as well as within both groups. However, consistently, I found that most of the interviewees only experienced intimacy in friendships with straight women. The interviewees perceive the workplace as predominantly a male heterosexual space (heteronormative) and as such are more likely to believe they would experience rejection or homophobia if they were to try formulate a reciprocal intimate friendship with a straight man.

I'm really careful when trying to be friendly, or make friends with straight guys at work. It's not the same with the girls. I've experienced some really nasty homophobia, from the straight guys in the past and I don't want to put myself in that position again. I even avoid going to staff socials, if certain straight guys are going to be there as I know they will make me feel uncomfortable, or say things that are really unkind or homophobic. (Philip)

Philip has experienced straight male colleagues putting up barriers through their negative behaviour towards him. Evidently, Philip sees these barriers as something that the majority of straight men erect around gay men, and that gay men also erect barriers around straight men. This double barrier needs to be dismantled before the heteronormative spaces can be deconstructed. The early research of Worsnop (1993) recognises that there are potential fears of being openly gay in the workplace when homophobia is present. Interviewees saw putting barriers up and being guarded around gay men as a subtle form of homophobia. Additionally, homophobia was perceived by gay men as typical straight male (not straight female) behaviour, and something that they would and should expect to happen when out in the workplace. As a result of the fear of homophobia, the interviewees felt it was more difficult for gay men to penetrate the heteronormative workplace space when they are perceived as deviating from the hetero-norm.

My findings suggest that these heteronormative work spaces can cause the gay men to feel both intimidated by heteronormativity, and judged negatively against the norms of expected heterosexual, masculine behaviour. Angus's work (as a satellite engineer and installer, a physically demanding job) is dominated by heterosexual men. He believes that his prowess as a man is being judged by his straight male colleagues, thus making it difficult to form relationships with them:

There are a lot of men out there that kind of judge you just because you're gay, thinking you don't have the same strength as a straight man. I might be gay, but I am still a man, and can do anything they can do. They don't want to know who you are and they don't look at you as a person.

The perceptions held by gay men of the heteronormative workplace and the straight men working within them reinforces barriers to friendship development, especially in an environment characterised by compulsory heterosexuality (Rich 1990). Likewise, McNaught describes this as 'the belief that everyone is heterosexual or ought to be' (1994, p.2) and thus being something other than heterosexual is deemed 'abnormal'.

According to Clarkson's (2006) findings, homosexuality could be seen as a threat to the heterosexual norms. Angus problematizes gay stereotypes by performing his job just as well as his straight male colleagues, therefore challenging the idea that straight masculinity is in some way superior to gay masculinity. This supports the research of Shepperd et al., who found that: 'Most theories of human relations are based upon an implicit model of heterosexuality' (2010, p.207). Heterosexual behaviour, according to Smith (2002) can be both subtle and overt. In my findings, we can see this when straight men ignore or avoid gay men other than for work-related tasks. Andy experienced this: 'I couldn't see a straight guy going out [of] their way to come to me. They are more likely to ignore me and go to another straight guy'. As a consequence, the straight men construct further barriers against understanding gay men in the workplace, limiting the opportunities for cross-sexuality workplace friendships.

Interviews revealed how gay men believed that if they tried to form friendships with their straight male colleagues, to be accepted they would have to display interest in stereotypical heterosexual male recreational activities to be discursively positioned as eligible friends and to form a basis for non-work conversations in the workplace. Paul, who works as a menswear buyer for a large retail outlet, explains:

I did try to do things to kind of integrate myself with them because I saw... I need to get into football and things they were doing... football, stakes and leagues and stuff like that. I was trying to get involved in [it] and they started a running club; I got involved in that, which backfired on me because I did get on much better running than all of them so they didn't like that, you know? So that didn't help my cause because they hated me because I was better at running than them, which they weren't expecting. They thought they could beat me, but I loved it, I was like 'fuck you' and beat the lot.

Unfortunately, rather than provide Paul with the common interests he hoped to have with straight men, his athletic prowess alienated him from them through his ability to outrun them, therefore undermining their ideals of straight masculinity being athletically superior to that of gay men. As Paul demonstrates, if gay men experience backlash from straight men because they can compete with (or out-perform) straight men, gay men like Paul may choose to avoid forming friendships with them. Tim, who works as a mortgage adviser for a large banking company, explains how he feels about being in the company of his straight male colleagues:

I just feel more comfortable in women's surroundings and some of the conversations and the jokes we can have. Sometimes again I can go into the back office and they will all be sitting around talking about rugby, football or whatever or just talking about bands they like and things and some of the conversations, like 'did you see the tits on that?' and I just cannot get involved in conversations on those subjects. I just switch off and go into another world as I can't relate to those subjects, where I can relate more to the conversations the women have.

The workplace context for these interviewees demonstrates that it is difficult to negotiate the hetero-masculine environment when they feel straight men have limited understanding of what it is to be a gay and run the risk of being vilified for their lifestyle.

Tim goes on to say:

I am with a lot of females and they feel comfortable around me to talk about their menstrual cycle, bra size and you can have a good old laugh about it. It's just common interests, the jokiness and the things that we come out with are similar and we have people in common.

What is surprising from Tim's comments is that he feels more comfortable talking about menstruation and bra sizes, which he cannot directly experience, than talking to straight men about subjects that make him feel inadequate as a man, or than introducing subjects of his own that he may have in common with straight men. Andy, who works in a similar workplace context to Tim, at a large bank, is frustrated when people are surprised he knows a lot about cars and sport: "It's not like these things are exclusively reserved for straight men, although some think they are". Because he is an out gay man, Andy believes straight men automatically assume he would not be interested in (or know anything about) what would be stereotypically assumed to be straight male pursuits. This overt demonstration of hetero-masculinity further undermines the notion that gay men are incapable of competing with straight men, and reinforces the perception that gay men lack the ability to enjoy similar pursuits to straight men. This behaviour by straight men is a form of passive-aggressive homophobia, which gay men negotiate and endure. Tim expands on this form of homophobia, in his straight male-dominated workplace, in which straight men identify being gay as something negative through their direct actions or language:

The language when I first come: I didn't like the language they were using. They were all so immature, management weren't stopping it and one of the managers was allowing it to happen. I hate the term, 'that's so gay' when applied to something negative or rubbish. So I had to nip that in the bud when I first got

there. And I am sure they thought, 'there's some miserable old gay guy coming into the branch that's stopping that'. They didn't realise that I would find it offensive, because they came straight from school and as they are in their late teens early twenties they are used to using that sort of language and brought up allowing that to happen.

It is hardly surprising that if gay men are experiencing negativity from straight men, or having to endure uncomfortable conversations that they decide to form friendships with women in their workplaces. My findings are consistent with those of Galupo, who found that: '[gay] men, reported significantly more cross-sex friendships than [straight] men' (2007, p.147). The gay men I interviewed believed the same barriers put up by straight men are not present when they form friendships with straight women. Henry, who works for a large pharmaceutical company, describes his workplace as, "a mixture of competitive straight male scientists and sales reps, who are wrapped up in their own worlds, and straight women, who just love to have a laugh". Henry explains that:

from my experiences of hanging around with the straight women at work, they like the whole talking about cock, shopping and gossiping and stuff like that, where the typical straight guys like talking about football and things like that and that just bores me to death.

What is evident from Henry's comments is that some of the interviewees are just as guilty of gender and sexual stereotyping as the straight men and women they describe. Through the stereotyping of heterosexual men, they create their own barriers to forming legitimate friendships with straight men. Shepperd et al. (2010) propose that these cross-sexed friendships may develop because gay men and straight women see each other as a resource to legitimise friendship with the opposite sex without having to be romantically or sexually involved. Reeder (2000) proposes that there is an assumption reinforced by the media that cross-sex friendships happen because there is a sexual attraction. Thus, if straight women are seen to be friends with a gay man or vice versa then romantic/sexual attraction is precluded from this assumption, making it 'safe' from romantic or sexual entanglement. This may explain why straight men are reluctant to drop the barriers and befriend gay men in case their sexuality or masculinity is called into question (Fee 2000; Price 1999). However, among the people I interviewed, I found dyadic friendships between gay men and straight women to be far more important than just about avoiding a romantic or sexual relationship.

Friendships with straight women also form in the workplace because these are sometimes the easiest friendships to develop. George's working environment (an airline) is dominated by straight women, making it easier for him (unlike Tim and Henry, for example) to establish cross-sexuality and cross-gender workplace friendships. "I'm more likely to talk to straight women. I think with straight men, and it's probably a sweeping statement and a bit of a generalisation, but I think they have this guard put on when they meet a gay man: 'is he going to come on to me?'" (George). The interviewees do not believe the straight women see them as having an ulterior sexual motive for being friends with them. My findings show that these friendships are more about survival and comradeship in the workplace, based on common interests (which I will explore later in this chapter). Many of the interviewees refer to their female friends as both work and social friends. The fact that women are prepared to socialise in gay leisure spaces enables these friendships to transcend the workplace. George believes that straight women like being his friends because there is no ulterior sexual motive:

I don't really [socialise with straight men] apart from the two I know outside of work, it pretty much stays within work, so it's a work-based friendship, where I am happy to socialise with the straight women as they are more, how do I put it, comfortable with who I am and they know they are safe from me trying to shag them.

The majority of the interviewees stated that their female friends saw them as predominantly masculine, as opposed to feminine or 'other', in contrast to the straight men they describe. Thus it appears that the interviewees believe that heteronormative discourses around masculine behaviour are only applied by straight men and not straight women. The gay men also stated that the women would be happier to socialise with them and go to gay bars etc., where the women would be easily accepted and less likely to be hit on by straight men in the more mainstream gay venues. The gay men also appreciated the fact that straight women were more comfortable undertaking the same sorts of recreational activities as the gay men, including talking about 'cock'. Talking about their commonality of sexual attraction to men was deemed to be an important part of the friendship:

I could sit down now, with the girls at work and just be out and open about sex, this that and the other, about men and I wouldn't even think twice about it, yeah, that's right what you are saying, that applies to me as well. (Liam)

Gay men are happy to continue friendship with women outside work, blurring the lines between work and personal friendship social space:

I think I am more inclined to go drinking with her after work. Whereas, I would go drinking with the straight guys but it would be me more me going drinking with them rather than them coming drinking with me, if that makes sense.
(Hayden)

The interviewees suggested that because they could work and socialise with the straight women, the friendship becomes deeper and more rounded than those conducted during working hours only. However, the findings are symptomatic of a problem in which straight male colleagues are not given the opportunity to form these deeper friendships, because they are not invited into these personal social spaces (as seen above) by their gay colleagues.

The issue of how gay men are stereotypically defined and perceived by heterosexuals within heteronormative workplaces is as relevant today as several decades ago (Humphrey 1999; Levine 1979). However, gay men may also stereotype gay male and heterosexual male and female sexuality. Until these perceptions of what it is to be gay (and not gay) are challenged and deconstructed, they will remain, and gay men will continue to be over-identified as feminine. However (and paradoxically), to do otherwise (e.g. act straight by performing normative hetero-masculinity) could be seen as normalising ourselves as gay men, conforming to heteronormative constructs of masculine behaviour (Duggan 2002; Seidman 2002). Henry is careful how he portrays himself in the heteronormative environment of a large pharmaceutical company:

Because the way the world is, if you were your full and real self then you run the risk of a bit of violence or some kind of shit kicking off with straight people. Or maybe with other gay people, as there are some gay people who are not at all camp. No, but I know a few that aren't and are quite macho. Yes, a bit, they are not free to be who they want to be and are very stuck in the straight world and acting as if they are not gay and not part of the gay world.

Henry suggests that there are two different worlds, and that to be accepted in the straight world, a gay man must dilute his gay identity. Such men could be seen as trying to normalise their identity through conforming to hetero-masculinity and thus approximating a heteronormative definition of what it is to be 'normal'.

Thus, “normalization” of some homosexuals and homosexual lifestyles constitutes selective homophobia because it comes at the expense of those homosexuals who do not conform to heteronormative expectations of gender performance, to the heteronormative family structure, or to heteronormative expressions of sexuality. (Clarkson, 2006, p.205)

As a consequence of gay men normalising or adopting expected heteronormative masculine behaviour to fit in, they are not subverting the heteronormative discourses associated with ‘normal’ masculine behaviour’ evident in the majority of the workplace experiences described by my interviewees. For example, Daniel has normalised his homosexuality to fit his heteronormative workplace:

One of the straight guys has just had a baby and he talks to me about it and his new family. I have never told him that I am gay and I don’t think he has really asked; you know, he points out girls, and I smile, you can say if someone is attractive, it doesn’t mean that you fancy them. You know, I would like to say to him, about myself, but I can’t, he might not want anything to do with me then, making it difficult at work. (Daniel)

As identified earlier Daniel has been advised not to be openly gay in the workplace as he would not be accepted. This has had an effect on his honesty about who he is when making friends with straight men. The friendship he describes above is based on a false identity. It is evidently not a fulfilling open friendship: he wants to be honest, but is afraid that the friendship would not continue.

Being out at work

Being out at work means different things to different people. For the purpose of presenting these findings, it means that the interviewee is aware that people in the workplace know or presume he is gay. People can still define themselves as not being out even if they have told friends in the workplace that they are gay. The interviewees did not believe that they should not come out at work, and they are all out to some level in their job. However, the reception they receive as gay men differs depending on their workplace context. For example, Steve works in a shoe shop, mainly with straight women. He has found them to be accepting of him as a gay man: "Yes, they are all pretty much accepting and will listen. There are some older people there and they kind of mother me, so if I have got anything on my mind they are used to listening." His experiences are in polar opposite to those of Tim, whose workplace is dominated by straight heteronormative masculinity: "the straight guys are always trying to assert their masculinity, whether they are just doing it in front of me or whether when I am around or they are doing it all the time, I don't know." Tim's experiences are symptomatic of the rest of the interviewees; Steve is the only exception, as he is not in a straight male-dominated workplace. These heterosexual masculine workplaces do not prevent gay men from coming out, but they make it more difficult to manage and to form close bonds and friendships with the straight men in their workplaces.

There are a variety of ways that people have come out in the workplace. Those who are out at work do not just out themselves: the findings show that it is either a gradual process, or one the interviewees have allowed to happen either through their behaviour or through comments they have made about their life. Toby, who works in a traditional straight male workplace as a site manager for a building company, did not plan to come out:

I think it was just... I didn't really come out as much, I think it was just one of them sort of things that came out... in the wrong place... I think it was just one of those things... I didn't tell one guy... I think it was probably more guessed I think it was.

Now he is out he has to watch how he behaves:

Some of the guys are in their seventies, most are forty and over. So obviously with me being gay it's a bit more like... I get on with them, I have a laugh and a

joke with them but they're probably not the sort I would join for a drink after work sort of thing, because the conversation I'm talking about... like my everyday life, I live a gay life, in their day it was wrong to be gay.

Toby is not an obviously camp or flamboyant man, describing himself as “straight-acting and not in their faces gay”, making it easier, he believes, for the straight men in his workplace to accept him. This is not the case for others who state they have come out at work through their performance of being camp. James even went as far as changing his behaviour: when entering the workplace, he puts on a much more camp persona: “When I am at work I make sure I mince around and put on more flamboyant mannerisms”. James does this so there is no doubt about his sexuality. Edelman (1994) maintains that historically, being a gay man has been defined through effeminate behaviour and it is these performances that have defined gay male behaviour as a fixed construct in binary opposition to heterosexual behaviour. Gary and Liam support this theory through their performances as camp gay men. They are not exhibiting heterosexual behaviour, therefore they must be gay: “in all honesty the way I am, my mannerisms, my look, my style, I didn't really need to tell or come out with it: [it] was just kinda they knew and that was that” (Gary). “They would have known through just the way I am in the office, long before the friendship occurred” (Liam). Both feel their workplaces are tolerant and accepting of gay men, and they do not worry about people knowing or presuming they are gay.

However, as mentioned above, one of the interviewees was advised not to come out at work when he moved branches. Daniel was told by his manager: “It was very family-orientated, that my lifestyle wasn't probably a subject that most employees and customers would take very well”. He was given the choice whether to come out or not, but being told this by a manager almost takes that choice away. This demonstrates how the context of the workplace and the beliefs of individuals can make it difficult to be ‘out’ and therefore honest with the people you are working with. Paul explains:

I think if I'm there talking to factory owners and, you know, businesspeople, I wouldn't be seen as, you know, as important as I should be and they wouldn't treat me with the same respect, because I've seen how they've treated women or other gay guys in those situations and they don't address them: they will address the straight guys. There was always this group of the lads and I saw they were kind of moved up the ranks and became you know, assistants to buyers.

Additionally, Daniel suggests that diversity policies within his company are not observed consistently by employers. Daniel believed he was “naturally camp” and was anxious that he would be subjected to homophobia by straight colleagues if he did not try to conform to the heteronormative expressions of sexuality. This is similar to the findings of Clarkson:

The label of straight acting serves to remind us of assimilationist tensions in gay communities. Some radical gay activists claim the assimilationists merely are seeking to gain acceptance of homosexuals by making them seem normal, like heterosexuals, simultaneously idolizing and emulating heteronormative expectations. (2006, p.205)

Arthur, who works as a bar licensee, feels that:

I have to be very careful as any sign of weakness or being gay would cause me all sorts of problems, I am only my real self around one straight girl who is my close friend, who works for me; certainly never around the straight chaps, where I am always straight-acting.

This environment makes it difficult for him to be openly gay, and as a result limits the colleagues with whom he can form friendships. Shaun, who works in a similar type of business to Arthur, as a bar manager in a straight bar, believes that: “By adopting this stereotypical gay behaviour I am able to use the situation to my best advantage to [...] talk to people and make friends”. However, Gary believes that campness breaks down awkwardness and makes it easier for everyone:

I would give them a clue rather than them guess it to me. Sometimes to make it easier for them, so they're not uncomfortable, if you know what I mean? Although I don't know why they would feel uncomfortable, because some people want to say, but some people feel frightened to ask.

When he first started working there he put on an act to break down the barrier of having to answer awkward questions about his sexuality, so he overemphasised his campness, because he felt it would be awkward for people to ask him if he was gay. A clear pattern of behaviour was evident from the interviewees: they want to be out at work, but also do not want to have to answer what they perceive as awkward or difficult questions from their colleagues. George explains: ‘I think more for me if I am this camp person, I can put up a guard, and I can sort of protect myself, in a way’. For the same reason Steve portrays camp behaviour in the workplace. He becomes a caricature of himself at work when people are unhappy or stressed, so in his words he becomes

'sassy' to cheer them up and make them laugh. Portraying campness for Steve is not always a negative form of behaviour; he saw campness as a positive stereotype, allowing him to be more outspoken at work:

I think the majority of gay men are far more comfortable messing about and being camp, but at work it seems to be the thing to imitate being gay, so everyone does it and it's quite funny, I am able to get away with what I want to say by being camp.

Steve's workplace context of being a friendly female-dominated workspace allows him to behave as a camp man without any repercussions for him as an individual. It is not seen as negative; in fact, his adoption of camp behaviour is seen as a positive. However, even though other interviewees have adopted the same approach to showing they are out gay men, they are not all working in places that are as accepting of gay men and their performance of campness.

However, exaggerating one's camp behaviour was not the only method of 'informing' colleagues they were gay. Others would accept their colleagues as friends on Facebook so they could see what sorts of activities they were engaging with, who they are friends with and the conversations they were having with other gay men. Additionally, some of the workforce already knew that the interviewees were gay from previous knowledge of them, such as previous working relationships, social activities or through social media. These seem to be common methods for gay men to unofficially inform the workforce about their sexuality. Alternatively, Colin, Shaun, Tim and Adam combined being feminine/camp with introducing female work friends (in either a social setting or work-based setting) to their partners.

It was never really kind of bought up... it was sort of like when I was talking about partners and everything else and it was sort of like, yeah, 'he'... it sort of came out like that. It wasn't sort of like made a big deal that I'm gay, sort of exploding out of the closet. (Adam)

However, regardless of how they came out at work, there are evidently underlying concerns and fears for the interviewees about being out in the workplace and the effect this may have on them being able to form friendships. The fear of being discriminated against or rejected by colleagues for being gay is real for the interviewees in this study. This type of discrimination still happens, as can be seen from Daniel's comments above; therefore, the workplace context being one of diversity, equality understanding

and acceptance is important for gay men to feel comfortable and supported enough to come out and form open friendships with colleagues. Unanimously, the interviewees at first did not feel that they had any issues with their colleagues when they came out at work. However, on closer inspection, it is evident that they not only prepared themselves for problems from straight men, but actually experienced some passive-aggressive backlash:

People know the types of people that they could actually pick on, if that makes sense as well? They see [gay] people as a target, where if they looked at me, I'd bloody punch them. (Andy)

It is not uncommon to feel defensive in relation to the anticipated outcome of coming out as gay. Martin, who works as an accounts manager for a marketing company, experienced different reactions: "Now I find that the reaction is different from female workers than it is for male workers". He indicates that the straight male workers were less accepting and more judgmental about what it means to be gay, therefore making it more difficult to establish friendships with them. James took the approach that, "if you've got a problem, that's fine: you can have a problem, but it's not my problem and I'm not (as you know), I'm not intimidated or bothered by what anyone thinks". However, similar to the other interviewees, James's approach to dealing with negativity puts barriers up to forming friendships with straight men. The fact the gay men have to stand up for themselves and deflect potential discrimination and compete to be accepted by straight men compounds that difficulty.

I find myself involving myself in conversations that are really no interest to me to be honest, but I do that to think, 'hang on a minute, I can show that I like the same things as you.' (Andy)

My findings show that hiding their sexuality through acting straight would cause the interviewees to feel anxious of being 'found out' at a later stage, making it difficult for them to be accepted in a new identity and transition from being perceived as straight to being accepted as gay. If they hide their sexuality, they run the risk of being 'discovered' as being gay, putting pressure on any friendships already established. This had happened to Philip at a previous job as buyer for a large meat factory:

when I worked there I had loads of straight guy mates as I hadn't come out yet, not even to my family, so acted straight and talked about all the straight guy things. When I came out to family I was outed at work and the people I thought

were my friends started to take the piss out of me and make me feel uncomfortable; they stopped hanging out with me or asking me to go out at night with them. I got really depressed over it and they made me feel worthless. Thinking about it now, I thought they weren't genuine people, but to be honest, I was the one that was who wasn't the genuine friend as I had been lying to them. They had always behaved like that with anyone they thought was a poof, so they were being the same people.

As seen above, someone who initially presents as straight and is then outed as gay can experience problems with existing friendships, as some friends are unable to cope with the revelation. One issue here is that Philip's straight male friends might feel he has been untruthful: Philip is not the heterosexual male they believe him to be. If the interviewees decided to not come out in the workplace, they believed they would be accepted and able to integrate; yet this would completely disregard an important part of their identity (for some, an important part of maintaining self-integrity) (Woods and Lucas 1993, p.5). This made it difficult for some of the interviewees to conceptualise how they would be seen in the workplace if they were to come out there.

Discussion

This chapter explores how the workplace can influence the friendship development opportunities experienced by gay men, noting in particular the shaping effect of heteronormativity and the gender and sexual binaries upon which it is sustained. One important area this research identifies is how gay men define workplace friendship, as it is through their own definitions they give value and meaning to their workplace friendships. Friendship for the interviewees does not differ that much from other forms of close friendship between heterosexuals. The gay men defined friendship as being about trust, support, kindness, intimacy (Bell 1981; Hays 1985; Hartup 1996; Hartup and Stevens 1999; Bagwell et al. 2001; Allan 2008; Rumens 2011; Sias et al. 2004). However, it is evident from the empirical data that gay men value their friendships with straight women, as they provide support and help them identify as gay, enabling them to negotiate the heteronormative workplace. The gay men trust their female friends and these relationships give them understanding, trust and support, although

experienced in heterosexual workplaces and thus still mediated by the experiences of heteronormativity. I did not find any evidence that gay-straight male workplace friendships are not understood or experienced queerly: that is, in ways that disrupt and rupture heteronormative discourses about how male friendships ought to be structured and the purposes they serve. There is no evidence in the study findings that gay-straight male workplace friendships generate non-normative intimacies, identities or modes of relating. The findings show clearly that gay men needed to feel accepted by straight men before they could consider them friends.

The interviewees believed that to be able to work effectively and productively it was important for them to find a place in the context of the workplace, in which they are accepted for who they are and treated as equal to heterosexual colleagues. Understanding how workplace friendships are formed is important if equality is understood and experienced between friends who occupy different sides of the hetero/homo binary. As discussed in the literature review, workplace friendships can be formed for many reasons: companionship, support and promotion (Bell 1981; Wright 1982; Allan 1989; Pahl 2000; Rumens 2011). Mark supports this, noting that straight men may want to be friends with him to demonstrate that they accept gay men, rather than wanting to genuinely be friends with gay men (or with Mark):

If the straight guys accept you, should I say it helps them to feel as if there are an all-round person, you know? It will help them I think. I think sometimes they actually look at it but it might be a bit of a notch on their belt because it would help them with like progressing in the company to say, you know, 'I'm not discriminating', you know? 'I accept equal opportunities' and it also helps outside as well. Socially, they can say, 'oh yeah I've got a gay friend in work, you know, so I'm alright with gay people.'. Yeah, so it kind of... I think it actually helps them with their egos.'

When friendships form, it can be because the two people involved have similar interests, or because they are in close proximity to each other, or through a preconceived set of needs fulfilling self-determined criteria. All the interviewees believe that work-based friendships are important. Despite some of the interviewees stating they have straight male friends, once the interviews progressed I found that workplace friendships with women were more intimate and supportive than friendships with straight men. Friendships in the workplace provides a relational context for

expressing emotions, closeness and sharing (and solving) issues and problems, both work-based and personal.

It was clear that if the interviewees had to choose between being friends with either female or male friends, all the interviewees would choose female friends. They would not want to lose or relinquish the common ground they have established with female colleagues. The gay men tend to keep their private life away from straight men, as there is a fear of being judged and treated as something less than a man. In these circumstances, hetero-masculinity is equated with homophobia (Kimmel 1994). In contrast, they appear happier talking to and sharing their private lives with a female friend. To form friendships with straight men it would appear, from the interview data, that both gay and straight men must challenge heteronormative discourse on gay-straight male friendships. From a queer theory perspective, this is possible through unpacking the assumptions made by straight and gay men about how each performs the norms that constitute gender and sexual identities (Metcalf et al. 2008; Giffney 2004; Green 2013; Watson 2005; Rumens 2012, 2013). Therefore, by not sharing their private lives with straight men, the assumptions that underpin and sustain gender and sexual binaries remain intact (Anderson 2005; Anderson and McCormack 2015; Rumens 2012; Sedgwick 1990).

Through predominantly socialising with and befriending straight women (and in some cases identifying themselves as women in male bodies), gay men reinforce the stereotype that gay men are feminine in nature. This behaviour also perpetrates the idea that gay men are camp and less than male and that straight men are more aligned with masculinity and limited in expressing intimacy. By discursively positioning themselves in this way, some of the gay men I interviewed are reproducing the hetero/homo binary, although in so doing they may construct themselves as more suitable friendship material for some heterosexual women. Additionally, through avoiding possible rejection from their straight colleagues, some gay men are placing barriers in the way of forming friendships with straight men and women. Walker (1994) found that (straight) men are capable of intimacy and sharing feelings in a friendship with other men. Intimacy can be achieved in all manner of ways beyond disclosing emotionally in conversations, such as sharing activities, silence and bonding through common interests (Walker 1994). By playing a role in some contexts, some gay men

are depriving themselves and others around them of friendship and insights into gay men as people, rather than as stereotypes or the mere occupants of jobs. Several of the gay men said they were routinely constructing and performing caricatures of a gay stereotype, making it difficult for them to break free from the camp/feminine role when needed. Lorber (1996, p.144) states 'sociology assumes that, '[a] woman is assumed to be a feminine female; a man a masculine male. Heterosexuality is the un-interrogated norm'. These are the starting positions gay men have to contend with in a heteronormative workplace context, before they can challenge how genders and/or sexualities, especially their own, are perceived. If gay men are seen as sensitive, caring and intimate, which are considered to be feminine traits, they are deemed to be feminine and female rather than male and masculine. Hence, the preference for gay men to befriend straight women, avoiding intimacy with straight men, prevents exploration of the understanding of gender boundaries and how these are demarcated and, potentially, transgressed and subverted (Sedgwick 1990; Namaste 1994). Additionally, gay men adopting a stereotypical camp persona can also support the predetermined heteronormative expected identity and behaviour of gay men.

For Steve, his camp behaviour could be viewed as queering the idea of what it is to be gay, through taking ownership, re-appropriating and reclaiming camp behaviour, so that it no longer is seen as a negative performance. Steve has attempted to reclaim camp behaviour and translate it into the behaviour of some of his straight colleagues, so even though this could be seen as form of mockery, it could also be viewed as emulating gay camp performance behaviour, and therefore normalising it (Beemyn and Eliason 1996; Goldman 1996; Giffney 2004; Valocchi 2005).

Queer theory can be used to deconstruct the emphasis placed on these social classifications of gender, sexuality and sex, refuting the notion that these categories are stable and bounded (Valocchi 2005). Because these classifications are social constructions, they are full of confusion and variability in how they are understood and experienced when someone does not fit comfortably into the categories (Watson 2005). This is evident from the interviewees, who are challenging and skewing the notions of masculinity through their performance of normative femininity. From one perspective, they might be seen to be rupturing social constructions of maleness within their heteronormative workplace contexts. However, gay men's performance of

femininity can be anything but deconstructive and transgressive, as it reinforces the very association it seeks to undermine: that gay men are closer to femininity than masculinity. As a result, it is easier for straight men to categorise gay men as female, maintaining the hetero-/homo binary (Corber and Valocchi 2003).

The concern for some of the interviewees around adopting a flamboyant camp identity can be that they may not be taken seriously when they need to be. They run the risk of being overlooked for promotion as they are fastened to the stereotype of the gay man as a happy-go-lucky, camp character. There are heteronormative expectations of how gay people should behave in the workplace: in general the interviewees felt it important to behave in the way the discourse of gay behaviour has been constituted in their individual workplaces. The creative appropriation and resignification of gender is constrained by norms, sanctions and hegemonic readings in a heteronormative context (Eves 2004, p.482). These norms associated with gay men could be viewed as pressuring them into adopting this stereotypical behaviour to express an identity through the forced citation of hetero-norms (Green 2002; Foster 2008; Seidman 1994).

Notably, I did not find any clear challenges to these ideals of masculine behaviour in the interview data. Moreover, I found the interviewees perpetuated the discourse that straight men only want to be friends with other straight men to avoid their masculinity being challenged. My findings here support the belief that gay men accept as 'truth' that straight men are fearful of being seen as less than a man (Way 1997) if they are intimate or emotional with their friends. As a result, the gay men accepted that being openly gay in the workplace made it inevitable they would experience homophobia from straight men if they try to create an intimate friendship with them. Consequently, workplace friendships between straight men and gay men had not flourished because of their own preconceptions of straight men's reactions to gay men.

The fear/concern expressed in my findings by the gay men was indicative of the belief that straight men are going to react in a stereotypical hetero-masculinity way and discriminate against them in the workplace because of their sexuality, regardless of the type of workplace. What is concerning here is that gay men like Daniel perceive it as 'professional' to be told that he should not say he is gay in the workplace. If management allow discrimination to go unchecked, then they are supporting discriminative behaviour through inaction. This marginalises gay people, causing them

to be seen in a negative way by the heterosexual workforce. This is important, as several of the gay men said that they want to embrace diversity within the workplace and did not want to limit themselves to experiencing life through a gay-only lens. They want to be able to have two perspectives and be able to see and experience life through a variety of perspectives in the context of cross-sexuality friendships. Additionally, several said that having straight friends was like taking a holiday from the gay life that they live and the difficulties that go with that; however, they were referring to straight female friends and not straight male friends.

Having straight friends allowed them to see and experience life from the point of view of a heterosexual, and the issues and problems they have to negotiate. Several people referred to the straight world as the 'real world', suggesting that the world they live in, the 'gay world', is fabricated. This suggests that, through their complete embodiment of the heteronormative workplace and living space, they have bought into the paradigm that only the straight space is acceptable ('real'). This shows that the heteronormative work world need to be challenged more often, to enable a more sensitive and multi-faceted understanding of the needs of gay men, to create a 'new work world' in which gay and heterosexual perspectives and lived realities intermingle. It is remarkable that those people who considered themselves 'straight-acting' felt they were more easily accepted into this 'real world'. They were not accepted because they are gay, but because they provide the people in that 'real world' with the gendered construction of masculinity that is read as indicative of their conformity to 'real' male behaviour, and as such do not challenge or disrupt the hetero-norms associated with male/masculine behaviour. Therefore, as suggested above, camp gay men do not challenge the straight men or the stereotypes attached to their sexuality in the workplace: they play the role that is expected of them and consequently block friendships between straight and gay men. Additionally, they are perpetuating the existing workplace hetero-masculine paradigms that all gay men are camp and that is how they should all behave, a performance that perpetuates the hetero/homo binary.

Camp behaviour does not challenge the alpha male heterosexuality or the heteronormative paradigms in the workplace, which is still evident even when the workplaces are more accepting of gay people. For example, the holiday camp for Liam, or the residential children's care home for Gary, understood by both as 'gay-

friendly', are work contexts in which they feel they need to perform being gay through 'camp' behaviour. Gary expresses his dislike for people that are not genuine and yet he is happy to perform as an overly camp man, which is not his 'natural' manner (and therefore he is creating friendships with people through behaviour that is not normal to him). The retail outlet for Daniel and the building company for Toby, which they identified as hostile to homosexuality, are workplaces in which forming friendships with straight men is more difficult. Despite this, they both still perform the camp behaviour. Effeminate/camp behaviour is synonymous with being a gay man in Western society, reinforced by gay men, the media and mainstream programmes such as *Will and Grace*, *Queer as Folk* and soap operas (Seidmen 2002). Edelman's (1994) research suggests exhibiting camp and feminine behaviour defines and contributes to the discourses and construction of homosexuality. Therefore, for my interviewees, performing in a feminine/camp manner in the workplace was seen as an effective method of informing those around them that they are gay, without having to individually inform people: "you find out that they knew straight away because of your camp mannerisms and some of the phrases that you come out with" (Tim). Many of the gay men I interviewed (like Tim, a mortgage adviser) decided to consciously use the validity of feminine/camp behaviour to declare their sexuality within their workplaces to avoid having to tell their colleagues that they are gay, making it easier for honest friendships to form. This behaviour conflicts with the findings of Ragins et al. (2007) who found that many gay employees leave part of themselves at home in case their true identity is discovered. This may be true for those who have decided to conform to the heterosexual norms of masculine behaviour to hide their sexuality, but not for my interviewees. What is not clear from my findings is whether gay men feel that the straight men are also playing a role (that of alpha male) to remain in a safe position within the heteronormative social context and to be accepted by other straight men as viable friends. Therefore, gay men are consciously avoiding an opportunity to queer the relationship they have with their straight male colleagues, to show them an alternative to the heteronormative paradigms present in the formation of workplace friendships, and deconstruct the behavioural expectations they perceive straight men to have in relation to stereotypical gay male behaviour. To be able to construct a new understanding of gay men within the heteronormative workplace, and how

male/masculinity is defined, gay men need to challenge their own perceptions and stereotypes of what constitutes masculine behaviour and friendship.

The interviewees would rather be in control of the act of coming out, rather than being forced to come out or 'outed' by others. As Butler (1997, p.33) explains, people can be labelled as gay by others without the knowledge of the individual in question. This could be why straight men do not want to be associated with, or friends with, gay men: to prevent others implying that they must be gay because of their association with another man who is openly gay. Philip's example of how his friends changed towards him in a previous job when he was outed provides a clear indication of the backlash gay people can experience if they are not in control of their coming out. Conversely, if the negativity surrounding what it is to be gay was to be deconstructed, and a more positive representation put forward, these barriers to friendship for straight men could be removed. Without queering the notion of homosexuality in the workplace, it remains framed as less than masculine and indicative of camp behaviour where the males concerned exhibit feminine characteristics. This framing has been constructed by the gay men interviewed to conform to their projected expectations of how gay men need to behave around straight people in the workplace: not to necessarily be accepted, but to allow their heterosexual colleagues to categorise them easily. This framing reinforces the heteronormative paradigms that dominate the workplace: that heterosexuality is the overriding accepted form of power; and that all gay men conform to the same stereotypes. Queering this paradigm would challenge its construction of homogenous gay identities, resulting in a deconstruction of the notion that identity is singular and fixed. I did not find any evidence from the interviewees of them queering their friendship with straight female friends. In fact, rather than queer the friendships, they were supporting the notion that they are friends with straight women because they have more in common with them than with straight men.

Foucault (1980), Fuss (1991) and Namaste (1994) discuss the idea that heterosexuality defines homosexuality as opposite to what it believes constitutes heterosexuality. Therefore, homosexuality is seen as 'other' and abnormal. It is not a big leap to apply this thinking to the heteronormative construction of societies defining homosexuality as everything that is opposite to heterosexuality. Therefore,

heteronormativity is power, subjugating the homosexual as deviant/abnormal. This then creates an unspoken caste system in which homosexuals are perceived as less than heterosexuals. Namaste believes that:

Queer theory recognises the impossibility of moving outside current conceptions of sexuality. We cannot assert ourselves to be entirely outside heterosexuality, nor entirely inside, because each of these terms achieved its meaning in relation to the other. What we can do, queer theory suggests, is negotiate these limits. (1994, p.224)

However, this does not mean that gay men cannot challenge these boundaries: it means that we recognise they exist, and therefore they can be challenged and renegotiated. By continuing to behave in a stereotypically camp manner to exert their gayness, the interviewees affirm the homosexual/heteronormative binary opposites, rather than deconstructing them and offering a new perspective on homosexuality and what it means to be friends with gay men. The gay men are reproducing the notions that gay men are non-masculine and camp, and that they value and exhibit feminine characteristics. They are creating a fixed identity for themselves, which in itself is not challenging the very thing they are looking for: acceptance of what and who they are, rather than what and who straight men think they are. If they were to queer this perception of themselves, they would look to deconstruct the stereotype profiling they are subjecting themselves to, instead of performing in a manner (camp) they believe identifies them as gay. In fact, what the gay men are creating through not challenging the heteronormativity ideal of what constitutes being a gay man is homogeny for gay people. It removes their individual uniqueness, allowing for all gay men within that workplace context they are working in to be seen as a one-size-fits-all commodity, rather than being identified as unique with individual skills, interests and qualities that should be accepted in the workplace. This approach then perpetuates the paradigm within that workplace that gay men are camp and effeminate, and thus unsuitable for dyadic friendships with straight men.

This chapter has looked at the heteronormative workplace context that gay men negotiate when forming friendships. Issues associated with the construction of friendship have been explored, how people came out in the workplace and the effect this has on the formation and understanding of friendship. The next chapter presents

the findings on the meaning and struggles of intimacy in workplace friendships, through identifying what workplace friendship means to gay men, how these friendships are nurtured and the struggles associated with making friends.

Chapter Four (Findings) Meanings associated with workplace friendships

Introduction

In chapter one I examined how the workplace context can impinge on gay men's friendships. I will now explore definitions of and meanings assigned to friendship in the workplace by gay men. As this chapter demonstrates, the interviewees have straight friends, but these are predominately women. As discussed in the literature review, friendship does not have a fixed definition or a set of criteria that allows evaluation of one friendship against another. However, it is evident from my findings that the interviewees all perceive and value friendship in similar ways. For example, they describe friendship as mutually caring and trusting, in which each friend can rely on the other for emotional support. This chapter proceeds on the understanding that friendships in the workplace are complex relationships and an important aspect of the lives of gay men. The empirical data reveals how gay men are not only intimidated at times by straight men and the prospect of forming friendships with them, but also feel they have nothing in common with them to allow them to construct friendships that are understood and experienced as meaningful.

This chapter seeks to contribute to the understanding of why gay men befriend straight women rather than straight men, the struggles gay men have when trying to construct friendship with straight men in the workplace, and how they negotiate these struggles. The empirical data shows that these struggles are not evident when befriendng straight women. The chapter begins with an exploration of what friendships mean to gay men and how they are formed. The next section discusses whether the friendships are supportive and who nurtures them, followed by an examination of the struggles gay men face when forming workplace friendships and how they perceive intimacy within the friendships.

Gay Men: the Importance of Workplace Friendships

The importance of workplace friendship is understood in ways common to straight people (Connell 1995; Doyle 1995). Straight men's friendships are believed to be based on activities and lacking in emotional intimacy, while straight women's friendships are based on intimacy and conversation (Migliaccio 2009; Reeder 2003; Rumens 2010; Sias et al. 2003; Walker 1994). Therefore, friendships are often defined through these discourses and categorised as masculine or feminine (Nardi 2007). It is these friendship discourses that the participants in this study identified with and sometimes compared their own friendships to when defining their own friendships. As previously, discussed men and women are characterised as expressing intimacy differently. Workplace friendships were seen by all the interviewees as extremely important. The interviewees suggested that if they were unable to befriend straight women at work (with whom they could be open about their sexuality), their work lives would not be as happy: "Because I can vent to them and things like that if I have a problem; they will help me or I can go to them and take advice, especially the girl" (Shaun). Without friends, the workplace would be insular and introspective. This sense of insularity was connected to the interviewees feeling that they were not seen as 'men' in the workplace by straight men. Here, my findings build on studies that reveal gay men to be happier at work when they are able to disclose their sexuality to colleagues (Bagwell et al. 2001; Day and Schoenrade 1997; Deci et al. 2006), adding to this literature by revealing how being out at work can be an opportunity to develop deeper friendships with colleagues. At the same time, and also in line with research on LGBT identity disclosure and management (Benozzo et al. 2015; Einarsdóttir et al. 2016; Rumens and Broomfield 2012), the interviews that there is still an undercurrent of apprehension and anxiety associated with coming out in the workplace. Crucially, when the interviewees felt they had the support of workplace friends, this anxiety reduced. The interviewees felt their friends were meaningful, supportive and trustworthy confidantes. However, this was not the same when interviewees discussed their relationships with straight male colleagues. Heteronormative discourses of masculinity and straight male friendships dominate the workplace context (Rumens

2010). Therefore, gay men deemed to be outside this discourse often form friendships with straight women (who are also outside this discourse), as a means of support.

When asked how they would feel about their job if they did not have friends, the majority of the interviewees said they would not like going to work. Many said that they would not stay and would find it difficult to be productive. This need for a sense of belonging is consistent with the research of Beaumeister and Leary (1995), who found that a sense of support and belonging had positive implications in the workplace. Friendship was identified by the interviewees as the main source of both these things, as James describes:

Friendships are a necessary part of work. Without them it would be difficult to function on a daily basis as the friendship network enables far more to be achieved and completed, often speeding up processes and solutions to problems as people are more willing to help and support their friends. Sometimes I am completely by myself, chaperoning students, but when everyone is in it is really supportive and it's really important, because if I am not supported I don't feel very confident, um, I don't know, even though I am really good at what I do I still lack confidence in what I do, so.

Daniel worried about not being able to make friends when he started his job as a customer service agent for a large retail outlet:

I just think it helps you to go in day to day knowing that you have got other people in there that you can talk to. I worried I wouldn't make friends when I first got there, but I soon found a woman that needed my support and we have been friends ever since.

As Mobley et al. (1994) and Elsesser and Peplau (2006) demonstrate, workplace friendships offer many advantages, and thus not having workplace friends can be a career disadvantage. Furthermore, and equally importantly, Daniel felt that if he was not able to make friends in the workplace he would not be able to talk openly about his sexuality. This suggests that he, like many other interviewees, clearly attributes the meaning of 'friends' as different to the relational category of 'colleagues'. People identified as friends were individuals they could trust, confide in, laugh with, share problems and work closely with. In contrast, colleagues are people they only discuss work-related issues with. Daniel intimated that if he had been unable to make work friends he would not have stayed for as long as he has in that job, especially since he had been told by the store manager not to be openly gay in the workplace. Indeed, a

recurring theme within the data was that without work friends the idea of going to work would be difficult, with some interviewees suggesting this would have a detrimental effect on their enthusiasm, as work friends afford emotional support to one another, 'providing understanding, empathy and comfort' (Bridge and Baxter 1992, p.216).

A supportive workplace friend can make the difference for gay men feeling happy and accepted in their work, rather than isolated and marginalised. Shaun, who manages a pub in a 'straight village pub', typically seen as a masculine heterosexual working environment (Migliaccio 2009) states:

I think that I get more support off the girl. I don't know, I think it's because she has seen how badly the company have treated me, she has seen the emails they have sent me, and she cares about me. Yeah, I feel quite relaxed around straight women, my best friend is a straight woman. It would be the girl, yeah.

Gary states that: "if you don't have support from your friends, who do you have support from?" Having a supportive friend enables him to detach emotionally from work-based issues and put those problems into perspective. For Gary, support and friendship held a great deal of meaning, as they were integral to each other, enabling him to construct an important distinction between a friend and a colleague. The emphasis placed on providing care to service users in his workplace made it easier for him to establish intimate friendships with colleagues. Additionally, Gary is the only interviewee who has to reside in his workplace; this means that some days he is spending almost twenty-four hours a day in the company of colleagues and work friends. Henry found support when people were not treating him with respect regarding his sexuality at work ("she came over to me and put her arm around me, and said, 'they are idiots. Come on, let's go have a coffee'"). His friend not only emotionally supported him, but also informed those in question about the company's equality and diversity policy. A less than supportive work place was also seen as a possible inhibitor to making friends. Martin, an accounts manager for a marketing company, believes that:

Support as a friend is important, definitely. I mean, yeah, in both my previous jobs... this one definitely... particularly from one or two workmates who I am particularly close to, [they] have given me a lot of support. And both have been women. Straight women without a doubt. I'm trying to weigh up the pros and cons, but, like, if you have a mix or if you have straight men, just straight men, you're more [likely] then, you're going to find a higher percentage of prejudice from people within that group than if you had a group of just women.

It is clear from my findings that the gay men value their workplace friendships and find meaning, trust, support and intimacy within them.

Gay Men's Friendship: Trust and Support

The construction of modern friendships and the meanings associated with them are often formed depending on the needs of the friends in question (Morrison and Nolan 2009). However, friendships have no clear-cut definition or predetermined structure, allowing a variety of meanings and definitions to be attributed to them (Allan 1989, 1998; Bagwell et al. 2001; Phal 2000; Wright 1982). My findings show that there are normally criteria that must be fulfilled for interviewees to define a friend as 'close' or 'meaningful', and these attributes are consistent with the current literature in the area of friendship: reciprocity, equality, voluntariness, spontaneity, trust and intimacy (Allan 2008; Bagwell et al. 2001; Hartup and Stevens 1999; Ingram and Zou 2008; Jehn and Shah 1997; Shelton et al. 2009). These attributes were indicative of traits the interviewees identified in their straight female friends. However, interviewees did not identify the same traits when discussing their straight male colleagues: the straight men did not meet the criteria of what the gay men expected from close friendships. My findings show that being able to trust a straight friend helped the interviewees to deal with day-to-day work and personal issues (Hayden: "just having them there helped"), especially if they felt that the problem they wanted to address with their friend could be perceived as 'silly' (Hayden: "I feel a lot more open to asking a stupid question because I trust them and feel supported"). When there is trust between the friends, the friendship has power to provide support, as there is less judgment of the actions being discussed. Bagwell et al. (2001) found that when a friendship has developed trust and therefore support, the friendship can help eliminate stresses for the friends. Another common feature of friendship was shared laughter, as Colin stated: "I have more of a laugh at the same things", and Paul related this to trust: "I think they can trust me more because I can have a laugh and a joke at the same time, you know?" Deci et al. identify that spending time together and laughing together can help people assess 'the degree at which people are content and happy with their friendships' (2006, p.317). This is evident in my findings where interviewees expressed how important laughing with their friends is.

Yes, yes, I think I wouldn't have stayed there quite as long as I have had I not had people like them, to chat with have a laugh with. (Daniel)

Oh yes, much more difficult because at the moment, if somebody phones me and says, 'can you come and do this?' and it's somebody I get on with then I can have a laugh, I'm off the seat, I'm off, I'm doing it. If it's somebody who's a bit too serious who I don't necessarily click with, it's very much, 'yeah, I'll do it when I can'. Oh yes, [it] definitely makes me happier and more productive being able to have a laugh with my friends. (James)

Therefore, friendship for the interviewees is about more than just being able to share issues and difficulties: it is also about being able to laugh together.

Yes, I have told her really personal and gruesome things and everything and she has told me the same; then we normally can laugh about them. (Tim)

Hartup and Stevens (1999) believe that laughter amongst friends is a positive part of friendship and happens much more than between non-friends.

Yeah... I think they can trust me more because I can have a laugh and a joke at the same time, you know? (Paul)

Joking around and having a good time with friends can be characterised as trusting behaviour, which is evidently important to the interviewees (Jehn and Shar 1997). The interviewees clearly identified that trust was more likely to be evident with their straight female friends than straight male colleagues. This may be why the interviewees initially identified themselves pre-interview as having a close friendship with a straight man, but later on in the interviews, through reflection on their friendships, it became clear that in fact they had much closer friendships with straight women. They reflected on the fact that they trusted their straight female friends, but didn't feel the same about their straight male colleagues/friends. Additionally, they identified that their straight female friends listened to their problems, while the straight men were not really interested.

With two of the women, yes, I do have a very close relationship, you know, I listen to their problems and they listen to mine. I have had quite a few recently and they have been like a rock to me. I would never go to a straight guy and tell them my problems: I couldn't trust them to not take the piss. (Daniel)

This is because they state they have spent more time with the women, so a closer bond and a more trusting relationship has emerged. For example, Martin stated:

[T]here's a woman that I used to work with in Ireland and I mean, she told me her problems and I told her my problems and we kind of... we really

connected and we stayed in touch, we worked together and the last time, maybe a year ago she came to visit me and we really, really connected. You know, she is more open and happy to listen to how I feel and share her feelings with me and much more understanding about things than the straight guys are.

Unlike the straight men, it appears that the straight women are more likely in the eyes of the interviewees to understand them and their atypical heteronormative masculine behaviour, therefore making them suitable as close friends (Budgeon 2006; Friedman 1993). Similarly, Tim describes a female friend as follows: "with the girl I would trust her with anything. Because she is like thirty and stuff and has been around and we have spent a lot of time together and things like that". Mark believes that "[t]rust can only be built if the gay man believes he is fully accepted". The interviewees infer that before they trust their friends, they need to be assured that they are honest, as without honesty trust cannot be achieved (Angus), or, as Angus puts it, "[t]hey'll always be honest with me and I'll always be honest with them". These interviewees believed that straight women are much better at expressing their feelings and being honest with themselves, making it easier to be friends with them. They also saw straight women as more understanding of the issues gay men faced in the workplace. Therefore, the friendships were perceived as closer and more meaningful than those with straight men, who were not perceived as good communicators or able to operate at the same level of emotion or understanding. It is evident that the form of communication changes when the friends are deemed to be closer (Sias and Cahill 1998).

Communication with straight men for the interviewees is predominately about work-related tasks, whereas with the straight women it is about much more personal matters. The interviewees perhaps see straight women as stereotypes of femininity ('emotional experts'), whereas straight men 'are positioned as being emotionally incompetent' (Rumens 2011, p.113). The construction of identity will be explored in more depth in the third of the findings chapters. It is interesting here that the meanings of the friendships are sometimes based on stereotypes of women being caring, emotional, sensitive and feminine (Burgess and Borgida 1999), and in turn the gay men sometimes think that they are seen as being all about image, grooming and fashion (Ridge et al. 2006; Madon 1997).

I sometimes get a little fed up with my girl friend thinking that I am this perfect gay, being only interested in fashion, or how I look and my image. Now I'm not

saying these things aren't important to me, but there is more to me than these things, lol. Well, I like to think there are. But this isn't a major issue really, as she is really caring and would be upset if I said anything to her about this. (Philip)

Some of the interviewees feel that their straight female friends see them as women rather than men. "I don't know because they all call me a bitch, [so] I suppose I am just one of them. She says one of the girls" (Colin). Similarly, Henry believes that:

Possibly yes, they see me as a girl, because I fit in with them and I am happy to talk to them about girly things, I think they see me as one of them rather than a man, they don't really get to see me doing anything manly, so why wouldn't they?

There is clear common ground in terms of what the interviewees believe constitutes friendship. Andy suggests that there should not be an ulterior motive for being friends with someone: "I have had people say, 'I thought you would try it on with me'". Daniel supports this, believing it is about 'value': having someone who is looking out for you and knows that you need help or if you have had a bad time. Gary believes that if all the criteria above are met, then the friend is a 'genuine' person and this is why they have connected with each other: "what attracts me to people is how genuine they are, I don't like fake people or people who put on an act". Similarly, Liam states that the people he is friendly with are genuine and "that's what I like [...] [my female friend] is the same, a very genuine person and that's why we connected". This suggests the gay men do not find the straight men to be genuine, perhaps because the straight men are more interested in maintaining their hetero-masculine image than constructing friendships with gay men. However, this does not mean that straight men are incapable of friendship intimacy (Walker 1994), and it may be that that straight men are performing masculinity to adhere to the heteronormative discourses of masculinity, which is different to that to the performance of femininity and homosexuality (Allan 1989; Way 1997; Nardi 2000). Perhaps what we are seeing here is that the gay men, straight men and women engage with discourses on gender and sexuality that position them and others in different ways. For example, as previously explored, straight men are seen to be poor at intimate friendships. Furthermore, gay men are drawing on discourses of femininity that position straight women as the natural friends of gay men, just as straight women are drawing on discourses of femininity to position gay men as 'one of the girls' (explored further in the final findings chapter). These discourses

create opportunities for friendship, despite such discourses being lived out at variance from what they purport to claim about gender characteristics of men and women.

As demonstrated above, support from work friends means a great deal to the interviewees. In addition to these forms of support, friendship was variously characterised by the interviewees as spending time together, talking, sharing problems, helping each other, gossiping and laughing together. As discussed above, gay men can worry about not making friendships at work. Mutual respect is also important for the interviewees; Colin describes the dynamics in his friendships as follows: “if we have an argument, one goes one way and one the other. Then about half an hour later, one will come back with a brew for the other and we just make up”. Shared interests are important for the interviewees to see a friendship as meaningful:

Again, I can go into the back office and they will all be sitting around talking about rugby, football or whatever or just talking about bands they like and things and some of the conversations like ‘did you see the tits on that?’ and I just cannot get involved in conversations on those subjects, I just switch off and go into another world as I can’t relate to those subjects, where I can relate more to the conversations the women have. (Tim).

When asked how the friendships were formed, several interviewees said their friendships just happened from the situations they are in within the workplace context, which is not an uncommon method of friendship formation (Bell 1981; Sias and Cahill 1998; Reeder 2003). They were not specifically looking for common interests to create the friendships. However, to maintain the friendship over the longer term, it was important for them to establish a common interest and develop a balance in the friendship. Allan (2008, p.14) identifies that:

In the doing of friendship, this balance is maintained through the active, though largely implicit, monitoring of the different forms of material and emotional support exchanged, with each friend usually ensuring that they do not become over indebted.

This was a surprise to me, as I initially thought that the gay men would be looking specifically for people with common interests before forming friendships. As a gay man, I personally always look for people I feel have something in common with me. Not surprisingly, in a workplace context, the initial contact in the development of several of the friendships was made through circumstances out of the control of the people involved. Others were just thrown together with people they had never met

before, starting the job, training, or a close working environment and conditions. Henry believe that: “because of the close working environment it would be hard not to be able to be friends with me or with them.” Developing friendships through close proximity with people in the workplace was typical (Duck 1978; Dickie 2009; Kenny and Kashy 1994). Additionally, it appears that whether the friendships carry on outside the workplace depends on several factors: location, age group and common interests. There is an equal split in those that do and don’t see workplace friends outside of the workplace. Often, if the straight female friends are single, they are more likely to move the friendship beyond the bounds of work.

Some of the people interviewed sought colleagues with similar interests prior to striking up a friendship. This was so important to Philip that he made things up to have something in common: “I have been lying for several years to a couple of the straight guys, even going as far as telling them I am bisexual so that when they are talking about girls I can be part of the conversation”. This supports the work of Ward and Winstanley (2005) who suggest that re-negotiating one’s identity can be stressful. The fact that Philip is going to the lengths of identifying as bisexual to be able to share common ground suggests that the friendships are important. This supports the idea that to maintain a friendship there needs to be some common ground (Bell 1981; Allan 1989; Rumens 2011; Sias et al. 2003), and he has gone to great lengths to ensure this is evident to his straight male friends. The interviewees place stress on the friendship, rather than allowing these friends to hold all the facts and provide the interviewees with the support they need (Humphrey 1999; Rostosky and Riggle 2002; Lugg and Autumn 2010). However, for the majority of the interviewees, commonalities were identified through hearing and observing straight people talk and interact, and then thinking ‘hang on, I can relate to that’ (Andy). Martin looks for common interests with everyone he meets, “whether it be different subjects or maybe you might find that somebody might like reading and you might like reading as well and you kind of connect on that commonality“. Andy believes that straight people are surprised they have something in common with a gay man:

I happen to love the rugby, and he said, ‘what’s a gay man like you enjoying the rugby for? Just looking at the legs?’ I actually turned round and said ‘no, I love the game’ and since then, since we have had that one thing in common, since then we talk more, he’s ever such a, it’s almost as if, God, you know, [he thinks], ‘he doesn’t just like dressing up and knitting’.

While some interviewees struggled to persuade straight men that gay men could be interested in the same things as them, others felt that straight men had nothing in common with them, because the straight men have their own “straight territories that are dominated by straight pursuits” (Tim). Tim’s use of the term “territories” relates to the groups and activities that straight men congregate in or engage in in the workplace. Therefore, if the straight men are conforming to the heteronormative ideals of masculinity and see gay men as feminine, gay man would be less likely to break the barriers of these straight territories to be able to form friendships (although, as we saw with Philip, some men develop strategies to deconstruct those barriers). The interviewees were all looking for common personal traits and similarities; they did not consider, as Sias et al. (2003) identified, that commonalities can be about tasks, location, and mutual dislike of a supervisor or having breaks at the same time. They were all looking for commonalities on a personal, emotional level, which is what they appear to have with their straight female friends. However, conversely, some of the interviewees saw meaning and benefit in the possibility of straight male friends as well as straight female friends.

Having straight friends was seen as a ‘holiday or ‘reprieve’ from the gay scene by many of the gay men. Gary’s job as a residential care provider gives him this feeling:

Yeah, it is like a holiday. This is my space to just be who I am with the people that I care about, rather than be having to think ‘where am I going? I am going out with the gays, I am going to have to put my face on, my hair has to be right, what am I going to wear?’ Actually I can just come into work looking like a bag of crap and no one judges me.

There were other benefits of having straight friends, which contribute to allowing for a sense of personal development and growth (Allan 1989; Hartup and Stevens 1999; Pahl 2000; Bagwell et al. 2001). Gary noted that being in the company of straight men was a break from “gay boy drama” and Andy noted that “the benefits of having straight friends is that you see two different aspects of how two different lifestyles live”. Andy demonstrates that there are perceived differences between the heterosexual and homosexual lifestyle binaries and that the categorisation of these binaries contributes to the organisation of knowledge and discourses associated with these groups (Fee 2000; Valocchi 2005). The participants see a divide between the two different lifestyles that maps onto the heterosexual/homosexual binary. George

also can see the benefit of having straight friends: "Well, I think it's mainly because most of my gay friends know what I do as a second job, working in gay porn, therefore when I am with my straight girl friends they don't know, so it's like having a break from constantly talking about that." However, when talking about their straight friends as a 'holiday' from the gay scene, the interviewees are all referring to straight female friends: none of the interviewees expressed feeling the same way about straight men, and Tim suggested one reason for this discrepancy was "a lack of maturity" in the straight men. Identifying straight men in this manner places a barrier on them in such a way they are unlikely to form friendships with the straight men. This also prevents them from having support from a close (male) friendship. When they are thinking of coming out to a wider audience at work or when dealing with difficult issues, friendship can be a great support (Humphrey 1999; Rostosky and Riggle 2002; Lugg and Autumn 2010).

There was a clear distinction evident in the boundaries and definitions of friendship identified by the gay men when defining their friendships with straight men and straight women. The interviewees were clear that they were not as honest and open with straight men as with straight female friends. They also did not identify their straight male colleagues as close friends, unlike their straight female colleagues. This was due to some interviewees feeling that straight men do not have "a clue what they [we] are about" (Liam). Therefore, there was no reciprocity in the relationship, preventing the feeling of belonging. Without a sense of belonging, there is a fear of isolation and loneliness (Erikson 1963; Peplau and Perlman 1982; Rokach 1989; Baumeister and Leary 1995; Boivin and Hymel 1997). Philip made clear that, in his workplace, he often feels isolated when he is with straight men:

I always feel really uncomfortable when I have to work on a project with a group of straight men. They don't know me and I feel they are laughing at me behind my back, especially if I am not close to any of them, it's a really lonely experience, and one that I dread being in. I can't wait to get out of the meetings and back to my female friends. God, it's depressing.

Mark, like other interviewees, felt that establishing friendship with straight men could not be rushed:

Eventually. Yeah, it does take some time. I think it will be a lot quicker here where I am at the moment in my new job because it's been so easily accepted straight away. If I'd been in any other job [...] say, for example, I went in and I

like had a kind of feel for the place and thought, 'it's not too bad but (1) I'm not going to tell anybody yet and (2) I'm going to bide my time to actually get to know people before I really show the [straight men] the real me', if you get what I mean, you know?

However, if they see their straight male colleagues taking an interest in them by being comfortable in their social surroundings (for example, going to gay clubs), then it is easier for the interviewees to be a little more open (Hayden). However, Hayden still believes he would be careful around straight men, where he isn't "fussed" about being careful around his straight women friends. He also is not guarded about what he allows his straight female friends see him doing when socialising, where he would be far more guarded if out with a straight male friend, because he does not want the straight males he works with to see or experience the gay side of his life and this would make him vulnerable. Similarly, Steve notes both understanding and lack of understanding from his straight friends:

I would not discuss things like what trousers go with these shoes etc. with my straight friends. Although I think that the majority of the straight people I know are very understanding of the gay thing, they are not fazed by it, so I don't necessarily feel that there are any boundaries or things that I can't discuss with them. Yes, because some of them find it funny or comical or they get really interested and into it and are asking questions, like how it works then. They ask things like, 'who is the man in the relationship?'

Daniel socialises with his straight male work friends, but (unlike with his female work friends) he is not out to the straight men. He finds it difficult and goes along with what they talk about. This is especially awkward for him when they point out girls they are attracted to or try and fix him up with women. He finds this "a bit sad" as he would like to be more open with the straight men (he would first have to admit to them that he has not been honest with them). Ward and Winstanley (2005) state that it is difficult to come out once an identity has been established. Daniel's experience was not unique and several interviewees felt that straight men would not be welcoming.

It is clear from the interviewee's responses that gay men can have a preconceived expectation of straight male behaviour, which they struggle to relate to or understand, and which in turn prevents them from wanting to form close friendships with straight men. The gay men are applying stereotypes and expecting straight men to live by the heteronormative male socially-constructed paradigms, adhering to a constructed social protocol (as identified in the first chapter of findings), rather than

trying to problematize their own expectations. One argument is that straight men are reproducing masculinity consistent with the expected social masculine protocol. Therefore, straight men identify themselves as superior to the women and gay men who they are devaluing (Anderson 2005). However, Anderson's later work found that masculinity is not fixed, but diverse, and that straight men are capable of a 'diverse set of attitudes, behaviours and social norms' (2015, p.214). Therefore, if straight men experience different forms of masculinity and are able to experience intimacy then the lines between straight and gay identity are blurred (Anderson and McCormack 2015; McCormack 2012). One perspective is that the gay men's insecurities and prejudices are being projected onto the straight men, creating a barrier to a potential close work friendship. For example, James believes his straight colleagues look down on him and his lifestyle and therefore struggles to form friendships with them. Mark suggests that, "There's nothing quite deep about it or anything like that, it's just conversation with the straight men". As the interviewees outlined, one of the contributing factors to being true friends is mutual respect. Martin is fearful that the straight men judge him and think his lifestyle is disgusting, while according to James it takes a very specific type of straight man to be friends with a gay man. This is supported by other interviewees, who state that only the more artistic and more 'feminine' types of straight men are accepting of gay men, because they are more sensitive to the needs of others. This is also in line with Hill's (2010) research, which identified that feminine straight men are often interpreted as gay and are not seen as desirable friends for other straight men, and therefore they are more likely to be more accepting of friendships with gay men as this does not challenge their performance of heteromasculinities. Steve supports this, as he believes that he is more sensitive and creative than straight men and that straight women like to be friends with gay men because they have those traits. Hill (2010) found that straight women like to be friends with men they identify as having positive feminine traits. Alternatively, Mark is concerned that he is used by his straight male colleagues: he feels that some of them are friendly with him to be seen to being accepting of diversity and helps them to feel like more rounded people, which in turn helps them progress within the company. Therefore, the friendship is not honest, and he is being used to help further the needs of others.

It will help them, I think. I think sometimes they actually look at it, but it might be a bit of a notch on their belt because it would help them with, like, progressing in the company to say, you know, 'I'm not discriminating', you know, 'I accept equal opportunities' and it also help outside as well. Socially, they can say 'oh yeah, I've got a gay friend in work, you know, so I'm alright with gay people'. Yeah, so it kind of... I think it actually helps them with their egos. (Mark)

Mark's comments show that he believes that there is potential for gay men to be used by straight men to further their careers, rather than to be a supporting mechanism in the workplace. Thus, this type of friendship could be identified as not worth nurturing, as it is not based on the traits and values the interviewees identify as important in a friendship.

Gay Men's Friendship: Nurturing

The literature on gay men and nurturing friendships is embryonic, with very little research having been undertaken in the area. As such, I have borrowed insights from the literature on gender nurturing (Andrew and Montague 1998; Dunn 1987; Geers 1998; Oswald and Clark 2006; Reeder 2003) to explore how gay men feel they have to undertake the work of nurturing friendships in the workplace.

Interviews revealed how they found themselves performing a nurturing role in order to develop friendships. Notably, they also felt that this was expected of them as gay men, stereotyped as natural carers and nurturers by some of their straight friends. There is very little research or literature in the area of gay men nurturing cross sex friendships. Therefore, I have explored the idea of friendship nurturing using the more general gender literature pertaining to women's friendships. As Andrew and Montague (1998) and Burgess and Borgida (1999) identified, female friendships are often seen as second-rate, and their identities are tied up with normative qualities of femininity such as caring and nurturing. Therefore, those interviewees who are seen to be nurturing their friendships are replicating the discourses of a heteronormative binary of friendship that identifies the nurturer as feminine. This contributes to gendered stereotyping, underpinned by an assumption that gay men are closer to normative femininity than masculinity (Edelman 2004). Some interviewees found themselves taking on the role of friendship initiator, such as Andy, who implied that straight men

are incapable of support or nurturing. He felt that a straight man would not go out of his way to nurture a friendship, as this would be considered feminine behaviour:

A girl would come to me straight away, where[as with] a guy, I would have to go over to them, as they are not interested in the caring side or developing and looking after the friendship, which is a bit odd really. In answer to your question, they are not nurturing, I don't think they are capable of that, as that would not be seen as being manly.

If nurturing is not “manly”, then straight men are discursively positioned as incapable of nurturing, as Geers (1998, p.15) identified: ‘Women are generally socialised to be more nurturing and accepting of others than are men, perhaps resulting in females’ having more friends with different outlooks from their own’. The majority of the interviewees believed that the nurturing was mutual between them and their straight female friends, problematizing the idea that only women are capable of nurturing. ‘Overall, research on gender differences in relationships suggests that males and females tend to approach relationship maintenance differently’ (Oswald et al. 2004, p.417). Masculinity has mostly been defined as autonomous, dominant and assertive (Blashill and Powlishta 2009, p.784). The interviewees approached the maintenance of their friendships differently, by being far more open, caring, nurturing and trusting with their straight female friends, whereas they were distant, less trusting and avoided nurturing with their straight male colleagues, switching between the stereotypical behaviour of masculine and feminine depending on which gender they were dealing with, reinforcing the gender stereotypes rather than problematizing them.

I really only nurture my friendships with the straight women. There are exceptions to that, but they're not my friends at work: they are mostly the straight guys I work with, if that makes sense, who I need something from. There are certain people that obviously I bow down to without question, like my boss, who is a straight guy. Well, I think he is [laughs]. (James)

For the interviewees that identified the nurturing of the friendship as mutual, it was important that both parties’ needs in the friendship are met. Gary thought it would be selfish of his friend not to take interest in his problems. He even stated that this was maybe a little selfish, but that it was good to be a little selfish now and again.

Similarly, Hayden identified himself as over-nurturing with his friends when he first started working as a commercial services manager at a university, because he was nervous he would not make friends, as the working environment was dominated by straight men. However, once a friendship formed with the straight woman in the

office, he then felt there was a much more equal balance within the dyadic friendship and the nurturing became more balanced. He states:

I think it is equal, it is equal; I don't think there has been a conscious effort to make an effort from either side. I think it's just, when I first started, I think my nerves kind of made me a bit over-eager to form relationships, but that was only for the first week then I was like, 'whatever' and they just kind of formed naturally after that.

Shaun also described the nurturing as balanced with his straight female friend: "we both share the nurturing, it's equally balanced we give each other advice and things, she supports me and I support her". It is clear from the interviewees that their friendships with straight women are seen as balanced: "[i]t's pretty equal to be honest. I mean, there's some people who I can't say that I'm overly friendly with, it's just sort of chatting but it stays at work and that's pretty much it but yeah, I'd say it's pretty balanced. I'd say a 50/50" (George). However, this balance is not the same when they are trying to be part of a group or friends with straight men. Henry (a customer service agent for a large pharmaceutical company) explains: "the straight men are self-absorbed, being only interested in their own lives and those of people who are similar to them". Henry wants to be friends with all the people he works with, but believes that this is only possible if he makes more effort to be accepted:

I would say that I put more effort into making friendships with straight men. I think deep down in a way, now that you have asked the question, I just want to be, I don't know, I just want to be part of a group I want to be involved. Yes, [I would be left out] because it happens. I think it is because they [straight men] are so self-absorbed in their own lives.

Paul feels he is the nurturer: he is fearful he will not be liked if he does not make the extra effort. He stated that he likes "to keep people happy all the time so that they are not angry or upset" with him. As a consequence of this he has to go the extra mile to keep the peace. However, he finds being the nurturer unrewarding and tiring:

I think I'm quite a nurturing person. I think that I do... I think I've always since I was at school... I was quite a bit of a geek when I was at school and I was quite shy and introverted, so I think when I was about eighteen, I went to college and kind of switched and kind of went the other way [...] I've always pushed to try and make friends or make an effort with people [...] I don't like people to be angry with me... to be upset with me and you know, I like to please people. So I do I think push to, like you say, nurture friendships and be liked [...] this one friend I've got, she's cancelled on me about four or five times in the last couple of months and I've got to the point with this last one

last week I've spent like fifty pounds on a couple of tickets to go and see some show and she cancelled on me on the day of it and I just ... I was exhausted by it as well... I can't keep doing this.

Gary was also aware of the pitfalls of doing all the 'heavy lifting':

if you are putting more in than you are receiving, it kind of gets to the point then when you are thinking 'what about me?', and that is a very selfish thing to say, but we all need to be a little selfish once in a while [...] one of my friends had issues every single day and I was the one nurturing them and guiding them and I had an issue, but their issues were over-shining [sic.] mine, then what about me?

Martin's approach to nurturing differs from others who identified as nurturers. He assesses the friendship to identify whether he feels it is worth nurturing. If he does not believe he is fully accepted by the other person, he does not nurture the friendship. However, if he believes the friendship is worth it, he will go out of his way to nurture it:

If the person... like this particular person that I told you about before, [if I] kind of I saw [him/her] making jokes about me or making jokes about my sexuality, then I wouldn't be overly enthusiastic to nurture that friendship, you know? But if I see someone who's a good person and someone that's friendly, they don't have an issue with me, then of course I don't mind nurturing the friendship.

Other interviewees were similarly cautious, speaking of being "very careful" (Mark) and taking time to develop trust. George is also wary:

I'm quite... I sort of keep things that matter to me a lot or things that hurt me or things that are very close to my chest... It takes a while for me to actually trust people enough to tell them anything like that.

Adam feels neglected by the straight men in his workplace: "I'd say I put more effort in. I don't know why but it does come across like that sometimes. It would have been nice to be have been asked, even if I couldn't have made it". Paul has had previous bad experiences: "I've had my fingers burnt with being too trusting before".

When nurturing is balanced, interviewees felt this enhanced their friendship: Shaun, George, Mark, Steve and James all agreed on this, with James stating that if the friendship nurturing is not mutual "then they are not my friends". Interestingly, this was not about equality or balance; the question specifically asked whether it was mutual, so one friend may need more nurturing than another at any given time, provided there was reciprocity. Additionally, Steve believes that mutual nurturing allows friends to share different life experiences. Mark believes that mutual nurturing

enables him to be more at ease and creates a “nicer” work environment. Gary described a period when he needed his friends to be more nurturing, as follows:

I could have broken up with a monkey or a dog: the fact is, the fact that I was upset and I was hurt was their concern, so they would ring me when they were on days off asking if I wanted to come out for a drink or whatever. Their support was there throughout the break up. I think actually without their support from them I probably wouldn't be as okay about things as I am now.

Daniel describes another mutually rewarding relationship:

I think that that particular friendship at work, she is as caring as I am, she is, somebody who looks after everybody. Her role in the branch is to look out for everyone, talk to everyone, see if they are okay and she has the prime responsibility. I just look after her because I know the role of taking on a lot of problems can be problematic for yourself. I look after them, I look after everybody. I do have a soft spot for anyone that is in need.

For the interviewees, it is evidently important for them to have meaningful friendships in which they experience closeness. This can be seen through their desire to nurture the friendships they have with straight women. Deep friendships for gay men are still about closeness and part of that closeness is experiencing intimacy with their friends (Allan 1989; Bird 1996; Fee 2000; Nardi 2000; Rumens 2011).

Gay Men's Friendships: Intimacy

Intimacy can be defined in a variety of ways, based on sharing activities, personal information, trust, conversations, physical contact, sex, etc. (Allan 1989; Bird 1996; Fee 2000; Nardi 2000; Reid and Fine 1992; Swain 1989). For the purpose of these interviews, it was made clear to the interviewees that when I was asking about intimacy it related to the sharing of personal issues and emotions, and I was not looking for the participants to describe sexual intimacy with men. However, the intention was not to foreclose any meanings attributed to intimacy where the lines are blurred between emotional and sexual boundaries and forms of sexual intimacy, which gay men's friendships have been identified as doing (Nardi 1999). Hence, some of the interviewees reported that they hugged their friends (Steve: “we all have moments when we are giving each other cuddles, as we all need times when we are supporting each other and have problems at home etc. we can help each other to

get through it"). Interviewees discussed a variety of areas in which they were intimate with their work friends, including issues with their children (Colin) and problems with their home life. Some of these were very personal:

I knew obviously there were going to be problems with me and my ex, you know, and I shared [that with her] that, you know, like, 'God knows what I'm going to do if this happens' and [...] fears of being alone, fears of being [...] near enough homeless and not being able to afford to live and that sort of stuff. (Adam)

Gary (who works with vulnerable children and lives on the premises of the home) believes that being intimate with his work friend is paramount, as this helps develop the trust that enables them to cope with their stressful work.

[I]t's an intense job, working with these children, they obviously have behavioural difficulties, so they are prone to having episodes of heightened emotions, where they attack staff members and although they are only little the staff still do need to be supported [...] and in that situation you need to know that your colleague/friend is behind you a hundred percent, because that support is paramount in this job because there is the risk of allegation[s] and also the risk of being hurt, so you need to be, you need to have these kind of intimate relationships with the people that you work with.

However, James said that he never allows intimacy to develop with his work friends as he likes to be a very private person (not just with his friends; James does not talk about personal issues with his family or his partner of ten years). George also only allowed himself to talk about some areas of his life, and did not discuss his sex life, while Hayden appeared to resist intimacy with everyone:

My darkest deepest secrets, it's just a dark deep place. I don't know, I don't know how intimate I would be willing to go. I think I don't really get that intimate with most of my friends because if it's that deep and dark, it's that deep and dark for a reason. Although, if I was, I would be more likely to with the girl I am friendly with.

It is clear from the responses of the interviewees that they do not talk about their straight male friends with the same fondness they feel towards their female friends, and struggle to form any intimacy with them. According to Bank and Hansford (2000) men who desire intimacy from their same-sex friendships face several challenges, particularly the fear of appearing feminine, resulting in possible homophobia. If more of the interviewees were to invest in a friendship with a straight man and queer their notion of friendship, their understanding and view of intimacy could be re-examined,

and a mutual appreciation of intimacy could be achieved, as sharing similar activities and interests on both a personal level and work level can help to create an intimate connection (Heasley 2005; Morman 2013; Reid and Fine 1992; Swain 1989).

Despite all the interviewees stating during the interview selection process that they had close male friends at work, only two of them after interviewing actually identified themselves as being friends with straight men. The other participants felt that the straight men were colleagues who they were friendly, with rather than actually defining them as close friends. For example, Mark backtracked after giving it some thought and realised his closest friend was female; and Arthur said he had more of a laugh with women than men, but couldn't articulate why.

The evidence suggests that the interviewees found it easier to have an intimate friendship with female work friends rather than male work friends. Andy suggests this could be because of the fear that straight men may think that they are "trying it on" and this was evident in the vast majority of the interviews undertaken. Tim felt that he does not know his straight male friends/colleagues well enough to know how they would react to him disclosing personal details about his life. He feels that his straight male colleagues are "shallow-minded" and not interested in sharing details about their respective private lives. It is clear that the interviewees saw intimacy as sharing personal issues and closeness, rather than (as discussed earlier) through different forms of connection. The evidence is not always obvious at first read of the interviews. However, when reading the responses from other areas where they were asked about intimacy and trust, it became clear that the majority of the gay men were more intimate with women than men. This is due to the interviewees believing that women see intimacy in the same way as them, making it easier to identify (Allan 1989; Way 1997; Nardi 2000). Andy states, "I would be more likely to go to a girl, as they understand me." Daniel states that he listens to his female friend's problems and she listens to his; he has had quite a few problems and issues lately and she has been his "rock". Shaun talks to his female friend about, for example, arguments at home, his sex life, "everything really". This also applies to Tim and Toby, who have talked to their female work friends about anything and everything including the "gruesome" details of their lives; significantly, this was a reciprocal arrangement ("Yes, I have told her really personal and gruesome things and everything and she

has told me the same"). Tim became very close to his female friend, allowing her to move in with him for a week when she needed somewhere to stay.

Several of the interviewees stated that their friendships with straight women evolved naturally. However, if this is correct, it would be unlikely that all the interviewees would prefer to have straight female friends. On further analysis of the data, it is evident that the gay men consciously choose straight women as friends over straight men. The interviewees see women as more accepting and less intimidating than the straight men (Galupo 2007; Tillman-Healy 2003; Shepperd et al. 2010). This appears to be a lack of negotiation of the barriers between straight and gay men that prevents these friendships from becoming intimate. A lack of mutual interests was mentioned here too, as described by Liam and Henry:

I have not got a fucking clue about what you are going on about here, so everything that I am interested in they are not the foggiest about and what they are interested in I haven't, so, they are talking about things, so there is no point getting involved with things that I don't give a shit about. (Liam)

I guess I am better with women; I was brought up with my mother and three sisters, so I don't really have that male interaction as much. So at times, if they are very heterosexual and such, watching the football and rugby, I'm not into that. So if there were a big group of guys doing that and a group of women, I would go to the women's side. (Henry)

Tim even suggests that lack of intimacy might trump shared interests for him, noting that he would prefer to seek advice from a female friend, and stating of a straight male friend that "[a]s much as he likes things that I like, he is still very shallow-minded in some respects". Interviewees Toby and George describe other barriers (age, religion) to making friends with colleagues:

I get on with them, I have a laugh and a joke with them, but they're probably not the sort I would join for a drink after work sort of thing, because the [topics of] conversation I'm talking about... like, my everyday life, I live a gay life ... I go on dates with men. I do different things to what they probably go down to the pub and watch football or something and I do different things to that so we don't tend to have as much in common and I think from their era as well [...] back then it was wrong to be gay, wasn't it? (Toby)

Because of the age gap there are some environmental difference[s] that give different perspectives on people who are gay. There is one particular lady, she is not nasty or mean to me, but she is a bit cold to me. She doesn't really like me because I am gay. There are different religions as well, the Muslim girls don't really understand or talk to me, which I understand in some ways as I had a very religious upbringing myself. But I think that there are other

people that would think, 'well, why you are not talking to me, and why are you not comfortable with me?' It's a case of live and let live. Actually they are not causing anything, so why should I challenge them? (George)

The struggle to form intimate friendships is more evident between gay and straight men. It is easier and more natural for the interviewees to be intimate with their straight female friends.

Discussion

Workplace friendships, according to the interviewees, are important to their happiness within the workplace, but they were reluctant to form friendships with straight men as they were less likely to develop into supportive, trustworthy, intimate friendships. The meanings gay men attributed to workplace friendships varied, but tended to conform to similar underlying principles of friendship to those outlined at the beginning of this chapter as being mutually caring, emotionally supportive and trusting. However, it would be imprudent to accept at face value that all friendships can be assumed to hold the same depth of meaning. It is almost impossible to clearly define the meaning of friendship and categorise friendships despite seeing similarities in this research. According to Wright (1982) Phal (2000), Allan (1989), Adams and Allan (1998) and Bagwell et al. (2001), friendship is indistinct as the meanings associated with it are broad, subjective and open to interpretation. However, what we have seen above are that honesty and trust need to be present for the interviewees before they consider their friendships to be close and to have meaning. Where there is no trust or honesty, the interviewees saw these relationships as difficult, supporting the research of Lepore (1992), Hess (2000), Ingram and Roberts (2000) and Bushman and Holt-Lunstad (2009), who found that in some cases, people's friends were unpleasant about each other behind their back, which was a concern for the interviewees, especially if they were friends with straight men.

Even though the interviewees believe it is positive to befriend females rather than males, they are often not giving men the chance to be friends with them. Looking at this through the lens of queer theory, there is very little problematizing of the understanding of the homosexual/heterosexual binaries evident between the straight men and the interviewees (Sedgwick 1990; Watson 2005). Therefore, they are

missing out on the possibility of experiencing the workplace and friendship from the perspective of a straight man. Looking to form diverse friendships, so they are not just friends with straight women, would present the ideal opportunity to queer workplace relationships and challenge the interviewees' understanding of their own prejudices and discourses and thus problematize the meanings and uncertainty they have constructed in relation to being friends with straight men (Shepperd et al. 2010; Rumens, 2008; Watson 2005). Through reflecting on their friendships during the interviews, the interviewees adopted a reflexively queer approach to understanding their friendships (Adams and Holman-Jones 2011). The interviewees were able to identify why they are more intimate with straight women. They then started to queer potential friendships with straight men and explore alternative forms of intimacy within their friendships, looking at how the friendships with straight men differed from those with straight women. As Valocchi (2005) identifies, queering can be used to rethink the nature of power, gender and human subjectivity when looking at the discourses surrounding social differences, allowing for a disruption of current understandings. Unfortunately, many interviewees were unable to articulate more than their fears of being rejected, ridiculed or seen as secondary to straight men by the straight men in their workplaces. From a queer theory perspective, there is very little evidence that the interviewees are constructing or disrupting the interactive possibilities of friendship outside their friendships with straight women (Shepperd et al 2010). This is at a variance to the findings of Anderson (2015) and Rumen (2010), who found that gay men were able to have straight male friends, and to challenge notions of how men's friendships can form. Additionally, through friendships between gay and straight men, they can both gain support (Nardi, 1999). The interviewees discursively position their friendships with straight men and women differently: they position female friends as kind caring, intimate and suitable for close friendship, and straight male friends as judgemental, untrustworthy, and incapable of intimacy. There is little that is queer about their friendships, as they are conforming to the relevant gender discourses. This is in contrast to the findings of Rumens (2010) and Shepperd et al. (2010), who found that friendships for gay men move beyond stereotypes, and that friendships with straight men and women help gay men to create viable identities that allow them to feel less marginalised.

For this researcher, it was a surprise that the interviewees preferred straight women over straight men, as I (a camp gay man) mainly have straight male friends in the workplace. Therefore, understanding how gay men feel they are understood and valued in terms of friendship by their straight female friends will contribute to current understanding of why they are more likely to have a cross-sex friendship bond develop (Blashill et al. 2009; Hill 2006; Rumens 2010; Walker 1994). Clearly the gay men involved in this research feel more relaxed around straight women. This is evident in the perception of the interviewees that the straight women they are friends with are more accepting of gay men: "I couldn't see a straight man going out of their way to come to me, where a girl would come to me straight away" (Colin).

Additionally, straight women do not seem to see being gay as an issue, which makes the gay men feel more comfortable in their company: "we were talking about partners and stuff and I just said I was gay, she started smiling and then going on about shopping" (Colin). The straight women accept and include the gay men in their social circle and treat them as one of their own: "they call me a bitch in a friendly fun way; she says I am one of the girls" (Colin). However, this objectifies and stereotypes gay men as non-male. The interviewees did not say this bothered them, but it is in juxtaposition to earlier findings in which gay men were, in some cases, trying to compete with straight men. Consistent with Shepperd et al. (2010), I found that the gay men interviewed were predominantly in dyadic friendships with women and that the participants were happy to be excluded by those women from the normative discourses surrounding heterosexual masculinity.

The gay men questioned do not see themselves as having a specific identity in the eyes of others. They believe that some people see them as men; others see them as female; and yet others still see them as something different. None of the interviewees thought that people saw them as gay men, a single identity. From a queer theory perspective this could be seen as both constraining and enabling the identity of gay men, as their identity is determined through the discourse that is historically constructed in their workplace context, and is applied by both straight men and straight women in that workplace (Valocchi, 2005).

Currently, if the interviewees want to create space for themselves, fit into the workplace and have friends, they have to relinquish their gay individuality and

conform to expect stereotypes (Adams and Holman-Jones 2011; Eves 2004; Rumens 2008). As identified earlier, friendships are important in the workplace for both morale and happiness. Therefore, the interviewees, to some extent, have to adjust their identity as gay men to fit into a specific heteronormative social group, rather than as would be expected from a queer theory approach, to 'disrupt insidious social conventions' (Adams and Holman-Jones 2011, p.110). Rather than queering the idea of what it is to be a gay friend in the workplace, the interviewees are normalising the idea of cooperative heteronormative workplaces, due to their concerns that straight men will not be interested in being close friends with them. This fear is a result of the vast majority of the gay men interviewed not socialising, not attempting to queer their current relationships, and/or not understanding the straight men they work with and only seeing them as colleagues. The reinforcement of the barriers between the two groups, and the reinforcement of the gender and sexual binaries, contributes to the anxiety that is felt when the two groups are forced to engage with each other. Through a better understanding of each other's differences, a closer working relationship could be formed, allowing new friendships to develop alongside those friendships with straight women. However, queer theory suggests that this would also require challenging the discourses and paradigms associated with friendships. The interviewees could queer and disrupt the discourse of the dominant focus of hetero-masculinity and the implications and understanding this has for them when constructing friendships with straight men, by presenting an alternative form of masculinity (Rumens 2010; Sedgwick 1990; Shepperd 2010)

As can be seen from the earlier findings, the workplace context can influence the construction of friendships. All the interviewees stated that their closest friends at work were straight women. They believed that the straight women (unlike the straight men) understood their lifestyle and vice-versa. Liam stated that "I think [the straight men] they would be like, 'shit, I don't know what to say', and I'd be like, 'you haven't got a fucking clue what I am on about, top, bottom versatile, whatever' [laughs]." Indirectly, these interviewees are saying that women are caring and men are not. It is the notion that straight men "wouldn't have a clue" that I find difficult to understand. The interviewees are, at times, simultaneously failing to understand straight men and stereotyping them as all the same, rather than deconstructing the normalised categories of gendered norms (Beemyn and Eliason 1996; Goldman 1996; Giffney

2004). On the one hand, without challenging these norms and stereotypes, the situation is not going to change and straight men are not given the opportunity to nurture potential friendships with the interviewees. The interviewees are constructing heterosexual men as monolithic, with a stable identity category, when in reality male heterosexuality and masculinity is diverse (Allan 2008; Anderson 2005, 2015; Migliaccio 2009; Rumens and Kerfoot 2005). On the other hand, many gay men felt they had to put more effort into maintaining and nurturing their workplace friendships than the other friend in the dyad. The idea of friendship nurturing demonstrates that the nurturer not only feels they need to behave in this manner to sustain a friendship, but also they have insecurities about their own self and do not always see themselves as worthy of a dyadic friendship unless they can give more than the other friend, making them indispensable to the other person.

Paul comments that he is often let down by friends, who see this behaviour as acceptable. He feels unfulfilled, and yet he has also perpetuated this type of friendship through his desire to please: through his nurturing, he has reinforced his friends' bad behaviour. He recognises that he cannot continue to be this type of nurturer long-term, as it comes with both an emotional and financial cost. However, he does not suggest that he knows how to make this change. Having close female workplace friends enabled the interviewees to be open and honest about being gay men. From my findings, typically women are perceived by gay men as more capable of reciprocal nurturing, caring and intimacy within a friendship. Interviewees can be seen to problematize the idea of men being incapable of nurturing; however, at the same time the interviewees are reinforcing the sexual stereotypes of gay men as naturally more nurturing and therefore more feminine than straight men (this will be explored further in the final findings chapter). 'The support of friendships and elective communities introduces the possibility of living outside of hetero-norms in a way that more circumscribed relations do not' (Budgeon 2006, p.10), and this applies particularly to those interviewees who are taking the role of principal nurturer in the friendship. They are the nurturers rather than the women; therefore they are queering the traditional gender roles within the friendship. As I have identified earlier, my findings show that the interviewees believe that these traits define their friendships as close. Not only do they accept these traits as the holy grail of friendship, they also buy into the idea that without them a friendship would not be

trusting and supportive. I did not find any examples of interviewees trying to subvert or problematize these ideals of gender differences in friendship. To queer the notion of gendered friendship traits, the interviewees would need to challenge hetero-norms that constitute specific friendships as caring, intimate and nurturing (Allan 2008; Bagwell 2001; Hartup and Stevens 1999; Ingram and Zou 2008; Jehn and Shah 1997; Shelton et al. 2009). However, there is limited evidence to suggest that interviewees are exploring new forms of workplace friendships that disrupt hetero-norms.

However, the interviewees appear to be heavily reliant on sexual and gender discourses that enable them to construct meanings of workplace friendship that conform to heteronormative definitions of gay-straight male and gay-straight female friendships. As Nardi (1992, p.1) points out, 'images of ideal friendship are often expressed in terms of women's traits: intimacy, trust, caring and nurturing, thereby excluding the more traditional men from true friendship'. Therefore, it is possible to see in the data how gay men's friendships are given meaning through feminine stereotypes of friendship.

Exploring the importance of workplace friendships, trust and support from those friendships and how the interviewees maintain those friendships with their straight female friends through nurturing and intimacy, leads on to how the participants construct the gender identity of others along with their own in order to create friendships. The third findings chapter will explore how the interviewees construct identity and the implications of this construction.

Chapter Five (Findings) identity and construction

Introduction

This final findings chapter will explore how gay men's workplace friendships with men and women influence the identity construction of gay men, examining the implications for establishing closeness within these friendships. It will also explore how the interviewees construct the identities of their friends and how their friends, in turn, influence the construction of interviewees' identities in the workplace. Firstly, I will present findings that reveal how gay men can stereotype themselves and the straight men and women they befriend. As discussed in the literature review, identity construction and stereotypes can impact on the ability of individuals to construct workplace friendships (Anderson 2005; Blashill and Powlishta 2009; Dutton et al. 2010; Fingerhut and Peplau 2006; Smith and Ingram 2004). It is evident from my findings that the people gay men choose as friends can contribute to the identity they construct for themselves. As Reddy and Butler (2004) observed, this does not mean that people are unable to construct their own identity, but that their identity is performatively constituted amid the discursive constraints from gender and sexual norms, which means that identities are in a constant process of being (re)made. Therefore, identity is not a fixed construct but can be adapted so, for example, that it fits with the identity expected of them from their friends:

I was in a meeting the other day with visiting international people and you know I can be overtly camp, but I needed to tone it right down for this meeting as the people visiting people were from the Middle East, I didn't want to draw attention to my sexuality and feel I wasn't being taken seriously. When we came out of the meeting my female friend said to me, 'what happened to you> You turned in to a straight boy! I nearly laughed.' I said to her, 'I am a chameleon, [I] need to change all the time.' (Philip)

As Philip demonstrated, identity is not fixed: it can constantly change depending on the performance that is required. For example, some of the interviewees performed a camp, 'screaming' identity, while others flip between a less camp identity and a more stereotypical masculine identity depending on who they are with:

I try, I try [laughs]. I am a lot less camp than I am than when I am out with my friends. Yeah, I think at first it was nerves, I was very nervous, when I get very nervous I have a deeper voice, closed arms and that sort of thing, more straight body language. (Daniel).

As hinted at above, this chapter proceeds on the understanding that the discursive construction of identity in the workplace is complex, and an important aspect of the work lives of gay men. The empirical data reveals that interviewees not only construct their own identity, but are also engaged in a discursive process of constituting the identities of others. As demonstrated in the previous findings chapters, the heteronormativity of the workplace influences how gay men construct workplace identities.

This chapter seeks to contribute to the understanding of why gay men construct particular identities for themselves and others, and the impact this has on their workplace friendships. The empirical data shows that more often than not the interviewees are relying on stereotypes of straight men and women (and often of gay men) when constructing identities. The context of the workplace has an influence on the identity the interviewees construct. As in the previous chapters, if the workplace is dominated by straight men or is one in which being gay is seen as negative, then the interviewees are less likely to be overtly camp and more likely to construct an identity that conforms to the hetero-norms of masculinity. The chapter begins with an exploration of the common stereotype identities evident amongst the interviewees. This is followed by an exploration of the construction of these stereotypes for the interviewees, and finally an overall discussion of the findings.

Gay men, gender censorship

Gender censorship is a method of constructing a different identity, not only for the interviewees, but for their male partners by referring to them using neutral pronouns or through changing 'him' and 'he' to 'her' and 'she' (Ellis and Riggle 1996; Griffith and Hebl 2002). It is a method of reinforcing the stereotype that men should be with women, and women with men, and anything else is wrong or queer. Therefore, gender censoring of identity can be seen as strategically constructing an identity to suit the needs of the individual, which can discourage gay men outing themselves when they feel it is unnecessary to do so. Alternatively, gay men may avoid referring to their partner's name or gender altogether to avoid being 'detected' as gay (Griffith and Hebl 2002). Only two interviewee said they gender censor, and this was only occasionally, and depended on the situation they were in:

it depends on what situation I'm in and if I feel threatened, if I am talking to my friends, I'd say 'me partner' or 'me fella'; if not, then I will avoid saying anything or just say 'partner' or 'she'. (Daniel)

This suggests that on the whole this group of people are happy for people to know they are gay, but this does not take away the anxiety or fear of being treated differently or victimised for their sexuality (Bowring and Brewis 2009; Ward and Winstanley 2005). Philip used to gender censor, but found it difficult to maintain. He has adopted a camp identity to avoid having to keep coming out:

I used to change the sex of my partner to say 'she', so that I didn't then have to answer awkward questions about being gay. [But] I can't be arsed anymore to do it, it is draining. I am now me, slightly camp and obviously gay. It saves having to keep coming out. Straight people don't have that problem: gay people have to come out so many times to different people. It's exhausting. (Philip).

Philip's comments are indicative of how other interviewees have adopted and perform a camp gay stereotype in the workplace. It enables them to out themselves as gay via a recognised performance that produces an identity effect their colleagues can easily relate to, as the stereotypes associated with being gay are consistent in their meaning (Blashill and Powlishta 2009; Fingerhut and Peplau 2006).

Gay men: Camp identity

Several interviewees self-identified as camp and used this identity to break down barriers in the workplace. They used the performance of camp to entertain and demonstrate that they were not a threat: "I'm camp, so no threat to the straight men, as I leave all that macho stuff to them" (Steve). However, this behaviour has a possible negative connotation for other gay men in the workplace, as the performance of camp can reinforce unchallenged gay stereotypes and erect barriers to friendship with straight men:

I think they have a preconceived perception of what a gay man is, yeah, and that's why some of them didn't realise that I was because I didn't go in wearing pink and throwing glitter. It wasn't what I did; if I had I am sure the straight guys would have run for the hills and not talked to me (George).

This can make it difficult for other gay men coming out in the workplace for fear of being identified according to these stereotypes. According to several of the interviewees, being identified as gay seems to come with expectations of camp behaviour (what Liam describes as "all that gay shebang"). However, it did not seem to bother many of the interviewees, even though it might make some colleagues feel uncomfortable. Tim explained that it has taken eighteen months for some colleagues to get used to his behaviour, both challenging their ideas about working with gay men and reinforcing the stereotype that gay men are intrinsically feminine and camp (Fingerhut and Peplau 2006; Michasiw 1994). As discussed in the literature review, the meanings attributed to campness and its association with gay male culture in particular have varied, not least because they are contextually contingent and historically patterned (Cleto, 1999; Meyer 2005; Michasiw, 1994). Male gay camp has been frequently read as a parody of femininity (Meyer 2005), and can be flamboyant and exaggerated, both applauded and derided for its entertainment value. For some participants, the performance of campness was felt to be appropriate in some situations:

... because I was in [an] entertainment environment every single night, [with] bleached blonde hair, looking like the centre of the stage. It was just what it had to be, I suppose. (Liam).

However, gay male camp has become synonymous with gay male sexuality, one effect of which is that gay men have been routinely stereotyped as naturally more feminine, which some participants were acutely aware of:

Yes, we are all camp in a way, but we are not the kind of group where we wear makeup: we are not that kind of camp, we are just a little camp, with maybe a few limp wrists, but the conversations we have and the idioms we have are what normal people would do. We go to the cinema, we go bowling, we go out for drinks. (Henry).

Gary believes that it is his “quirky mannerisms” and his use of language that identify him as camp and therefore gay. Camp behaviour epitomising gay men has been used to enable gay men to come out at work without having to actually tell people:

because I am in myself a little bit camp and a little bit extroverted, then it does just break down the awkwardness, as they don't need to know [that I'm gay] ... I am not straight acting, I am camp and I am a bit 'out there', so it is just a bit easier for everyone to know. ... when I first started working here, yes, there was a slight act [to it] [...] rather than having to answer that awkward question, let's play it up a bit, so they know, because actually it is quite awkward for people to have to come out and say 'are you gay?' It's obvious but people don't like to ask it, so actually if you just over-accentuate everything it takes the awkwardness away. ... it does come out, especially when I am with my gay friends its does come out, the stereotypical [campness] does come out, mostly as a barrier, in all honesty. It's a wall [and] a defence. (Gary)

Gary is clear that he has adopted a specific gay male camp identity. He makes it evident that he is not what some other participants described as “straight-acting”, and therefore is happy for all the people he comes into contact with him to position him as in the stereotyped subject position of camp gay man. He is unlike James, who doesn't want to be “normal” (e.g. straight-acting), but also he does not want to be camp; yet, he feels he unconsciously exhibits camp behaviour.

I kind of try to avoid it but yes, I probably am camp. It's... I would like to say... no, I wouldn't actually, because I don't want to be normal, but I know [...] I listen to my own recordings of meetings and as soon as I hear it [...] if they hear what I'm hearing there's no way anyone could be confused. I sound like Julian Clary half the time. (James).

James's comments are representative of other participants' comments that “normal” is something that they do not want to be, yet they are not clear about what “normal” is for them. There is a suggestion that the interviewees identify “normal” in heteronormative terms, in particular its incarnation in hetero-masculinity that straight men are seen to perform.

I didn't mention anything personal, partners or my lifestyle or anything like that ... and then you find out that they knew straight away because of your mannerisms and some of the phrases that you come out with. Consciously I don't think I do [behave in a camp way], but maybe I do. ... A lot of people say it's because of my hand movements and what and how I say things. I am not an aggressive seller with mortgages and things as the straight boys can be. (Tim)

The notion that camp behaviour identifies a man as being gay has been used by some of the interviewees to work in their favour, and they seem to view this as harmless role-play:

if they are expecting me to be that person, I do sort of play up to it sometimes. I do sort of play up to the role and...I think it just entertains them. I think... because the girls say, 'oh, you make me laugh' and all that. So I think it is just purely sort of like a gimmick and entertainment thing for them and the difficult bit then is obviously outside of work, outside of that group, I'm different; I'm not that person, so they can't really seem to get their head around that ... I think more for me, if I am this person I can put up a guard and I can sort of protect myself, in a way? (George).

George has shown that he is playing the role of camp in the workplace as this is what is expected of him from his colleagues who work for the airline.

Everyone just assumes that the male cabin crew are gay and that anyone that isn't a typical straight man is gay, it is kinda expected in a way. I think the girls are so used to working around campish gay men that they just expect it (George).

As a result, George is perpetuating the stereotype, reinforcing that gay men are camp. He does this to entertain his friends and colleagues. However, outside of the work environment he appears to draw less on the discourse of gay male camp

When I get out of work, I easily shake off the camp identity. It is a relief at times: I like the kind of guys that really don't go for pissy camp queens, so I butch up (George).

What George is demonstrating is that identity is not fixed (Anderson 2015; Dutton et al. 2010; Smith and Ingram 2004). For George and others, the workplace context has a real influence on the identity they project while at work. In one regard, he might be understood as disrupting taken-for-granted ideas of what it is to be a gay man, by showing his straight male or female colleagues that there is more than one side to him, and that gay men are more than a stereotype. Steve also makes assumptions about gay men and their identity, going as far as to categorise "the majority" as comfortable with being camp.

Back then I had multi-coloured hair and I looked like a peacock. I think the majority of gay men are far more comfortable messing about and being camp, but at work it seems to be the thing to imitate being gay, so everyone does it and it's quite funny. ... I feel like I am the real me, but at different times I am a character. At times I put on different voices or do things to make people laugh or camp it up, especially with the black people as they are quite sassy back and it makes us both laugh and smile, so I slip into a caricature then. (Steve).

Interestingly, he has found that others around him who are not gay are emulating camp behaviour, adopting this as a norm in the workplace. Therefore, unlike the other candidates in this study, Steve is not under pressure to adopt the dominant heterosexual masculine discourses surrounding male identity at work. However, Steve works in a predominantly female workspace, so he feels that "because there are no straight guys here, I don't have to worry about what they think of me and can just be as camp as I like, which the girls love". It seems that the straight women Steve works with are comfortable around him when he is performing gay male camp. He is aware that he is producing a caricature of being gay and that it is only one facet of identity that obscures others he attaches more priority to in some contexts.

Yeah ... you are what you are. [Partner] says that to me, actually. I do drag, and he has said 'you're not you, [you] become someone else'. And people want that all the time and you're thinking, 'no, that's done for a bit of fun and now it's back to me'. It's tiring, you couldn't do that all the time. (Andy).

What we can see above is that where the interviewees are being overly camp, they are doing so because they believe this is, in part, the performance people expect. Surprisingly, none of the interviewees specifically identified themselves as 'male', perhaps because they see masculine/male behaviour as straight:

I always associate being male as male behaviour as being that sort of behaviour coming from straight men. I'm not saying I'm not a man [laughs]: of course I am: I have a cock. But I'm not a man as people expect a man to be, I'm not straight. My dad always said when I was little that I needed to man up and be like him. He was very straight, so think that's why (Adam).

Adam's statement is indicative of how the participants defined male behaviour as something that is normatively linked to heterosexual men. Even though they are fully aware they belong to the identity category of 'men', they see themselves as different to the normative construction of what it is to be 'male', as they do not want to be defined by the definition of straight maleness they perceive as the norm.

Only Mark identified as 'female'. This, he explained, was because he believed he exhibited feminine characteristics at work ("gossiping", "bitchiness", "a wild side"), but this can be read as a blatant gender stereotype of women and women's expression of femininity in a work context. Therefore, he is identifying as female, but as a stereotype of femininity. In fact, Mark felt "just him" most of the time, or between male and female with characteristics of both. As George puts it, "a gay man is just ... a woman with a dick."

Gay men: Straight-acting

'Straight-acting' is a term that is frequently used by gay men to normalise their behaviour and identity through the approximation of the normative ideals of male hetero-masculinity (Clarkson 2006; Connell 1992). However, straight-acting is a polysemic term. For example, Clarkson (2006) argues that straight-acting can be a term used to indicate how some gay men do not want to be identified as gay, to distance themselves from outmoded stereotypes of gay men. In contrast, the term might be used to identify their interest in having a relationship with a straight man. Furthermore, gay men can be referred to by camp gay men as 'straight-acting' if they do not perform the stereotypical behaviour associated with being gay (Clarkson 2006; Hill 2010). Despite the rigidity in how these gay masculine stereotypes can be deployed to fix and stabilise gay men's identities, many of the interviewees revealed how they move from performing gay male camp into performances of 'straight-acting' gay masculinity, depending on the situation they are in:

... in my job I have to adapt. I could be speaking to police officers, or solicitor[s], I have to be talking about nothing about my lifestyle. I have to be talking professionally and adapting, mirror[ing] what they do. I think sometimes you have to blend [in], I don't know why but you have [to] blend [in] sometimes because [that is] the way that society is, there is a time and a place, as they say. (Andy)

Participants who identified themselves as straight-acting also said they have their 'camp moments'. For example, Hayden says, "I have my camp moments and I have my straight moments and, um, they just treat me exactly the same no matter what I am doing". He went on:

I think I've just got a couple of faces... you know, a few personalities. I think it's just different sides to my personality. I think I adapt myself to the environment I'm in, but it's not that it's fake adaptation. It's when I'm being serious I'm quite straight actually, but then when I'm not serious it's a different side of my personality that just happens to come across in a camper way.

Hayden's comments chime with research that shows how being 'professional' in some work contexts requires gay men to demonstrate the qualities of masculinity associated with male hetero-masculinity (Rumens and Kerfoot 2009; Woods and Lucas 1993). For Paul, 'straight-acting' is part of his professional identity:

[in] a business environment I'm not [camp]. If I'm down bloody Ricky's or something, I'm camping it up as much as you like aren't I, you know? But in an office environment, I'm not like that.... if the boss is asking me something about figures or numbers or how much money we're spending or what my plans are, if I deliver that in a straight, blokeish, straight way it has more impact and more value and more resonance to him than if I were to go, 'oh yeah, you know' in a more camper tone, but I can use my personality, you know, my camper side if things are getting a bit tense or something, to kind of have a little joke, and I do often lighten the mood and make people laugh [...] by doing that.

However, other participants expressed different views, such as Angus who felt 'straight acting' behaviour was dangerous and fake:

... like my ex done exactly what you just said... around groups, he was one way and another group he was another, and it really bugged the tits out of me. [...] it's kind of borderline schizophrenia ... you're kind of depriving one group of people one part of you and you're depriving the other group [of] another part of you. (Angus)

No, I am the same with everybody ... I don't like the thought of being something I'm not and so I just be myself. (Colin).

Of interest here, then, is how the different gender identities the participants discursively constructed at work impacted on the types of friendships they were able to form with straight men and women.

Gay men: identity and stereotypes

How an individual's gay male identity is understood can influence how people perceive the wider group to which that individual belongs. As Dutton et al. (2010) discovered, people want to construct positive identities in the workplace that are favourable or valuable in some way. The findings of this study show that the interviewees attributed largely positive meanings to their gay identities within the relational contexts of friendships formed with straight women, not least due to feeling more accepted by them (see chapter 1). This feeling of being accepted by women has a history in their lives, often beginning at school, where the gay men in my study were far friendlier with girls: "when I was at school, I was never friends with the boys. All of my friends were girls at school, and I think it has come from there, that I prefer straight women over straight men" (Tim).

Even though I wasn't out at school, I came out much later, I still hung around with girls as their company was more fun and not about kicking a ball about. I never wanted to be a girl, but felt closer to them (Philip).

The gay men clearly feel more comfortable to gossip and relax with their female friends. This is more than a coincidence: one person identified that he had worked at fifteen different branches for the same company and it was the same pattern at each branch. There is evidence throughout the interviews that the interviewees' identities are influenced by their straight friends. The interviewees expressed how their identities change in their friendships with straight men and women, and how they see themselves differently depending on who they are interacting with. They also modify their performance of stereotypical gay behaviour to prevent possible resistance to them as individuals and to be taken more seriously. For example, as described above, by opting to perform a more 'straight' identity, Paul believes that he is presenting himself as being more mature and serious: "let's be honest, being camp is fun, but being really camp, we just aren't taken seriously by straight people, and I can be as camp as Christmas." Therefore, Paul sees camp as a childish identity and something that can be picked up and put away when needed. Michasiw (1994 p151) saw this as 'Hitting the off switch' which 'reaffirms the subject's self-mastery and that the identificatory lure of the camp object has been disavowed.' As identified in the earlier chapters, camp identity is often seen as a performing effeminate behaviour, albeit a caricature of feminine behaviour. As a camp identity can lead to negative

responses from some straight colleagues, constituting gay identities within heteronormative straight masculine discourses should encourage a positive reaction from the group they are presenting this identity to (Glick et al. 2007; Johnson et al. 2008; Madon 1997). As Plummer (2001) suggests, being camp can be understood as a weakness by straight men. Paul wants to feel he will be seen positively and taken seriously, hence the change in his identity when these characteristics are needed. This pressure to perform a different identity can also come from the close friends the gay men have made in the workplace.

[friend] tells me when she needs me to be serious, she will sigh and say, 'can you stop being gay for a few minutes and calm down?' So I adapt myself to the environment I'm in (Hayden).

Hayden can see that to be taken seriously he needs to adopt a different identity. However, he sees both these identities as being parts of a whole, as neither of them are "fake". This change of identities is something that other candidates adopted.

I tend to think of myself as less camp these days, but it has been pointed out to me by friends at work that I am camp. I do find this a little insulting: I don't want to be categorised or stereotyped and tend to over-compensate for a few days and be really butch. I want to be taken seriously and not seen as just a camp man. (Philip)

Philip knows that he is camp at times, but sees himself as more than a stereotype. Therefore, his friend's reaction to his camp behaviour causes him to over-compensate and project a different identity, which has a direct influence on his friendships. Anderson (2005, p.348) suggests that people are not free to 'to construct simply any version of identity that they desire; identity construction is influenced and constrained by a number of micro and macro social processes.' For my participants, the macro processes can be seen as the workplace context putting pressure on the interviewees to conform to heteronormative discourses of masculine identity. The micro processes relate to how their friends exert pressure on them to conform to a particular identity. Toby's words below exemplify the discursive micro processes at work in how he is encouraged to 'straighten up' when the 'guys' enter the office. In these situations, Toby is expected by his female friends to perform a more normative gay identity that cites hetero-norms and so is more likely to be understood as being gendered as masculine. These normative injunctions from Toby's female friends are motivated by concern, as they worry that his 'gayness' may heighten his chances of

experiencing homophobia from the straight male builders he works with. Hence, his friends are encouraging him to perform a straight identity as a mode of protection.

Both girls will say to me if we are having a gossip in the office, 'straighten up, the guys are coming in'. They [the girls] know that if I am flamboyant and overly gay then the guys will take the piss and it annoys them when this happens. It doesn't really bother me as the guys know I am gay and they're not interested in me as a friend, but I do it anyway as I like to keep the girls happy. (Toby)

Gay men are often subjected to stereotypical representations of what it is to be gay by friends and colleagues, and are paradoxically expected to either conform to that stereotype in the workplace or not conform, depending on the situation. As we have seen above, many of the interviewees do not present a stable identity that is read only as camp or straight acting. Shifts in their performances of gender, for example, allow them to alternate between different types of gay masculine identity, influenced by what they need to present at any given time. The performance of identity in different ways can be a source of strength and personal integrity (Dutton et al 2010).

Additionally, performing and presenting a camp identity can also have implications for straight men who exhibit feminine traits being categorised as gay. Furthermore, changing from effeminate camp behaviour to masculine behaviour when the participants want to be taken seriously also supports the 'gender role stereotypes of women as weak and vulnerable and men as dominant and threatening' (Seelau and Seelau 2005, p. 365). According to the findings of this research, gay men recognise establishing an identity, different to that of the gay stereotype in the workplace, as difficult but sometimes necessary to meet the needs of the workplace and their friends within it. In a heteronormative workplace environment, particularly when the straight men in that workplace are perceived by the interviewees as stereotypically masculine, my findings suggest that gay men are less likely to form friendships with them. As Johnson et al. (2008) assert, people will more likely apply stereotypes to someone when there is very little information about them available. Evidence in the previous two chapters suggests the interviewees are not problematizing their understanding of friendship by forming friendships with straight men.

From one perspective, this might not be surprising in those situations where gay men are targeted by straight male colleagues for homophobia, as some interviewees

alluded to, such as when one straight male colleague reasoned that “all gay men should be put on an island somewhere” (Philip); or they discover their born-again Christian line manager wants to dismiss them for being gay (Daniel); or they are given more work than others and yet constantly criticised for the quality of their work (Adam). It is also unsurprising that the gay men have difficulty in working within a heteronormative workplace when they are not taken seriously, or told they are being ‘over-sensitive’ when they complain about homophobic jokes and discrimination they experience at work. If they are told to ‘toughen up’, as Philip was, this can undermine their capacity to identify positively as a gay man in the workplace, and feel it necessary to adopt a more straight-acting identity around these people.

With their female work friends, the gay men interviewed identify as having far more commonly-held interests and levels of intimacy that transcend the workplace. They are supporting and reinforcing the stereotype that straight men are less able to disclose and explore similar interests and intimacy with gay men as this would threaten their stereotypical performance of masculinity (Coltrane 1994; Connell 1995; Way 1997; Migliaccio 2009). The interviewees gravitated towards straight women, whose identities they have constructed as caring, kind, accepting and willing to have a laugh and joke with them. For example, Adam says:

It is because I think the women just seem more accepting and less threatened. You know, they just like accept you for who you are. They know you're not going to [...] look at their rack [...] there's no ulterior motive. You know, you are just you... that's it even though they're not treating you as one of the girls as much as they could do if you were maybe quite camp...but they don't view you as one of the lads, they just view you as you.

Colin described this as a trend throughout his life, including school:

I prefer female[s]. I don't know, I just click more with females. I don't know, when I was a kid I always hung around with girls and stuff like that and never hung around with lads and stuff. We think the same things at work, how to do things, how things should be done, we agree on everything.

Similarly, Tim preferred the company of straight women to straight men: “Generally it is a lack of maturity ... as much as he [straight friend] likes things that I like, he is still very shallow minded in some respects”. James felt he had more in common with women: “either they're gay, which is an automatic inroad because you have much more in common anyway, or they're female, which is the equivalent of a gay man.”

Interestingly, James describes female friends as gay rather than himself as female. Shaun and Martin described straight women as less prejudiced than straight men:

Yes definitely, I think that I get more support off the girl. I don't know, I think it's because she has seen how badly the company have treated me, she has seen the emails they have sent me, and she cares about me. (Shaun).

I'm trying to weigh up the pros and cons, but, like if you have a mix or if you have straight men, just straight men [...] you're going to find a higher percentage of prejudice from people within that group than if you had a group of just women. (Martin)

Some of the gay men said they talk to their female friends about everything, but only talk to their male friends about personal information if they want to 'wind them up'. Notably, the interviewees refer to the fact that a lot of gay men are seen to be more feminine because they are attracted to men. This stereotype of gay men is clearly evident throughout the straight work-world of the people I interviewed. Also, there is no issue with gay men being seen with straight women as it doesn't threaten the masculinity of the straight men. Some of the gay men interviewed felt that if a straight man (especially an alpha male type) were seen to be good friends with a gay men, this would cast doubt on the straight man's sex identity and render unstable his ideals of being an alpha male (Clarkson, 2006). Gary believes that he can maintain his friendship and is accepted because his straight male friends treat him as a woman, using him as a sounding board on how they should treat their women. While he does not express a concern with this treatment or how he is perceived by them, he is still being treated as a stereotypical (gay) feminine male:

they are always asking me, 'what shall I wear with this? What shall I wear with that? I am going on a date with this girl. How shall I act? How shall I be? Should I buy her flowers?' It's like this gay best friend kind of bracket that you fall into ... straight men just love it because you can basically... you are essentially a woman in a man's body almost and it helps them to understand their wives and girlfriends and when they come in and say, 'oh my wife was a bit of a bitch because I did this', I kinda go 'well, actually you were being a bit of a dick because of that'. (Gary)

Several of the interviewees felt that they were treated stereotypically as gay. Andy defined this stereotype as being into "girly stuff, so they wouldn't bother speaking to you". He also goes on to say that he is thought of as camp, just because he is gay. Andy and George believe their colleagues assume what sort of person they are

based on the idea that all gay men are the same: that they think about “cock all day”; are mummy’s boys who live at home; and are fashion aficionados. What they do not realise is that gay men own homes, have mortgages, pay bills and have similar worries and troubles to straight men. Paul complained of being stereotyped, as women often do: “You know, gossiping and bitching isn’t like a gay skill or a female trait in what I do. It’s just what people do and, excuse me, people gossip”. It is not uncommon for gay employees to feel judged or rejected by their straight male colleagues (Galupo, 2007; Griffith et al. 2002; Rumens and Kerfoot, 2005). Liam believes that “the straight men are thinking, ‘what the fuck is he about?’”

Female friends are seen to be less judgemental by the interviewees and more accepting of gay men, as they are not seen as threatening and have more in common with their gay male friends (this common ground was described by an interviewee simply as “you have got cock in common”). A recurring theme is that there is more of a social aspect in the relationship between gay men and their female friends: gossiping, drinking, laughing and sharing issues and problems, both work-related and personal, providing more equality within the friendship (Galupo, 2007; Kirsch, 2005; Nardi, 1999). If this is the case then this could contribute to the ongoing development of the gay stereotype. The gay men are happy to talk about intimate details of their sex life with their straight female work friends:

I could sit down now, with however many girls and just be out and open about sex, this that and the other, about men and I wouldn’t even think twice about it. (Liam)

This is because of the closeness they already share as part of the process of creating an intimate and close relationship with these women. Additionally, they are happy to talk about emotions and cry in front of their straight female work friends.

The evidence shows that the gay friend believes they are able to express themselves and their opinions in a more honest way with each other (Arthur: “I’m more open with gay friends. About everything. You know, I think you’re more of yourself. You are more... yeah. I’m not fully relaxed, if that makes sense?”). They feel they can be more open and outspoken; they have common interests and feel more able to stick up for each other:

Because I am a different person when I'm with straight people; I don't have to keep my guard up when I'm with gay men, but when I'm with my straight friends at work I have to tone it down, and focus on my demeanour all the time and not come across as camp and things like that. Not a different character because they all know I'm gay [but] yes, I just calm down. I'm not one of these in your face people, but, it's the same when I take our daughters to school, it's not the place to be gay. I don't feel that there is a time and a place. I just don't feel relaxed, I think. Around gay people I am more relaxed, I think, I can be myself. (Shaun)

They can talk about sex without having to censor the conversation or fear of being told 'I don't want to talk about that!' However, the evidence suggests that gay men feel comfortable to talk about anything with their straight friends: even more so if those friends are straight women, as the gay men feel they have a deeper connection combined with a higher level of understanding and tolerance for their lifestyle. Surprisingly, some of the gay men felt more comfortable talking to their straight female friends rather than their outside-of-work gay male friends. What we are seeing here is the capacity within straight female and gay male friendship for the gay men to not have to conform to stereotypes, or be identified solely as gay, which they can be when surrounded by other gay men. Gary states the reason for this is because talking about feelings with their gay friends created "drama":

Thankfully you don't get wrapped up in all that gay boy drama, that's one great thing and actually it's nice. It is exhausting sometimes to be different people, it is exhausting. So when I am out with my gay friends, in gay places, in gay bars, it's kind of exhausting to have to hold this wall up and defence, so working here with my straight friends, I am just me, I am nothing more or nothing less.

One of the other areas that emerged from this line of questioning was that the female straight friends were happy to ask personal and delving questions. Steve gave a clear example of this: "they ask things like, who is the man in the relationship?" This is an interesting question as the asking of this question exposes how some straight women draw on heteronormative discourses to understand a relationship between two gay men, in order to put a gay relationship into a wider heteronormative context that they are comfortable with. This stereotypes the relationship within a heteronormative frame, wherein one gay man must exhibit more masculine characteristics, while the other must be more feminine, aping a heterosexual model of romantic coupling. This also suggests that these female friends are only able to

perceive identity through heterosexual binaries (Cass 1984; Smith and Ingram 2004).

Several of the interviewees found it surprising that straight men in the workplace feel it is acceptable behaviour to tell them that they are 'camp' or 'act gay'. Additionally, they have found that people are happy to say things to them that are inappropriate and that they wouldn't say to straight colleagues. For example, Mark was asked by one of his straight male colleagues, "do you think I dress gay?" He replied, "the fact is you are straight, so you dress straight". Martin didn't feel welcome when he first started his job because people knew he was gay. It took him some time to move past this feeling and felt he had to make more of an effort to be accepted, when a straight man would not have that initial barrier to break through. What came across in this line of discussion is the notion that many gay men are living under the cloud of stereotypes applied to gay men: that gay men are 'bitchy', do hairdressing all day, don't like sport, like to party all night and will 'pounce' on straight men. Andy's comments typify other interviewees' comments in that respect:

some straight men, feel a bit frightened, don't they [laughs]? They kind of think that you are going to pounce on them, or try it on with them. I think ... a lot of gay men used to come onto straight men, I think years ago and nowadays people, think every gay man I going to try that ... My other half knows everything about cars, he was having a conversation the other night on a night out and a straight guy said 'how do you know that?' I was thinking, 'why shouldn't he know that?' ... they all stereotype people thinking gays party all night [...] we do have professional jobs as well, we don't just sit [around] doing hairdressing. (Andy).

A number of interviewees believed they should (or are expected to) act as a stereotypical straight man by their straight male workplace friends. They experience a discursive pull exerted by their straight male's friend to conform to the heteronormative expectations of employee behaviour if they are to gain the respect of their heterosexual clientele and colleagues to avoid being seen negatively, in particular as 'less than a man'. Shaun experienced an extreme example of this:

The amount of shit I got when I took over the pub, like 'I'm not having a fucking queer tell me that my girlfriend can't drink because she has no ID', and with all that and you have got to be the face of the pub and be the one that throws people out: you can't be seen as the little poof behind the bar if

you get what I mean. There is no respect for you as a man if you are seen like that.

Therefore, the workplace can be seen as normalising specific identities over others, encouraging gay men to conform to expectations of heteronormative discourses of masculinity. Daniel explains that he has to 'correct' himself when talking to straight male colleagues, to prevent his behaviour being judged as 'too gay'. Similarly, it annoys Paul that straight men see him as a 'bitchy gossip' before getting to know him. Andy also gets irritated when people are surprised he knows a lot about cars and sport: "It's not like these things are exclusively reserved for straight men, although some think they are." Andy and Gary believe that the straight men at work see them as 'female': Gary is often asked by his straight male work colleagues to help them understand their wives, what they should wear or how to act around women. Several interviewees said they are not treated as 'one of the lads' by the straight men they work with, and this phrase and idea (i.e. being 'one of the lads' or 'one of the girls') was used by several interviewees:

I don't think they class me as one of the lads. (Adam).

... when I am their boss and I am having a go at them or trying to train them and stuff, its professional, when we are having a laugh and a chat and a gossip it's a bit different, I think they see me as one of the girls. (Daniel)

I don't think they look at me as one of the lads, as I am quite clearly not one of the lads. (Gary)

Possibly they see me as one of the girls, slightly, yeah... especially doing an admin support role as well, which is a female team mostly as well. So, I'm like the only guy in that place. (Adam).

Therefore, if they are not seen as 'one of the lads', they are being seen as something different to being male: sometimes female, and other times something completely different. For instance, if the interviewees are camp or exhibit what are seen as feminine characteristics, similar to Adam, Gary and Daniel, then they are seen less as 'one of the lads' but more 'one of the girls'. However, if they are not disclosing their identity through adopting a stereotypical gay identity then, like Shaun, Martin and to some extent Philip, they are identified as 'male' but still different from a heterosexual male (Clarkson 2006; Dutton et al. 2010; Glick et al. 2007; Johnson 2008; Smith and Ingram 2004).

There is evidence here that gay men are often identified as something different by straight men (i.e. neither male nor female), which can be difficult to define. On the one hand, because they are unable to construct meaningful friendships or find common ground that each group believes to be important, gay and straight men struggle to become close friends. The interviewees expressed that they believe straight men are trying to enforce an identity onto them in order to be accepted. If this identity does not meet the expectations of the straight men, then they appear unable to become members of their group.

They [the straight men he works with] have asked me out, but usually to lap dancing clubs. I think they do it on purpose. They say things like, 'you can be straight for a night', [and] 'people won't know you're gay. You'll probably get to like it' and the worst one, 'come in your work clothes, not a dress and no one will know'. I did go once, to try and make friends, I was as straight as I could be, and as fake as I could be, but they insisted on getting me a lap dance. I put up with it, but never again, (Angus)

Despite his reservations, Angus tried to adapt his identity to meet the needs of the straight men he works with. Identity is not always about what the individual wants: for Angus to be accepted by his straight male colleagues, they require him to identify as straight to allow him to participate in their out of work activities (Dutton et al. 2010). If he does not perform a heteronormative masculine identity according to his male friends' expectations, then Angus risks being marginalised. In this scenario, Angus's straight male colleagues struggle to identify him as male and masculine. On the other hand, because they know gay men are not 'female', they have no option but to see gay men as something different when they see them not conforming to the ideals of the straight masculine discourse.

Paul suggests that he is identified differently, but "not different to mean 'bad different': just different, you know?", suggesting straight men are unsure how to categorise gay men, and that some of them do not see them as female or male. Paul thinks this could be because he does not talk about sport, or about women in a sexual manner ("conversations about women and stuff like that [...] that's very much part of their culture you know and they're way of being friends is to talk about stuff like that"). He believes this is why they are unable to fully befriend him, as he isn't part of their culture and find there is "quite an arrogant attitude about it all".

Adam and James both felt that their female friends saw them as 'one of the girls'. This didn't seem to be an issue for either of the gay men interviewed. However, this could be an issue for others to be identified in this way:

I'm me, a man, a gay man, but still a man. I am definitely not a woman and wouldn't ever want to be seen as one or treated like one [laughs]. What I want is just to be treated kindly and with respect as a man and if people can't do that then I have no time for them in my life (Philip).

However, what it does show is that the majority of straight people see gay men as something 'different', neither male nor female. None of the interviewees identified that the women at work thought of them as male. This could possibly be that straight women deal with straight men as both colleagues and in relationships. Therefore, they are seeing a completely different set of needs and behaviour from straight men than from gay men, making it difficult for them to make a comparison. Interestingly none of the gay men interviewed felt that their straight female friends identified them as gay. This supports the idea that they are seen as something different, not fitting into a stereotypical category of the expectations of female or male behaviour:

Yeah, I'd say something different but I think the difference here [is that] I think I fit into both groups, whereas at my last place I kind of didn't fulfil both... [or] either and kind of slipped down the middle. (Paul)

Being identified as 'something different' could be seen as both positive and negative: a break from the norm, not complying with the expectations of typical behaviour. This can result in people feeling excluded and marginalised; or, as for Steve, unique and valued. He sees himself as different to the straight world, and therefore, he feels his unique perspective is valuable to others. Clearly the respondents believe that not being seen as a typical heterosexual male allows them to construct and develop deeper relationships with female friends. The interviewees identified that this is because there were no sexual expectations, which resulted in the women being more accepting of the friendship and less threatened. When asked how it feels to be treated as different by straight women, the responses from the interviewees differed from their responses to the same question in regard to straight men. Rather than feeling uncomfortable and wishing to avoid straight men, or develop new skills to interact with them, they felt much happier being seen as something different by straight women. There was also no sense of interviewees feeling they had to compete with straight women, as was the case with straight men. The interviewees

engaged more with the straight women, not having to assert their masculinity, and hence felt more confident and less vulnerable in having to live up to straight men's expectations of typical masculine behaviour. Interviewees were able to be themselves and laugh and joke more freely with straight women in the workplace.

I am something different. ... I'm definitely not the kind of guy that gets a girl, like, [to] come shopping with me, 'I want your opinion on clothes' and stuff. I would absolutely die of boredom in the shop. ... [but] then again, I'm not going to go and sit down and talk about [stuff] like football with the lads either you know? As I said before, try and find something in common with everyone and kind of work around that and then kind of go beyond gender. I am proud to consider myself beyond normal. (Martin).

If gay men are seeing themselves as something different and unique, then they are also seeing this as a positive. However, it was less clear-cut for other interviewees:

I would just say I'm in the middle. I would say [...] I am a fucking mega bitch, so I guess I'll just say I see myself more as one of the girls! Yeah, I mean in a gossip kind of like more comfortable way if anything, I would see myself... fitting myself in a lot more comfortably with the girls. But you know, if I was to say ... where I would really sit, I would sit somewhere in the middle but I wouldn't ever say that I'm different. No, I would just say I'm me, I'm Mark.

The evidence from the interviews suggests that 'something different' consists of gay men being treated differently from their straight colleagues. Tim sums this up well: "I would say I am treated as something different to the rest of the people in the branch. And even the girls say it as well, they would never talk to one of the boys about certain things that they talk to me about".

Discussion

The interviewees understand their identities differently, whether that is straight acting, camp, screaming, or a combination of all these. These identities are (re)shaped discursively within heteronormative discourse that reproduces gender and sexual binaries. Equally, many of the interviewees draw on the same heteronormative discourses to identify straight men and women they work with and befriend. For instance, interviewees often defined straight men as judgmental, condescending, arrogant, uncaring and in some cases boring. As Beasley et al. (2015, p.682) aver, often heterosexuality is stereotyped as 'nasty, boring and normative' and that there is an inclination to concentrate on the 'more negative and disturbing aspects while, at the same time, casting it as uninteresting.' As Beasley et al. (2015) note, these readings of heterosexuality obscure other, non-normative, ways of seeing and experiencing heterosexuality. Somewhat similarly, many study participants identified women as caring, nurturing, and less judgemental. In these interview accounts, the men were guilty also of normalising female heterosexuality within a heteronormative frame, mobilising heteronormative stereotypes of female heterosexuality as naturally more caring, open, nurturing and emotionally available.

From a queer theory perspective, when gay men regard straight men as unapproachable because of the above definitions of male heterosexuality, they create discursive barriers to friendship development. Male heterosexuality is only ever read as normative and nasty, as Beasley et al. (2015) note. Without questioning heteronormative discourses on sexuality and gender, heterosexual and gay identities remain bounded, treated as stable entities that both open and foreclose opportunities for friendship development in the workplace (Rumens 2010, 2012). Notably, there is little in the study data that reveals how gay men, or their male and female friends, might work to destabilise these fixed notions of sexuality and gender that link specific identities with particular characteristics and behaviours (Bendl 2005; Metcalf et al. 2008). A queerer understanding of friendship is possible when identities are regarded as unstable, fluid and unbounded, allowing friends to dispel the myths and allay fears surrounding sexuality and its influence on friendship (Rumens 2011).

Instead, the analysis above reveals how discursive constructions of straight men's identities as linked to behaviours that are coded as macho, tough, aloof, cold and

inconsiderate merely reinforce harmful heteronormative sexual and gender binaries. As Migliaccio reminds us, 'A man's friendship is more than simply a product of being a man. It is a performance of masculinity that is influenced by gendered expectations' (2009, p.226). Interview data suggests that some interviewees are reaffirming to themselves that straight men do not have a soft side to their personality (Migliaccio 2009, Doyle 1995, Connell 1995, Kimmel 1996). In these cases, workplace friendships between gay-straight men falter as they fall foul of gender and sexual binaries. Heterosexual men are a diverse group, despite the tendency among the interviewees to treat them as a homogenous and unified identity category (Rose and Rodes 1987).

As explored in the literature review, gay men, for instance, can be perceived as exhibiting only feminine traits. This is a gender stereotype arising from the notion that gay men embrace intimacy, flamboyance, camp behaviour and so on (Edelman, 2004). These traits and behaviours are seen as feminine, but are performed by men, therefore potentially subverting the heterosexual norms of masculinity. However, as Fee points out, it is important to be aware of the 'danger of falling into an unproblematically hetero-defined existence' (2000, p.46). When some interviewees perform camp to produce an exaggerated feminine identity, they can simultaneously conform to the expected stereotypical behaviour of gay men being camp, but also subvert (queering) heteronormative discourses of gender that associate femininity with women only. There are positive outcomes from this. The interviewees are able to identify and form friendships with straight women, providing them with the support and intimacy they are seek from friends in the workplace. However, a male gay camp identity can also cause problems if the notion of heteronormative ideals of masculinity is to be challenged. If the interviewees were to only represent their identity as that of a camp man, which we have seen earlier is something that some straight men do not value, it would be difficult to undermine and deconstruct the discourse that heteronormative ideals of masculine identity as being seen as superior to and more 'normal' than identifying as gay. This is not uncommon amongst the participants who in some way are trying to connect with straight people through a heteronormalisation of their identity, as I have identified above. Queer theorists such as Green (2007), Namaste (1994) and Valocchi (2005) would argue that this heteronormalisation of gay men by gay men is not deconstructing the

heterosexual/homosexual binary that sustains heteronormativity. However, what the participants are doing is demonstrating that they can deconstruct the stereotypical camp identity to present an alternative, showing that their identities are unstable (Butler 1991; Green 2002). Butler (1991) argues that gender is not something that can be picked up and decided on one day and then changed another day, but the performance or 'mime' of that gender can be influenced by 'socially constructed elements' as to how that gender is performed. This is what we have seen from some of the participants. They are still gay, but they have adapted how they perform their sexuality and gender to suit the needs of the people they are interacting with.

I change my identity, like I change my socks. If I am working with the girls all day then I am more girly and camp, they love it, and it is not threatening to them, they know I am not trying to get in their knickers LOL. If I am working with straight guys all day then I am straight acting. It makes it easier: they also know I'm not trying to get in their tighty whities [i.e. underwear], although I wouldn't mind with a couple of them [laughs]. (Paul)

Of course, altering identity is not always as simple as changing socks, as Paul suggests, or Butler (1991) submits. But what Paul demonstrates is that his identity is not fixed and he is able to present a 'normalised' identity, depending on whose company he is in. What was not clear from Paul's comments was whether he did this because he felt pressure from other colleagues or friends to do so, or whether he was doing it to disrupt people's perceptions of him as a gay man.

Yes, I do change who I am. If I am with straight guys on a trip I feel I have to completely tone down my gayness, if not then I would be embarrassed and a little worried that I might be ridiculed for being who I am. I am much more a 'normal' man, I hate thinking of myself as 'normal', but I have to protect myself. (Martin).

Barnard (1999) would suggest that Martin's and Paul's identities are being shaped by discourses. They are relating to an identity to fulfil not only their own needs but the needs of others in terms of how they should perform their identity. However, as I have said, there are risks involved when trying to adapt or change an identity to fit in with one group or another. Angus is an example of this: by insisting he attends a lap dancing club and acts straight, his straight male colleagues could be considered cruel, undermining his sexuality and constraining his freedom to choose his identity by insisting he conform to their normative injunctions of performing a straight identity. What has not been taken into consideration here is that this form of activity is not

something that all straight men would be comfortable with. For some straight men, encouraging other men around them to conform to the ideal of male heterosexuality can distract them from deconstructing or destabilizing their own understanding of male identity (Metcalf et al. 2008). All of this has a detrimental impact on friendship development in the workplace. Angus's experience was a negative one, in which he didn't have fun or form any intimate relationships.

The interviewees have demonstrated that they are contributing to the large variety of identities that may be coded as 'gay male', sometimes pushing the boundaries of those straight men who believe all gay men are the same (i.e. camp and effeminate). Butler (1991) believes that identity categories are a method of normalising identity, creating oppressive structures that sustain regulatory regimes such as heteronormativity. Therefore, through the interviewee's deconstruction of stereotypical camp gay identities, they are reconstructing alternative identities, which prevent heteronormative classification of one identity category fitting all gay men. However, that is not to say that camp behaviour isn't in itself providing a representation of male behaviour as an alternative to that of the 'norms' associated with being a heterosexual male. Camp men are still men, choosing to perform masculinity according to discourses on gay masculinity and femininity. The interviewees are not trying to be women, but are just men who are camp (Shepperd et al. 2010). Therefore, they are providing an alternative to how masculinity can be constructed and presented and in turn are queering the notion of masculinity.

Queering for me is not about trying to destroy heterosexuality (Halperin 1995). Queering allows us to problematize existing norms with the view to seeking out non-normative alternatives where homosexuality is not demonised through expectations of conforming to stereotypes (Namaste 2000; Sullivan 2003; Rumens 2015).

Therefore, the heterosexual image of the masculine appropriated by gays functions not as an identification with but as a parody of masculinity and a masquerade, something which can be worn and taken off at will. It subverts the straight and its stereotypes and at the same time unites that which is at the beginning binary opposites: the straight and the gay. This union and its recognition demystifies both identities. (Michasiw 1994, p.146).

The empirical data shows that identity is not something that is fixed. According to Rumens (2008, p.83) identity can provide a feeling of belonging that 'runs counter to

the dominant heteronormative discourses.’ A heterosexual masculine identity is seen as ‘normal’ by the heterosexuals. This is the dominant identity that many gay men are living alongside in the workplace. Some of the interviewees enjoy being identified as ‘normal’ and, like Philip, are upset when they are not. Being normal enables Philip to feel he holds respectability and legitimises his status in the workplace (Rumens 2008; Rumens and Kerfoot 2009). However, this also reproduces the idea that identity is not fixed, allowing participants to reflect on the outcomes of a particular performed identity. This reflection and understanding of the different identities that can be adopted can open up opportunities to explore, change, and play around with the discursive construction of identity within existing heteronormative relations of power (Butler, 2004). Therefore the participants can queer identity in ways that allow them to reimagine their identity in more meaningful ways, and to allow for different modes of identity to be performed depending on their needs and as work demands.

In certain situations the workplace constrains identity, encouraging gay men to conform to heteronormative discourses and devalue any identity other than the heteronormative ideal of masculinity. This is evident when interviewees expressed how they needed to ‘act straight’ to be taken seriously, or they need to ‘act straighter’ for them to be accepted into the heteronormative masculine friendship circles:

If I am to be accepted as one of the lads and be friends with one of the lads then I need to act like one of the lads, not a big girl’s blouse. It’s tiring sometimes as I have to have a guard up and be careful not to flick my imaginary hair or say ‘you go, girl’ [laughs]. But if I want to get on in this company and make friends with the men, and they are the ones mostly in charge, then that is what I have to do. (Henry)

However, if the gay men are choosing to adapt and change the identity they are performing to suit their surroundings, then they are problematizing and deconstructing the notion that all gay men are camp stereotypes. Henry is out in the workplace and he thinks most people know that he is gay, yet he is also able to appreciate what he needs to do to progress in the company, so he is showing the straight men that there is far more to being gay than being camp. The gay men demonstrate that they can deconstruct and present a variety of forms of male identity, queering the notion that the stereotype gay man is more than a parody of the feminine and that their identities are complex (Green 2007).

Chapter Six: Conclusion

The aim of my study is to explore friendship between gay and heterosexual men in the workplace. To recap, the established research in the area of workplace friendships mainly concentrates on how these friendship can help improve organisational outcomes, such as productivity and performance (Berman et al., 2002; Shah and Jehn, 1993; Song, 2006; Song and Olshfski, 2008). As a gay man working in a predominately heteronormative workplace, I wanted to explore how gay men make friends in the workplace and the meanings of those friendships, as opposed to looking at friendship from the perspective of what organisations can gain from them. As Rumens states, there is a 'responsibility for attending to how workplace friendships can contribute to human flourishing, helping individuals to pursue a meaningful existence along different pre-established and new pathways' (2016, p.5). There were four specific areas I wanted to explore:

- How do gay men develop friendships with straight men in the context of the workplace?
- What are the meanings attached to these friendships in the workplace for the gay men?
- What influence does heteronormativity have on how gay men develop workplace friendships, in particular the types of friendships they are able to form with straight men and women?
- How do gay men's workplace friendships with straight men and women shape the kinds of identities they are able to form and sustain in the workplace?

In light of these research questions and the data presented in the previous chapters, this thesis makes the following contributions to extant theory and knowledge on workplace friendships and gay men's friendships. Before elaborating these, I want to acknowledge that the complexity of workplace friendship as a scholarly topic to explore. One of the biggest surprises I found in carrying out this research was how, in seeking to undertake research on gay-straight male workplace friendships, many of the gay men I spoke to spoke of their enthusiasm for their workplace friendships with straight women. As noted in the empirical sections of this thesis, study

participants appeared to enjoy more intimate workplace friendships with straight women that could be developed more easily within the confines of heteronormative discourses on friendship, sexuality and gender. I have more to say on this below. Here, I want to acknowledge also the complexity in how workplace friendships are constructed. According to Rumens, '[s]tudied from different theoretical perspectives, friendships can take on different shades and hues in terms of how they are qualitatively understood and experienced in the workplace' (2016, p.10). For example, a social constructionist approach to friendship research suggests that friendships are socially constructed and contextually contingent (Rumens 2011, 2016; Sias and Cahill 1998; Sias et al. 2004; Sias et al. 2012). Therefore, it is at times difficult to clearly define the construction of friendship, as it has no clear and hard rules for its construction or definition. My study findings highlight this complexity, showing how friendships can be constructed for a number of reasons. These reasons can include having a limited choice of people to choose from due to a small workforce; a lack of gay men in the workplace to befriend; choosing not to be friends with other gay men in the workplace; discomfort with how they perceive straight men as potential friends; and because they feel straight women have more in common with them than straight men. Additionally, the meanings attributed to friendship differ: some friendships can be just about work and career progression, where others can be about companionship and like-mindedness. However, clear themes relating to deep friendship emerged from my analysis, such as mutual respect, intimacy, companionship, responsiveness and reciprocity. These themes are in line with the work of Bell 1981 and others (Hays 1985; Hartup 1996; Hartup and Stevens 1999; Bagwell et al. 2001; Allan 2008; Rumens 2011). Additionally, themes such as the influence of heteronormativity in the workplace and the fear this can create for gay men to navigate to feel accepted by heterosexual men run throughout the findings.

As noted above, I have established in my findings that, for my participants, there was a greater tendency for them to develop friendships with straight women as opposed to straight men. These findings are broadly in line with those of researchers such as Price (1999), Barrett (2013), Rumens (2011, 2016), Sias and Cahill (1998) and Sias et al. (2004). Generally speaking, the participants discursively constructed straight

women as able to understand and accept gay men, and were not put off when they discussed the intimate areas of their sexual and personal relationships. The findings show also that there is a strong motivational factor associated with the gay men to develop friendships with straight women, to avoid the fear of being judged negatively or not taken seriously by straight men. However, as the study findings reveal, many of the study participants discursively constructed straight women as 'better' friends than straight men in particular ways, some of them reproducing heteronormative discourses on women and femininity as well as men and their association with masculinity. For example, some of the participants seemed to navigate potential friendships with straight men and women through accepting stereotypical behaviour of straight men and women. They see the straight women as nurturing, caring, soft and supportive as opposed to their straight male colleagues, who are seen as hard, uncaring, unsupportive and judgemental. They also see women as more capable of engaging in a reciprocal friendship and of sharing intimacy with gay men, where straight men are deemed as incapable of intimacy.

My study makes a number of empirical and theoretical contributions to current knowledge regarding gay men and the development of workplace friendships with straight men. Using queer theory to analyse the findings, one contribution relates to the use of queer theory as a conceptual resource for studying workplace friendships, in particular noting its capacity for combatting the heteronormative bias in the organisational scholarship on workplace friendships (Rumens 2011). As such, this study contributes further to a more theoretically diverse body of literature on gay friendships and how the workplace context can affect their development. Workplace friendships have been touched on, but have lacked a sustained development or analysis; rather, the concentration for research has been on friendships in a non-work context (Morgan 2011). Barrett (2013) also identifies that research on friendship between straight men and gay men as friends is underdeveloped. This study has shown me that there is far more to friendship than I first thought. Friendship is complicated and has many different meanings and implications for people, both male and female (Andrew and Montague 1998; Bell 1981; Day and Schoenrades 1997; Hymel 1997; Riordan and Griffeth 1995; Rumens 2010, 2011, 2016; Sherman 1987; Sias et al. 2003). The workplace context has huge implications

for gay men in the way they develop and form friendships and the potential to be accepted as a friend in the workplace, especially if they perceive colleagues to be homophobic (Lewis 2010; Lugg 2010; Sias and Avedeyeva 2003; Smith and Ingram 2004; Tejeda 2006; Ward and Winstanley 2005; Worsnop 1993). Sias's research explores friendship development, but not the consequences of heteronormativity and the implications this has for gay men developing friendships in the workplace.

One major empirical contribution of my study is how it sheds light on how heteronormativity influences gay men's friendship development with straight men and women. The heteronormative workplace is one in which gay men can feel uncomfortable in trying to develop friendships with straight men. In contrast, the interviewees were much more comfortable developing friendships with straight women. For the gay men, developing friendships with straight men meant negotiating and sometimes challenging heteronormative discourses on friendship, sexuality and gender. From a queer theory perspective, the process of friendship development between straight-gay men in the workplace exposes how befriending can involve unpacking normative assumptions each friend holds about the other in terms of sexual orientation (Metcalfe et al. 2008; Giffney 2004; Green 2013; Watson 2005; Rumens 2012, 2013). Unfortunately, these norms were not usually challenged by the interviewees in the context of gay-straight male friendships as they appeared reluctant to share their private lives and develop intimate relationships with straight men because of the fear of being judged as being less than normal. As a result, the heteronormative assumptions that underpin gender and sexual binaries remain unchallenged and unbroken (Anderson 2005; Anderson and McCormarck 2015; Rumens 2012; Sedgwick 1990). Therefore, consciously or unconsciously, by not challenging the gender and sexual binaries associated with being a gay man, and predominately befriending straight women, study participants can be read as re-enforcing the heteronormative stereotypes and discourses about how men and women should interact and befriend each other. Therefore, the lack of any challenge to the heteronormativity in the workplace can reproduce stereotyped and homogenous ideas about gay men, rather than celebrating the diversity within the category of 'gay male'. Additionally, study findings show how gay men can avoid challenging their own stereotyping of straight men and women within the context of

friendship development and in workplaces that are understood and experienced by them as heteronormative (Fee 2000; Pahl 2000). Therefore, without mounting any challenge to heteronormative discourses, heteronormativity endures as a disciplinary form of power that constrains the possibilities for living lives that transcend heteronorms (Butler 1990; Ready and Butler 2004). As can be seen from the findings, it is implicit throughout that the interviewees believe that straight men do not understand them. One reading of this is that some study participants are foreclosing opportunities for exploring further what it means to be a 'straight' man and women in ways that extend beyond heteronormative ideals, thereby erecting barriers to friendship in the workplace. Quite possibly, if study participants sought to understand the influence of heteronormative discourse on their own view of friendship, sexuality and gender, they might be better placed to challenge and deconstruct the heteronorms that continue to shape how human relations should be organised in and outside the workplace. Some gay men interviewed understood that they were, in part, responsible for re-creating these barriers, through overly camp performances and caricaturing what they considered to be 'typical' gay behaviour. This behaviour provided for them an 'easy' way of coming out as gay, as they were conforming to heteronormative expectations of gay men and thus perpetrating and reinforcing the stereotypes, endorsing heteronormative expectations (Edelman 1994; Lorber 1996;). Steve has used camp behaviour in such a way that it is no longer seen as negative. Steve's straight colleagues are starting to present camp behaviour in the workplace, potentially resulting in a normalisation of camp at work (Beemyn and Eliason 1996; Goldman 1996; Giffney 2004; Valocchi 2005). Additionally, camp behaviour could be seen as challenging the expectations of masculine behaviour in the workplace, rupturing expectations of male behaviour, queering the idea that all men have to adopt the heteronormative ideals of a masculine identity to be accepted. However, from my findings I would suggest this is not the case, as most study participants are reinforcing the idea that gay men are camp/feminine, therefore keeping the hetero/homo binary intact (Corber and Valocchi 2003; Eves 2004; Valocchi 2005; Watson 2005). As Edelman's (1994) findings show, exhibiting camp/feminine behaviour defines and contributes to the construction of homosexuality. Therefore in a heteronormative workplace the gay men are defined as something other and

abnormal as it is everything that is opposite to heterosexuality (Foucault 1980; Fuss 1991; Namaste 1994).

Another principal contribution this study makes is how we can draw out implications for organisations. To recap, heteronormativity has a concrete impact on friendship development in the workplace, with material consequences for organisations if they want employees to cultivate friendships or, even, friendly relations. As a result, organisations can draw on the study findings presented in this thesis to deepen their knowledge about how heteronormativity influences the friendship development process amongst particular types of employees, and what can be done to hold open opportunities for friendship development. Clearly, the heteronormativity of some workplaces is a problem in how it reproduces harmful gender and sexual binaries. For example, it may be that straight men feel they must adhere to and perform gender through a heteronormative discourse of masculinity that may well be privileged and expected within specific places of work (Allan 1989; Way 1997; Nardi 2000; Rumens 2011). Organisations need to tackle heteronormativity in that regard, if cross-sexuality workplace friendships are to be encouraged. In regard to gay-straight male workplace friendships, employers need to eradicate heteronormativity so that gay men are treated equally to their straight counterparts. In practical terms, this may involve effectively addressing forms of workplace homophobia or negativity towards gay men. Staff need to be educated so that they understand that being gay is not a 'weakness' or an abnormality within a heteronormative sexual binary. As Plummer (2001) identified, being camp (and equating this with being gay) can be seen as a weakness by straight men. Pressure should not be placed on gay men by organisations to conform to the heterosexual ideals of masculinity in order to be considered a 'strong' or 'professional' employee (Rumens and Kerfoot 2009). As Johnson et al. (2008) suggest, if people know more about someone or a group of people they are less likely to stereotype them. For example, some of the interviewees said that when they have spoken to their straight male colleagues on more personal matters, the question they are more often asked is 'which one are you: the giver or the taker, the boy or the girl?' This type of question clearly demonstrates that these straight men are only able to perceive identity through heterosexual binaries (Cass 1984; Smith and Ingram 2004). As a consequence, the

interviewees are less likely to challenge these ideas of masculinity and heterosexual binaries to develop friendships if they believe that straight men are only capable of seeing the world through these heterosexual binaries. As Migliaccio reminds us, 'A man's friendship is more than simply a product of being a man. It is a performance of masculinity that is influenced by gendered expectations' (2009, p.226). Therefore, organisations that do not deal with heteronormativity are foreclosing opportunities for gay and straight men to befriend each other and, in the process of friendship development, break down the gender and sexual binaries that sustain harmful stereotypes about gay and straight men.

Another contribution of this study is the empirical insights it provides into what happens when heteronormativity has a firm grip on how gay men draw on friendship discourse to befriend straight men and women. It is hardly surprising when we take into account the heteronormative context of the workplace, and the barriers this creates for gay men to develop friendships with straight men, that the interviewees all identified that their closest friends at work are straight women. I have shown in my findings that the discourse on masculinity can have a limiting effect on friendship developing between gay and straight men. This, in turn, can motivate gay men to develop friendships with straight women as these friendships are discursively constructed as more equitable and easier to maintain (Elesser and Peplau 2006; Galupo 2009; Nardi 2009; Reeder 2003; Russell et al. 2015; Torre and Manalastas 2013). Furthermore, my findings support and develop the findings of Reeder (2003) that women are more comfortable with cross-sexed friendship with gay men. Women are presumed to be more sensitive to the issues of being a minority in the workplace, and more understanding of gay men's sexual identity. This is also supported by Galupo (2007) who found that gay men reported significantly more cross-sexed friendships than straight men. These cross-sexed friendships are legitimised as friendships because they do not involve friends being romantically or sexually attached (Shepperd et al. 2010). My findings show that friendships between gay men and straight women are about much more than precluding sexual intimacy. One reason these relationships seem to develop more easily suggested by the study participants is that they feel they have more in common with straight women. For example, many gay men discursively constructed women as capable of emotional

intimacy and conversation, which is the stereotype associated with women and the feminine qualities they bring to a friendship (Migliaccio 2009; Reeder 2003; Rumens 2010; Sias et al. 2003; Walker 1994). Friendships are often defined through these gendered discourses, reproducing friendship categories in terms of masculine and feminine (Nardi 2007). The interviewees identified with these friendship discourses, seeing straight men as incapable of intimacy, preferring activities and sport, while women were positioned as wanting intimacy. On this basis, study participants tended to assume that all straight men are incapable of having intimate friendships, which as Walker (1994) identified is not the case. However, being friends with straight women for the participants did allow them to be openly gay. Here, my findings build on the work of Bagwell et al. (2001), Day and Schoenrade (1997) and Deci et al. (2006) by revealing how being out at work can help gay men develop deeper and more meaningful friendships with certain colleagues. The friendships with straight women were seen as being much closer than the friendships with straight men and that communication and intimacy were more meaningful between close friends (Sias and Cahill 1998). My findings are also in line with and build on the findings of Benozzo et al. (2015), Einarsdóttir et al. (2016) and Rumens and Broomfield (2012), that there is still an undercurrent of trepidation and nervousness about coming out in the workplace (the interviewees identified that they had close straight female friends in the workplace this trepidation and nervousness was reduced).

The interviewees felt that with the straight men there was no reciprocity in the relationship preventing a sense of belonging and therefore creating a sense of isolation and loneliness should they choose straight men over straight women to be friends with (Erickson 1963; Peplau and Perlman 1982; Rokach 1989; Baumeister and Leary 1995; Boivin and Hymel 1997). My findings build on the research of Hill (2010) who found that straight women prefer to be friends with men who are seen as having positive feminine traits. These feminine traits have been expressed by the participants through their self-identifying camp and feminine behaviour. Hence, one of the reasons that these friendships are developing and being maintained is because neither the straight women nor the gay men are intimidated by the stereotype of straight male masculine behaviour (Galupo 2007; Tillman-Healy 2003; Shepperd et al. 2010). Thus, through my findings as to why the participants are

happier being friends with straight women and how they understand and are valued by their straight female friends and why they are more likely to have cross-sex friendship bonds builds further on the work of Blashill et al. (2009), Hill (2006), Rumens (2010) and Walker (1994). Friendships with straight women, unlike their relationships with straight men, are something that the gay men appear happy to nurture to ensure that they are maintained and grow.

Indeed, this study adds to the workplace friendship development literature in how it reveals gay men as 'nurturers' of friendship. The literature on gay men's nurturing is extremely limited. I have used the following literature to help explore the ideas of nurturing from Andrew and Montague (1998), Dunn (1987), Geers (1998), Oswald and Clark (2006) and Reeder (2003), all of whom have undertaken research on gender nurturing. It appears there are three possible reasons identified from the interviews why study participants position themselves discursively as the nurturer within friendships involving straight men and women. Reason one is because they genuinely care more and want to nurture friendships more than straight men, although this reproduces a faulty stereotype that straight men are uninterested in friendship development. Reason two is that they are fearful that, without demonstrating that they are being overly-caring, they will be discursively constructed as 'unacceptable' to straight people. Reason three is they understand that friendship nurturing is expected behaviour of gay men. Two and three would mean that these are not real friendships, as defined by the interviewees themselves, as they are based on a false premise that makes them exploitative rather than genuinely meaningful friendships, based on honesty and trust. However, for the majority of the interviewees, they felt it was important to be a nurturer in the friendship. This behaviour does, however, reinforce the notion within a heteronormative workplace that gay men are naturally closer to femininity than masculinity, as nurturing is often seen as a female trait (Andrew and Montague 1998; Burgess et al. 1999). Hence, if it is not considered to be manly to nurture, then this would position straight men as being incapable of nurturing (Geers 1998). When the nurturing was balanced between gay men and the straight women, some gay men felt their friendships were enhanced. It is not until the nurturing becomes unbalanced, with the gay friend having to constantly adopt the role of nurturer, that concerns were raised about the

nature of the friendship itself, with some suggesting that it could not be called a friendship. As my findings have shown, gay men who continue to nurture under these circumstances are worried about their own self-worth and feel they are not worthy of being in a friendship unless they make themselves indispensable. The participants felt that straight men were incapable of nurturing, as this would be considered traditionally feminine behaviour. This is problematic in how it can support the heteronormative assumption that straight men are uniformly incapable of friendship development. Some research would suggest that men and women approach relationship maintenance differently, as male friendship has often been about autonomy, dominance and assertiveness, rather than intimacy and nurturing, which has been associated with female friendships (Blashill and Powlishta 2009). Strikingly, this is how the interviewees defined the differences between themselves and straight men regarding friendship nurturing and maintenance. For many study participants, deep friendship is about closeness and part of that closeness is experiencing intimacy and nurturing with their friends (Allan 1989; Bird 1996; Fee 2000; Nardi 2000; Rumens 2011). As I have identified in my findings, the interviewees often construct heterosexual men as a monolithic and homogenous group, when in reality male heterosexuality and masculinity is incredibly diverse (Allan 2008; Anderson 2005, 2015; Migliaccio 2009; Rumens and Kerfoot 2005). With that diversity in masculinity comes a diverse approach to friendship maintenance that can be hidden when heteronormative discourses are deployed to position straight men as inept friends. One result of this stereotyping is that it obstructs the queering of the heterosexual/homosexual binary that sustains heteronormativity within these friendships, as noted in by Rumens (2011).

One implication of this study is the attention it pays to disrupting hetero-norms regarding sexuality. In regard to heterosexuality, Heasley (2005) argues that 'Many straight men experience and demonstrate queer masculinity, defined as ways of being masculine outside of hetero-normative constructions of masculinity that disrupt, or have the potential to disrupt, traditional images of the hegemonic heterosexual masculine' (2005, p.310). In the context of this thesis, such a contention remains empirically open, and therefore an exciting avenue for future research, which I note below. Equally, the same disruption of the ideals of hetero-

normative masculinity can also be problematized through the behaviour of some study participants who, to some extent, are disrupting the norms associated with hetero-normative behaviour (Green 2002; Foster 2008; Seidman 1994). Through, for example, having sexual relationships with other men, through their engagement with a culture (gay) that can be highly critical of heteronormativity and through gay male sensibilities and behaviours coded as 'camp' (Allan 2008; Bagwell 2001; Hartup and Stevens 1999; Ingram and Zou 2008; Jehn and Shah 1997; Shelton et al. 2009). Yet, at the same time, many study participants appear eager to form connections to heterosexuals, embedding themselves within heteronormative work contexts in order to develop meaningful work lives. As such, many participants articulated the benefits of having straight work friends as a form of 'escape' these friends and friendships seem to offer them from the 'gay boy drama' associated with interacting with other gay men (Allan 1989; Hartup and Stevens 1999; Pahl 2000; Bagwell et al. 2001). Importantly, the value of straight workplace friendships for many study participants is the insights they gain into life from 'both sides of the fence'. These friendships also acted as a support network for many of the interviewees (Humphrey 1999; Rostosky and Riggle 2002; Lugg and Autumn 2010) when they decided to come out to a wider audience than just their close friends. My study findings contrast to those of Rumens (2011), who found that friendships with both straight men and women provided a level of protection against heterosexual norms, and that gay men were not necessarily stereotyping straight men or avoiding them as friends. At the same time, my research builds upon that of Rumens (2011), through identifying and exploring the notion that gay men can be fearful of developing friendships with straight men and prefer the company of straight women. The deployment of queer theory as a conceptual resource in this thesis has shed light on workplace friendship development, with the aim of exploring and problematizing the social norms that surround heteronormativity and friendship development (Edelman 2004; Halperin 1995; Jagose 1996; Warner 1993, 1999). I have used queer theory to contribute to understanding of friendship development within a heteronormative workplace to identify and in places challenge the supposed naturalness of heteronormative discourses that sustain gender and sexual binaries, as well as fixed and limited ideas about how friendships between and within men and women should be organised (Beemyn and Eliason 1996; Goldman 1996; Giffney 2004). As queer theory can help

us to explore how gay men are excluded from heteronormative culture because of the heterosexual discourses (Namaste 1994), I found, unlike in Rumens (2011), that the majority of interviewees do not challenge heterosexual discourses. Instead, many of them seem to avoid interaction with straight men, foreclosing opportunities to develop friendships that may lead to the generation of queer perspectives on sexuality and gender. In so doing, interviewees are not challenging their own understanding of friendship, sexuality and gender, shutting off the development of intimacy with straight men that may be different and similar to the intimacies they experience with straight women, but of equal value (Heasley 2005; Morman 2013; Reid and Fine 1992; Swain 1989). Interviewees expressed their fear of being rejected, ridiculed or perceived as less valuable than the straight men. This fear prevents, as Valocchi (2005) suggests, the rethinking of the nature of power, gender and human subjectivity through understanding the social differences between gay men and straight men, allowing for a disruption of the current discourses relating to gay and straight men.

On the face of it, this would suggest that the gay men interviewed are not interested in developing friendships with straight men, but this is not the case. As we have seen in the findings, several of the interviewees would like to form close friendships with a straight male work colleague. The heteronormative workplace, along with the heteronormative expectations and conventions of hetero-normative masculinity is an important factor in preventing these friendships developing.

Limitations

I should stress that my study has been primarily concerned with talking to and exploring friendship from the perspectives of gay men in the workplace. The perspectives of straight men and straight women are not included in this study, which was never intended to be a debate between the gay men and the heterosexual men and women on friendship, and which would have resulted from incorporating their views into this study. My analysis has concentrated on areas such as the meaning of friendship, barriers to gay men's friendship and how friendships develop within a heteronormative workplace context.

My findings should not be read as evidence that the findings are definitive about how gay and heterosexual men develop workplace friendships. As mentioned earlier, heterosexual people were not interviewed. Therefore, where it is stated that heterosexual people think and feel, this is from the perspectives of the gay men interviewed and how they believe they think or feel in relation to them. This is coming from their experience and their own analysis of their friendships and/or previous friendships, and attempts at developing friendships with heterosexual people. The lack of interview data from heterosexual workers at the same workplace as the gay men interviewed means that we cannot be certain that how the gay men perceives a situation in the workplace is accurate.

Further research in the area of gay men's workplace friendships could focus on a more multi-faceted view of friendship. This could be achieved through interviewing the straight friends of the interviewees to explore how they understand and experience friendship development with gay men. This could be extended to lesbians, bisexuals and transgender persons to explore whether they experience the same concerns and issues regarding heteronormativity as gay men in making friends in the workplace; additionally, one could interview managers and human resources to identify how they perceive friendship opportunities within the workplace and how heteronormativity influences their opportunities. Comparative studies could be undertaken from these findings to build a richer understanding of friendship development for gay men, amongst others.

Concluding remarks

This research journey has at times been difficult, frustrating and tedious. However, I have learnt a great deal about the research process and the difficulties associated with working fulltime and trying to keep motivated in the research. Additionally, I have gained a newfound respect for researchers. I also learnt about myself as a person, realising that at times I was guilty of essentializing gay men and straight men and women. Additionally, at times I became a champion for gay rights, allowing myself to side with what the participants told me. It took me a while to not get angry about how some of the men in this research had been treated by colleagues. The

participants were all more than willing to be interviewed and made me feel very welcome into their lives for the short period we were together. All the participants stressed they believed this research was important in identifying the barriers they experience when developing friendships. This is an important area of research that contributes to our understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion for gay men in the workplace.

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Appendix

Table 2: Interviewees and workplace context

Number	Pseudonym	Job title	Details
1	Andy	Insurance agent for a bank	Straight male-dominated, competitive environment, high turnover of staff. Difficult to engage with the straight men as they are displaying heterosexual ideal of masculinity.
2	Liam	Events coordinator for a holiday camp	Has a managerial position, line manages four straight women. The majority of managerial positions are held by straight men, who are comfortable with Liam being gay. He doesn't feel that he is in any way discriminated against and, as his job requires creativity and organising fun events, he is expected to be 'over the top'.
3	Hayden	Commercial service manager at a university	He looks after the entertainment for the students, manages the bars and the club evenings. He is the only gay in his office: there is one straight woman and four straight men. The university has a diversity policy. He gets on well with the straight guys in the office, but considers himself friends with the straight women. As it's a small office he has to be careful about some of the things he says about his personal life as the straight guys don't like it, despite them feeling comfortable talking about their own wives and girlfriends in the same space. He has to make the effort with the straight men to be included in their activities or

			conversations and thus only socialises with the straight women.
4	Daniel	Customer Services manager for larger retail outlet	Works for a large supermarket chain in a rural area. Was told that he shouldn't be openly gay in the workplace as the customers wouldn't like it. He also found that the straight men in the shop were not comfortable with gay people, so has chosen to tone himself down and conform to the straight-acting gay stereotype. People know he is gay, but it is not spoken about. The straight men are not willing to be friends with him or include him in social events. However, he has developed friendships with straight women in the workplace who are less judgemental and accepting of him as a gay man.
5	Gary	Residential care worker for vulnerable children	There is an equal balance of straight men and straight women. However, when he first started there the straight guys were a little uncomfortable with him, but due to the nature of their job they need to be able to confide, trust and be intimate with each other. However, he still feels more comfortable working and being with the straight women.
6	Colin	Care worker for the elderly	This is a female-dominated workplace: there are only two straight men working in his team and five straight women. The straight men sometimes refer to him as a 'bitch'. The straight women are more accepting and he has a straight female friend. One of the straight men is the husband of the owner.

			He often gives Colin a hard time as he thinks he is better than him and 'untouchable' due to his connections.
7	Shaun	Pub manager licensee	Shaun has five staff, two of which are women. He has been experiencing a lot of pressure and problems from head office. They are (according to him) treating him badly. The three straight men working for the pub have not been supportive and are not very open or comfortable with him because he is gay. However, the women are much more comfortable around him and very supportive of him. One of them is particularly close to him and they both nurture the friendship.
8	Tim	Mortgage adviser at large bank	The majority of the straight men he works with are under 25. It is a highly competitive working environment. He is the senior adviser and often determines a final mortgage contract. The straight guys flirt with him when they want something. It took 18 months for the straight guys to become comfortable with him, whereas the women he works with were comfortable from the start. It was difficult to develop friendships with the straight men because of their prejudices towards gay men. There are 20 people working at his branch and 15 of them are straight men; the others are straight women. His closest friend is a straight woman.
9	Henry	Customer service for large	This candidate has worked in areas that were supportive of him in the past. However, now he works in an area that is competitive and difficult to

		pharmaceutical company	work in, as the majority of people are straight males. There are a few straight women and he is close to one of them. However, he finds it difficult at times to engage with the straight men who often ignore him, or only talk to him about work.
10	Adam	Admin support for Health and Safety officer local council	The entire office comprises 250 people in one building that consists of open-plan office floors. As far as he knows, there is only one other gay person working there. He finds the straight men are not interested in what he has to talk about. However, he is much more comfortable talking to the straight women and is close to two of them. He feels there is no point trying to be friends with the straight men as they are not interested.
11	Toby	Site manager for building company	This is a difficult environment for him as a gay man. He has to deal with builders and contractors on a daily basis. He finds these straight guys are constantly exerting their masculinity and are not interested in being seen with a gay man for anything other than work. He has a couple of friends among the female staff.
12	George	Occupation Team Leader for airline	George works with a mixture of straight women, straight men and gay men. He finds the straight men are difficult to talk to and put up barriers to being friends with gay men. They tend to keep to their own circle rather than engage with or socialise with the women or gay men. He does not have gay friends there, but is friendly with the

			straight women as they are more approachable and tolerant.
13	Mark	Customer service Adviser for bank	This is a predominately straight female environment with only two straight men. He feels intimidated by the straight men as he has experienced intimidation from straight managers in the past. He is friends with the straight women in the branch and they all accept him being gay. As the majority of the staff are straight women it is an easier environment for him to make friends in.
14	Paul	Menswear head buyer for large retail chain	Paul thinks that the people he works with are friendly, but the straight men do not like their masculinity challenged by a gay man. They can be difficult to get along with and he has to do all the nurturing of the relationship between him and the straight men. However, there are also a few straight women who are more open to friendship with him and are accepting of who he is as a gay man.
15	Steve	Departmental leader shoe store	This is a workplace dominated by straight women. Steve is a flamboyant gay man, and the straight women he works with expect this behaviour from him. He likes to use his campness to cheer people up when they are unhappy. Some of the older women he works with 'mother' him. However, he does not experience the same issues as the others with straight men. The manager is a straight man,

			but is happy to have a laugh and joke with him about most things.
16	Angus	Satellite instillation engineer	The majority of Angus's time is spent working on his own. He sometimes goes to the office where there is a mix of straight men and gay men, and go on training where the majority of people are straight men. He believes that his colleagues know that he is gay and at training etc. they can sometimes come across as patronising or judgemental, as his job is seen as a straight male role.
17	Martin	Accounts Manager for marketing company	Martin works in a competitive, aggressive environment. He works alongside several straight men that he finds are judgemental towards him because he is gay. He does not feel the same about the women, who he feels are less judgemental and more willing to support him and open to a nurturing friendship.
18	Arthur	Publican	Manages a conventional pub. The customers are homophobic. They know he is gay, but straight-acting. He has seven employees, including straight women and straight men. He is close friends with one of the straight women, but feel his staff are tolerant of him because he has the power to hire and fire. He was difficult to interview, not open and gave short answers. He is not comfortable talking about his sexuality.

19	James	Facilities Administrator for hospital	James deals with a variety of people. While he has not experienced any form of homophobia outright in the workplace, he does feel that the straight men are more reserved and less likely to engage in banter or conversation with him. He feels more comfortable talking to and being friends with straight women and socialises with them.
20	Philip	Services manager for facilities at a college	Philip has found that he over-emphasises his campness so that the people he works with are aware he is gay. He gets frustrated by some of the ignorant or stupid things straight men say to him. He has been offended when people are negative about gay men, but on the whole he thinks his working environment is more accepting of people that differ from the norm.