Lesbian Language, Memory, and the Social Construction of Inclusion

Veronica Kleinert

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Western Sydney

January 2009

© Veronica Kleinert
This work has not been previously submitted for a higher degree at any other institution, either in whole or in part. The work contained in this thesis is entirely my own except as acknowledged in the text.

Veronica Kleinert
With special thanks to

Julia Gray and Siobhan McGrath

for their unfailing support
CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES v
ABSTRACT vi
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS vii
INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER 1. INVESTIGATING LESBIAN LANGUAGE AND INCLUSION 10
CHAPTER 2. MEMORY WORK AS A METHODOLOGY FOR UNDERSTANDING 50
CHAPTER 3. PARALLEL TENSIONS IN THE PRODUCTION OF INCLUSION 89
CHAPTER 4. REALITY AND FANTASY IN THE PRODUCTION OF INCLUSION 130
CHAPTER 5. ACCUMULATED KNOWLEDGE IN THE PRODUCTION OF DISCURSIVE INCLUSION 192

CONCLUSION 230

BIBLIOGRAPHY 238

APPENDICES 260
Appendix A: Copy of advertisement placed in Lesbians on the Loose magazine 261
Appendix B: Memory-work group application form 262
Appendix C: Information package 263
Appendix D: Consent form 273
Appendix E: Memory-work narratives 274
Appendix F: Discussion excerpts in order of use, per chapter 285
Appendix G: Research assistant’s transcription samples 304
Appendix H: Transcription key 308
LIST OF TABLES

2.1 The Memory-Work Participants 55

2.2 Responses to Advertisement in *Lesbians on the Loose* Magazine 55

2.3 Quantitative Data Details 60

3.1 Narrative and Discussion Excerpts 90

3.2 Primary Binaries Utilised in this Thesis 91

4.1 Narrative and Discussion Excerpts 132

5.1 Narrative and Discussion Excerpts 194
ABSTRACT

Lesbian language can be defined as a codified (Queen 1997) and/or an indexible and discursive body of knowledge (Morrish & Sauntson 2007). A large proportion of research has been conducted on the heterosexual-homosexual binary and the construction of the social relations that constitute normalcy and its discursive opposite, abnormalcy, and the various codifications that exemplify these locations. The objective of this present research is to locate the social construction of inclusion within lesbian language using the empirical research technique of memory work (Haug 1987).

The data were obtained from a longitudinal group process involving six respondents identifying as lesbian. The results consist of the analysis of discursive patterns produced by the group using written narratives and discussions ensuing from the reading of the narratives. Memory work is the methodology used to obtain the data and is supported by a broad theoretical framework comprising ethnographic socio-linguistics (Berger & Luckmann 1966; Bourdieu 1980; Rampton et al 2006), critical discourse analysis (Halliday 1994), queer theory (Butler 1990-1997) as well as the newly evolving post-queer theories (Seidman 1997; McLaughlin 2003).

My focus is on the richer patterns of discursive content that denote the production of textual lesbian-specific inclusion. The results were contextualised as negotiations of inclusion through the process of self-construction within the dichotomous social locations constituting society, specifically those that surround the concept of reality-fantasy - and the accumulations of knowledge realised as inclusiveness. Through these three discrete modes of discursive and cultural expression as bodies of research, the memory work group participants demonstrated their discursive and cultural self-construction and subsequent inclusion in lesbian language.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like first to acknowledge considerable debt and heartfelt thanks to my supervisory panel, in particular my supervisors Dr Bruno Di Biase, and Dr Samar Habib, for taking on board an unfinished project and working with me, tirelessly, until its completion. I could not have progressed so efficiently without their direction and encouragement. My thanks and gratitude also go to Dr David McInnes who inspired this thesis in its beginnings.

My gratitude goes to the University of Western Sydney, School of Humanities and Languages, for providing the opportunity to conduct this research and especially to Dr Nancy Wright and Dr Judith Snodgrass who provided both encouragement and opportunity.

At home, I would like to thank my dear friends for their unfailing support in so many ways. In particular, thanks go to Siobhan McGrath, for her constant (nagging) encouragement for me to finish, as well as essential practical support, and to Julia Gray for her moral and practical support at a time when I needed it most. For moral support and collegiality, my thanks go to Dianne Hayles and Bao-Er.

I would also like to thank my mother, Vanda Eidem, for supporting and believing in education even without understanding my passion for it. To my tantes Nel and Asta, my eternal gratitude because they wanted me to have the education they didn’t get. Thanks also to my dedicated friends who enabled this project in so many different ways, particularly: Sue Hitches, Jo Tibbitts, Jen Gosling and Joy Roberts, Melody Mandeno, Deb Blair and Leonie Gendle, and also to Sandra Robinson for her emergency computer support at the critical final hurdle. I am immensely grateful to Dr Sue Wiles for her careful editing of my thesis, and for her calm and caring manner, which contributed to the dissolution of my bouts of panic in the closing stages.

And finally, and most importantly, my gratitude goes to the six participants who allowed their deepest thoughts and feelings to be used as data. They shall remain anonymous, but please know that this project would not have been possible without you.
INTRODUCTION

The invisibility of the lesbian subject in most bodies of academic knowledge, including the queer-theory paradigm, was responsible for my embarking on a project that would hope to elucidate the reasons behind this anomaly. The memory-work group engaged for the current project demonstrated a consistent politicisation of both written and spoken texts, explicated by the data. Once investigated, these texts revealed the essential singularity with which the participants deployed duality as a negotiating device for self-and other-inclusion realised through the thematic paradigms of silence (invisibility) and coming out (visibility). This dual negotiating construct and the concept of inclusion operated concurrently to produce a sense of social equability through the processes of discursive deconstruction and reconstruction.

My hypothesis is that lesbian language operates to inform the social construction of inclusion. Having determined that lesbian language exists, in multiple and variously defined formats, it is the construction of inclusion within language as a domain that exists commensurate to its culture-community (Berger & Luckmann 1966) that is investigated in this thesis. Inclusion as a discursive construct and inclusiveness as cultural-communal behaviour is investigated using the memory-work process which involved the formation of a lesbian-identified group. The data were obtained through the memory-work devices of writing memories into narratives, reading them aloud in the group setting, discussing the readings of the stories, and generalising and analysing the subsequent data.

The data were collected by a memory-work group process sourced by the work of theorists such as Frigga Haug ([1987] 1999) who, with a group of colleagues, formed
the first memory-work project based on the contention that women, as subjects with speakable agency, were being left out of history. Memory-work as a research technique based on generalisable or universifiable data generation was devised to rectify this anomaly. The concept of memory work was adopted and further developed by June Crawford et al (1992) in Australia, using memory work to investigate emotions and gender. Additional memory-work theorists with varied approaches to memory work were researched so that a broad perspective could be attained before embarking on the current project (Farrar 2007; Gannon 2000; Ingleton 1999, 2000; Johnston 2000; McCormack 2000; Small 1999, 2000; Cadman et al 2007; among others). The current research project differs in some of the technicalities pertinent to memory-work research and this is registered in chapter 2. Its primary difference, however, is that the current research is, to my knowledge, the only lesbian-specific memory work project to date, and the only process that has investigated the social construction of inclusion using language analysis paradigms to determine the data.

This dissertation is data driven, qualifying as an empirical research project. Memory work, definable as a qualitative research endeavour (Silverman 1993; Wadsworth 1997), is observation based as well as operating from the premise that the subject positions of the researcher and the researched were conflated. As well as using memory work as its methodology, the current research project has a theoretical framework based on the analysis of discourse and some language patterns, realised through the utilisation of research paradigms such as critical discourse analysis, and ethnographic sociolinguistics. The ethnographic component is evidenced through the utilisation of a longitudinal study involving participant observation denoting a qualitative approach. These research paradigms are presented in detail in chapter 1.
Given the considerable amount of participant-generated data produced over a four-week period, involving the collection of narratives and recorded discussions of two hours per week, the data are presented quantitatively in the form of tables located in the methodology, chapter two, as well as set out in brief tables at the beginning of each of the data chapters.

The terminology used to deliver a concept of ‘lesbian’ as a cultural descriptive will denote female same-sex desire, or female same-sex identity, also referred to occasionally in this data as gay and, less frequently again, as queer. These terms are implicatively self-descriptive and are not in any sense intended to describe those social subjects of female same-sex desire unwilling to be categorised as such. For example, the terms ‘lesbian’ and ‘dyke’ were used by the group participants as general self-reference, albeit frequently in relation to the inclusive “we”, denoting a broader community reference. More specific terminology, such as the ‘wandering-handed lemon’, was used as an interpellative nominal group obtained from one participant’s memory, and represented as a narrative, during one of the group sessions. Lesbian-specific codes that are capable of being indexed as linguistic or discursive paradigms refer to lexical terminology generally realised through nominal groups and used in situations denoting lesbian community or culture. These definitions shall remain de-scribed, rather than pre-scribed, by which I mean that the descriptive terminology presented in this data is that which was utilised by the group participants, rather than presuming them to apply to all lesbians. The terminology and definitions presented here are those used within the current memory-work group, and are presented in tandem with my research-based definitions.
In exploring the concept of inclusion within a social culture or community, that culture or community can be defined as ‘any group of people who are drawn together for a certain purpose or purposes’ and language can be defined as ‘what the members of a particular society speak’ (Wardhaugh 1985:1). Codes are employed when people ‘communicate with each other in speech’ (ibid), or ‘any human aggregate characterised by regular and frequent interaction by means of a shared body of verbal signs’ compounded by ‘significant differences in language usage’ (Gumperz 1968:114). The terms ‘community’ and ‘culture’ denote gendered groups within the western society (Sydney, Australia) in which the research was conducted, specifically relating to heterosexual and homosexual community-culture. These two latter terms will be used interchangeably, as they were by the group participants. To be included as one who belongs in such a social and cultural group, to be culturally embraced and discursively understood, underpins the concept of inclusion as it is represented in this dissertation on the social construction of inclusion.

The term ‘language’ as it is presented in this dissertation represents the individual language known as English. Individual languages as such ‘possess important [universal] properties in common … with a number of accidental and often idiosyncratic features’ (Trask 1999:138). Where I refer to heterosexual, heterocentric, heteronormative, normative, or mainstream language, that reference is to the common-use English language deploying a heterosexist, or heteronormatively gendered context. Where I refer to lesbian language, that reference also is to the common-use language deploying a lesbian-gay-queer context. Linguistic context is known as discourse. Discourse is defined as ‘[a]ny connected piece of speech or writing’ that can be produced by one or more persons (ibid:78). The discourse analyses as they apply to this thesis will be based on the coherence concept, that is,
‘the degree to which a discourse makes sense in terms of our knowledge of the world’ (italics are the author’s) (ibid:79).

The implications of these definitions is that when referring to lesbian language as a concept, it is designated as contextualised coherence-discourse as it is used in the English language to the degree that it would be comprehended by the lesbian community represented by the current memory-work group, in its self-defined variegations. By the same token, the denotation of language as normal realised through the categories representing heterosexuality, above, would be understood by the current group and its extenuations to inhabit a non-lesbian/gay/queer context. These defining designations of language and discourse, which can be interpretively identified as lesbian-specific, are also described as a set of ‘interpretive procedures and external cues’ that come to be expounded in ways that are comprehensively understood by any ‘member of the lesbian speech community’ (Painter 1981:68). The implication would appear to be ‘a kind of bilingual code-switching’, with lesbian (and gay) codes being spoken ‘into dominant cultural sites’ offering multiple choices of meanings (Dolan 1994:32). The operation of code-switching in relation to the current data is embedded in the text. Although there are not experiences determining the need to code-switch between heteronormative and ‘homosocial’ (Sedgwick 1985:2) discourses within the actual memory work process, there is evidence of the knowledge of, and ability to, code-switch between these discourses in the text of the data presented. The texts speak in patterned binaries, and it is within the binaried discourses that the need for code-switching is heard.

Language that can be indexed as lesbian-specific suggests the provision of identifiable markers that can be named or titled, and that can therefore constitute a pattern of use,
for example, in the indexing of lesbian codes of language. Language distinguishable as a code is a term frequently deployed by socio-linguists and signifies an ‘identifiable speech variety’ (Trask 1999:36). As a co-existent concept to heteronormative discourse, lesbian language can be designated as a form of ‘antilanguage’ (Halliday 1978:164–82), which is a term used to describe the construction of codified forms of language used by marginalised groups when located within a dominant group. As such, a codifiable version of lesbian language is considered to be an identifiable concept (Leap 1996:xvii; Barrett 1997:191) in some theoretical approaches, or only as an indexible social marker in other theoretical approaches (Queen 1997; Morrish & Sauntson 2007).

There is significant argument against the existence of ‘specific sexuality/gay or lesbian code’ but refer, instead, to certain identifiable ‘linguistic indexes that mark social identity’ (Morrish & Saunston 2007:24). This perspective contends that discourses of ‘identity and resistance’ are temporarily constructed depending on the areas ‘the speakers wish to foreground in any given context’ (ibid:25). In effect:

There is no essentialising force associated with identity; but it is something which the individual constructs for themselves with others who share the same experiences and culture. (ibid)

The proposal of an ‘absence of lesbian language’ confirms the necessity of its existence as a vehicle for lesbian visibility (Jackson 1994:13). Although these definitions assert a non-definable lesbian-gay language, based on an empirical analysis of lesbian-deployed language, the ethnographic-socio-linguistic paradigms purport that a broader cultural assessment, combined with critical discourse analysis, provides comprehensible denotations of community-specific language, based on coherence as knowledge, and accumulations of knowledge affirmed through
longitudinal studies and participation observation. These paradigms are registered in detail in chapter 1.

The current thesis is organised to provide the theoretical framework and literature review in chapter 1, reviewing and evaluating research methods relevant to this study of language, culture, and the social construction of inclusion. The assessments cover an exploration of queer theory, critical discourse analysis, and ethnographic socio-linguistics. Chapter 2 presents an in-depth overview of memory work as methodology, looking at its historical context as a social constructionist method, as well as the theoretical context, evaluating the prior research corpus. Finally, chapter 2 examines memory work in connection with the current project stressing the active participation of individuals in the ‘socialization’ process (Small 1999:27).

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 present the data utilised in the investigation of the social construction of inclusion in lesbian language. The data first of all explicates how the memory-work participants negotiated inclusion within the dichotomous domains of heteronormative culture, explicated through the generation of narratives. This is contrasted with the information obtained through the ensuing discussions, explicating the participants’ negotiated inclusion through the oppositional binary domain of lesbian-queer culture. Secondly, these theoretical parameters are deployed to explore the primary dichotomous site presented through an analysis of the participants’ language use, that of the reality–fantasy dyad. The fantasy component is realised through humour and laughter, discursively explored. Both of these chapters demonstrate the manner in which the group process enabled the reconfiguration of their binaried cultural and discursive locations, resulting in reclamation and reparation processes. And thirdly, the corpus of accumulated knowledge demonstrated through
the memory-work process is realised through the socially constructed duality of the conventions of weddings and funerals, viewed through the evolving construction of the coming-out paradigm. While chapters three, four and five all utilise the data obtained to demonstrate and discuss the significant points of analysis, they differ in structure and presentation. Chapter three is explanatory (binaries), chapter four is exploratory (one binary) and chapter five presents the culmination of binary research as it relates to the social construction of inclusion in this instance (institutionalisation).

The fundamental theme throughout the data was the coming-out paradigm, obtained through the memory-work process and explored through a theoretical framework of ethnographic socio-linguistic and critical discourse analyses. The thematic content was realised through the generation of written and spoken texts carrying political dimensions within each personal recollection. These qualities are represented as the dichotomous social locations that needed to be negotiated in order to construct self- and other-inclusion, encompassing the broader aspect of collective-inclusion. The historicity of the accumulated bases of knowledge demonstrated through the discursive reconstruction and reclamation of social power, and the subsequent reparation that the participants experienced substantiated the social construction of inclusion in lesbian language.

The importance of writing lesbians (and gay-queer) citizens into history underpins the impetus for this current research dissertation. The ramifications of non-inclusion, or exclusion, also socially constructed states, operated as a broader impetus to create a body of work that would redress the social and cultural invisibility experienced particularly by lesbian adolescents and children. To ignore this aspect as a tangential
social goal would be to condemn current and future lesbian youth to struggles that can include the development of socio-psychological disorders, such as depression, eating disorders, addiction behaviours, potentially precipitating a trajectory into suicide ideation and worse. Social and cultural visibility and historical backgrounding are essential components in the battle to create a sustainable future.

The social construction of inclusion is not a unique concept. However, what this thesis will contribute to the academic research body is a lesbian-specific project that will in some way alleviate the theoretical and social invisibility prevalent to lesbian culture. The data produced through this memory-work project will also contribute to the writing of lesbians into contemporary history. This has been achieved through a study of the confirmation of lesbian-specific language, however identifiable, the self and other social construction, the reconstruction of social equability realised as the reclamation of power relations, and the acknowledgement of the longitudinal production of lesbian historicity.
Originally my interest in the topic of lesbian language and the sense of inclusion that felt inherent arose through many discussions with friends and colleagues, and observations of both the normative and alternative domains available to social subjects in the modern Western cultural structure. Enquiries into the meaning of sexuality and difference, encapsulated by the quotes above, incorporating both queer (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and others) as well as heterosexual perspectives led to the decision to produce a data-driven empirical dissertation. An empirical research project utilising memory work as the methodology, involving the concept of participant observation, constitutes a qualitative research paradigm (Silverman 1993:31). Qualitative research is a broad term that implies field-based research which is experiential and explorative (Wadsworth 1997:103). The current memory-work project implicates both qualitative and quantitative definitions, as the project occurred in an extrapolated field-context through a planned series of meetings for women who identified as lesbian or who identified as females with same-sex desire. The meeting place was consistent in that participants grouped and disbanded each week in the same location, creating the data through written narratives and discussion as an experiential exercise each week. The data obtained could be qualified through the exploration of patterned discourse use, and linguistic choices, as well as observational behaviours realised through the ethnographic study of language and
discourse. The quantifiable data are presented in tables within the data chapters, providing an encapsulated view of the ensuing qualitative data.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter the theoretical framework that informs the objective of my thesis is presented, commencing with memory work in its capacity as a research instrument, including its capacity as the methodology of this project, which is fully detailed in chapter 2. As the memory-work mode is closely aligned to narrative theory, a brief overview of the latter relative to the current project will be incorporated in this chapter. Following the memory-work/narrative-theory synopsis, summaries of the research paradigms utilised to support the suppositions obtained from the data are presented. These theoretical models were chosen for their capacity to elucidate the construction of inclusion in language in the first instance and to clarify the particular construction of inclusion in lesbian language that forms the primary intention of this dissertation. Such multiplicity and diversity was essential to this study because of its focus on the social construction of inclusion in lesbian language rather than on specific theory/hypothesis testing or validation. Hence this work can be characterised as exploratory and empirical rather than as a theoretical process.

To this end, the memory-work review below is followed by summations of, in order, queer theory, critical discourse analysis, ethnographic socio-linguistics, and finally an exposition of lesbian language. Although lesbian language as a research category has received limited theoretical attention, a number of treatises were uncovered to the extent that a small but significant corpus has been available to enhance the research of this thesis. Gay-language and queer-language research provided substantial background and comparative information to the project. To further explicate these
modalities in relation to the data produced an exposition is also provided of the different concepts supporting identity theory and social constructionist theory as these terms correlate to the existence (or not) of lesbian-gay-queer communities. The memory-work participants related to identity theory to a greater degree than to constructionist theories, albeit in an unremarked manner. Queer theory is based on a constructionist premise, and although the term ‘queer’ was occasionally used in speech turns or written sentences, it was relative to the concept of social identity rather than social theory, realised through the term ‘queer identity’. This factor is significant given the production of queer theory as a social construct that represents non-identity constructs, seen as fluidic and supporting a choice-driven constructionist paradigm.

In summation, this chapter will integrate the dissertation objective with the manner in which the methodology and theoretical research paradigms correlate to the social construction of inclusion in lesbian language.

**MEMORY WORK AND NARRATIVE THEORY**

Memory work is the methodology used to obtain the data for this dissertation. It is a feminist technique devised by Frigga Haug ([1987] 1999) and colleagues, and has its origins in both feminist and post-structuralist paradigms. Memory work is based on a combination of social constructionist and social psychological theories (Haug [1987] 1999; Crawford et al 1992; Ingleton 1999; Small 1999, 2000; Gannon 2000; Friend & Thompson 2002; Farrar 2007; Cadman et al 2007). As a research tool it comes under the rubric of the broader theoretical paradigm known as social constructionism. This can be defined simply as ‘what there is to be known and how it is known as a social construction’ (Small 1999:26). All people are the primary knowers of their social
‘truths’ and in the feminist canon women are the knowers of their own social construction, their own ‘truth’, locating women as the ‘knowers’ of their society, rather than as peripheral adjuncts to the traditional patriarchal ‘knowers’ (ibid).

The initial focus of memory work is to obtain data from a researcher–researched perspective, with a subsequent focus on the evaluation and appraisal of material produced by the written memories and through discussion, where ‘meanings are negotiated until a “common” sense is achieved’ (Crawford et al. 1992:40). While these aims were designed to obtain maximum benefit from a group-research process, it shall be seen that each group responds differently to the guiding restraints. In the current memory-work process, the group rearranged some of the rules to suit its particular situation, raising issues that are fully explored in chapter 2, as methodological limitations and strengths. Memory-work researchers have used the basic tenets outlined by Haug’s original 1987 (1999 edition) work, but in some cases adjustments were also made in order to meet the challenges unique to and raised by individual research projects (McCormack 2000; Gannon 2000; Farrar 2007).

Haug’s empirical memory-work methods proliferated as Crawford, Kippax, Onyx, Cault, and Benton emulated the proceedings, becoming the leading innovators of memory-work theory in Australia. Memory work offers ‘a way of exploring human experience’ and, furthermore, ‘capturing and documenting its production’ (Crawford et al. 1992:37). In their book Emotion and Gender they lend support to the memory-work process by claiming that emotions, usually neglected in research corpuses, are appropriate research objectives since people use them constantly as part of their social habituation and construction.
Memory work and narrative theory are closely linked as memories or remembered experiences of the recent and distant past are written in the narrative format. In their narrative-writing exercises, the memory-work participants generally adopted the ‘narrative structure’ system (Labov & Waletsky 1967), consisting of a beginning, a plot, and an ending, identifiable as the taxonomy: orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution, and coda (ibid). This structure is prevalent as a Western cultural storytelling/writing mode. At other times the participants adopted the recount format, which is a more journalistic style of writing, describing events sequentially, as they were remembered (‘and then, and then …’) without a particular boundaried configuration. The narrative structure outlined above is implicated in the analyses of many of the participants’ written narratives (as opposed to the spoken narratives provided during discussions), and an elucidation of the dual-thematics evidenced within these stories is registered in the data chapters.

Narrative production, as a theoretical tool, is intrinsic to memory work as an effective mode of expressing experiences, producing interactive material, and engaging in storytelling to get to the heart of the matter (Miller 1994; Wood 1997; Roberts 2002; Kleinert 2002). A possible limitation in its utilisation as a social research device is the potential for ‘discontinuity’ between past-memory and present-narrative (Wood 1997:258; Sepulveda dos Santos 2002:171; Lister 2002:43–44). ‘The notion of narrative practices forefronts the particularity and the situatedness of personal storytelling, the fact that stories defined in particular ways are told for particular purposes in particular contexts of use’ (Miller 1994:164). The main cogency behind Miller’s statement is that certain experiences are remembered for a (usually) significant reason. Accuracy and precision in relating past experiences are not the
objective of memory work, as memories are frequently compounded to present a clear storyline without an actual memory of how frequently an event occurred.

Memory is generally not considered a reliable source of evidence in many fields (British Psychological Society). It is the *experience* of the remembered event that is crucial to the memory-work narrative process, as these experiences contribute to the collectivity of shared events, which can subsequently be constituted as discursively and experientially generalisable. The value of producing a generalisable event can be posited as a universal constituent in the practice of seeking to attribute certain fundamental qualities to certain events and experiences. The practice of universalising knowledge or information is ‘a system for achieving a shared set of beliefs’, inclining toward a ‘common ideology’ (Wardhaugh 1988:3). These situations are ‘neither discrete nor self-contained, but [are] constructed in the discourses that articulate [them]’ (Godard 1990:112–13), and can by this means be recognised as the constitution of naturalised knowledge, on occasion validating or creating ideological constructions.

Narrative research is adequately established as an academic research paradigm. Kitzinger uses a form of storytelling through interviews conducted for a research project investigating the social construction of lesbianism. These data were categorised as ‘autobiographical material’, which was ‘a reconstruction of the past told from the viewpoint of the present’ (Kitzinger 1987:71). Gulich and Quasthoff also conducted a study on narrative storytelling and found definitional differences compared to studies of other conversational structures (Gulich & Quasthoff 1985:192). The implication of their research was that the structure of narrative provides a broader database than topic-based interviews. This situation was replicated
within the current memory-work process. The presentation of personal material in a narrative format, and the ensuing reading of that material in a public setting, facilitated a process that was simultaneously intimate and collective.

In the act of reading we divest ourselves of the illusion of monologic selfhood. Finally, we align ourselves with the symbolic order of our own world and test this order against the texts that have already been “spoken”. (Bauer 1988:8)

The writing and reading aloud of remembered experiences derived from experience obtained within one ‘symbolic order’—the enculturation of the past—and realigned itself with a new ‘symbolic order’ (ibid)—the enculturation within the present social context—provided by the structure of the memory-work group. The participants were enabled by a sense of security inherent within this collective process, which was evidenced by the degree of shared intimacy made apparent in the data.

The circumstance of shared intimacy was enhanced by the memory-work method of researcher–researched conflation (the researcher becomes the researched) where all of the participants in the group were in equitable positions as the narrators of their own experiences. ‘The self as narrator—the inhabited self as distinguished from the represented self-protagonist—is thereby affirmed’ (Miller 1994:164). As the central characters of their narratives as well as the narrators and their own audience—the ‘self talking with the self’ (Crawford et al 1992:40)—the group participants in their varied roles as narrator and audience became active participants in the stories, where the writer-reader of the narrative moves from ‘protagonist’ to ‘inhabited self’ in their performances of significant experiences, both to themselves and through the reiterated themes produced within memory work (ibid).
Memory work as a constructionist research technique is demonstrably compatible with the constructionist-based concept of queer theory, as both demonstrate fluidic parameters (as opposed to measurable and quantifiable borders).

**Queer Theory**

Queer theorists propose the contextualisation of queer through language (Butler 1990, 1993, 1997a, 1997b; Sedgwick 1990; 1993). Other queer theorists whose research informs this dissertation are Livia and Hall (1997), who produced *Queerly Phrased*, one of the early anthologies expounding queer theory. Queer theory was popularised during the early 1990s (Groocock 1995:x) and is theoretically grouped with the concept of performativity (advanced by Austin [1962] as the illocution/perlocution model of speech), which subsequently constituted a distinguishable theoretical and academic corpus based on the fluidic validation of lesbian, gay, and transgender cultures (Vasquez 1999:269). Queer, the concept, has impacted many areas both culturally and academically and is viewed as a disruptive stratagem to the categories of gender and identity in their relationship to heteronormativity. One of the primary influences of queer theory on lesbian political thought has been ‘in the area of identity’, which Groocock contends is a direct response to the ‘more authoritarian elements of lesbian feminism’ (1995:x). Further, queer is considered to have empowered ‘an entire generation of our youth’ (Vasquez 1999:269) facilitating both scholastic and political voices.

Queer theory is viewed as a disruptive modality because it seeks to interrupt the overarching reach of heterosexuality. The suggestion that queer theory ‘interrogates’ heterosexuality in its normative status and critiques it as both ‘institution and practice’ (Jackson 1999:159) is a standard premise. This kind of interrogation is the ‘project’
(ibid:160) of queer theory in that it must call into question the primary binary opposites of ‘gay/straight, man/woman’ (ibid). Actions resulting in ‘destabilizing the boundaries’ between these normative–abnormative (non-normative) social structures demonstrates the ‘points of convergence with feminism’ (ibid).

Most significantly, queer theory was and is considered to be an inclusive theoretical paradigm. The implication of the term ‘inclusive’ in this context is that all gendered subjects—lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and others—are included within the queer construct. My research into queer theory suggests a sense of inclusiveness was understood in opposition to the essentialism (hence purported separation/factionalism) in identity theory as well as in other binary divisions such as class, race, etc. A pro-queer lesbian feminist perspective of this theme is adequately referenced by the many authors in the Kleindienst (1999) anthology (This Is What Lesbian Looks Like: Dyke Activists Take on the 21st Century); and other researchers, including Stein & Plummer (1996) and Dilley (1999) who all refer to queer theory as an inclusive paradigm. Queer implicates lesbian culture because the contention is that now ‘lesbian discourse can be studied cross-culturally because of the performativity of gender’ (Livia & Hall 1997:11), where performativity is equated with the ‘reproduction of norms’ (ibid:12). With the demolition of identity categories and the validation of all the diverse sexualities apart from (although sometimes even including) heterosexuality, queer was culturally and politically considered to be both accurately informative and academically acceptable. Queer discourses were able to be culturally specific but without the boundaries of exclusion that are stereotypically a natural accompaniment to identity theory and politics. According to Butler, queer also collapsed the concepts of action and speech, specifying queer-specific speech or,
significantly, the resignification of speech, paralleling them in their divisive
collection to a chain of repeatable performances:

The revaluation of such terms as “queer” suggests that speech can be
“returned” to its speaker in a different form, that it can be cited against its
originary purposes, and perform a reversal of effects … this suggests that the
changeable power of such terms marks a kind of discursive performativity that
is not a discrete series of speech acts, but a ritual chain of resignifications
whose origin and end remain unfixed and unfixable … [that is] an “act” is not
a momentary happening but a certain nexus of temporal horizons, the
condensation of an iterability that exceeds the moment it occasions. (Butler
1997a:14)

Queer theory was embraced by many politically disposed lesbians as a new political
platform from which to speak because of its theoretical capacity for inclusiveness,
which enabled the potential for the identity/exclusion problematic to be reduced. The
factionalism between radical-lesbian feminists and heterosexual feminists, particularly
regarding the cultural areas of race difference and sexuality difference, was still
extensive prior to the advent of queer theory.

Another example of the manner in which queer theory was initially perceived is
depicted in the title of the queer anthology This Is What Lesbian Looks Like: Dyke
Activists Take on the 21st Century (Kleindienst 1999). This book, with articles that
resonate with its title, is indicative of the newness with which lesbian feminism was
being considered. The assertion that “[w]e are intentional about bringing together a
mix of folks in terms of race, gender, and geography’ (McMichael & Wallace
1999:164) is typical of the thematic content of the anthology. In a trajectory toward
the queering of the lesbian, the assumption was that lesbian culture could
opportunistically become less identity-focused and more expansive. Extensive
research determined the inclusiveness of queer theory and practices, to the degree that researchers could claim that, because of queer theory, ‘[w]e try to model the “we” by having an interracial team’ (ibid) when they collaborated for a lesbian-specific project. Similarly, queer research was represented with positive interpellations, such as ‘a glimmer of hope’ as ‘an intellectual movement’ in academia, as it would lead to a decrease in the marginalisation of ‘sexual minorities’ (Stein & Plummer 1996:129).

Considering queer theory in terms of language in all its theoretical, political and cultural aspects, Dilley suggests that the ‘definition of queer is not about a lack of something (a lack of heterosexuality)’ (Dilley 1999:458) but can be seen as the constitution of a mode of expression for ‘same-sex experiences, a position outside of the normal trope of daily life’ that can redefine the construction of normalcy (ibid). Dilley further states that because the word ‘queer’ can be positioned as ‘a noun’ it therefore can be used as an inclusive term of categorisation for ‘one included in the marginalized group: a queer’ (ibid).

Queered inclusion at this level is also complemented by a broader social definition of cultural inclusion. Warner asserts that queers can clearly be as abusive as any other person in any other cultural group, but due to the ‘shared condition’ and comprehension of the state of ‘abjection’, queer people ‘also know how to communicate through … camaraderie [displaying] an unexpected form of generosity’ (Warner 1999:35). Assessing identity theory from a queer perspective, Seidman contends that ‘individuals are simultaneously’ capable of multiple identities with ‘each identification being shaped and shaping the others’ (Seidman 1997:123). Barrett concurs with this perspective on queer theory and suggests that the notion of a codified uniformity comprising a singular speech community is a fictional concept
(Barrett 1997:181). There are multiple speech communities that each individual belongs to at any given point in time and queer community as well as queer linguistics are basically non-definable (ibid), which also confirms Butler’s contention that ‘speech is always in some ways out of our control’ (Butler 1997a:15). Queer theory therefore opened up a means of multicultural communication ‘as queers with multiple identities’ within the queer habitus, and was also credited with the idea that this new form of social contact would ‘create openings for talking with other people’ outside the queer habitus as an ‘inclusive and expanded we’ (McMichael & Wallace 1999:164–65), thus pioneering a movement of breaking through the constraining barriers of difference.

More recent research has broached some incongruities between queer theory and its livable actuality, to the degree that queer has been accused of having ‘the most pernicious implications of normative complacency’ implicating it as a non-feminist construct (Dever 1999:414). Other theorists have determined that, even while proactively engaged with queer theory, a contention persists that it is theoretically “‘thin” on gender and race’ (Ingram, Bouthillette & Retter 1997b:7), locating it in a similarly contended position as the identity theory it was replacing, which is also accused of instigating separative constructs. This suggestion, however, does not find favour with all theorists, given the potential for interracial and gendered cohesion (Kleindienst 1999; McMichael & Wallace 1999). Ingram, Bouthillette and Retter also suggest in an article subtitled ‘queer theory and community activism’ that queer theory is ‘written largely by white and decidedly Eurocentric males and therefore excessively reflects their ideas’ (Ingram, Bouthillette & Retter 1997b:7).
The dissolution of identity as a social category was a paramount objective of the queer theoretical movement. Removing the socio-sexual boundaries of difference and the essentialisms presumed in many theories of identity would create equitable social relations and eliminate the dominant–subordinate dichotomy that underpins the heteronormative–alternative construction.

However, this aspect of the deconstruction of social binaries and borders has some perceived limitations. For example, in his article ‘Must identity movements self-destruct?’ Gamson queries the dissolution of identities:

> Queerness in its most distinctive forms shakes the ground on which gay and lesbian politics have been built, taking apart the ideas of a “sexual minority” and a “gay community”, indeed of “gay” and “lesbian”. (Gamson 1996:395)

Gamson’s concerns are in accordance with McLaughlin’s critical position on queer theory. In her book *Feminist Social and Political Theory*, McLaughlin contends that it is ‘problematic that as the term lesbian gains acceptance as a legitimate person and identity’, queer theory ‘liquidates’ (to use Kitzinger’s [1987] term) the lesbian subject’ (McLaughlin 2003:144). She is referring to the lengthy struggle (Kitzinger 1987) for public (visibility) recognition that had been undertaken by the lesbian community (broadly speaking) prior to the Gay Pride movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. This is confirmed by the suggestion that from this period ‘[v]isibility and identity had become inextricably linked’ (Brownworth 1999:26).

The lesbian identity is the only category that does not involve males in its cultural construction as same-sex or queer desire. It is unsurprising, therefore, that the lesbian figure is almost invisible in queer social research (Kleindienst 1999:14). It stands to reason that the ideological power that goes with the discursive and cultural visibility
engendered by the activist extensions of queer theory (such as Queer Nation) is almost entirely taken up by the male form, in any of its multiple constructs.

Concurrent to queer theoretical momentum was the growth of the concept, inferred by Gamson (1996) and McLaughlin (2003) that some aspect of identity theory or otherness ought to be maintained. This perspective is supported by other theorists. The suggestion that acknowledging ‘difference without surrendering otherness’ (Seidman 1997:99) suggests a contender for an updated codicil to queer theory. An approach was suggested that, as well as resistance to the surrender of identity, an outsider (to the normative habitus) could establish otherness in its positive and reclaimed aspect, thereby alleviating the possibility of experiencing an ‘inferior subordinate moment’ (ibid). Gamson also suggests that while queer has organised itself based on the difficulties perceived by antagonists of identity theory, identity is still a ‘made up yet necessary character’ and asserts both ‘individual and collective’ identity (Gamson 1996:395). These theoretical deliberations are compatible with many other theorists’ accounts where the acceptability of queer theory is expounded, while contending a preference for the maintenance of identity categories. This appears to be particularly relevant in consideration of the current lesbian-specific project, demonstrating through the production of data that the concept of identity is ‘something commonly shared by lesbians’ (Esterberg 1996:264) and that even when it was a marginalised subsidiary of heteronormative society there was an insistence on ‘a distinctive lesbian presence in the community’ (ibid).

In summary, queer theory has provided a scholastic mode for the intelligent, academically acceptable, and public debate about sexuality, as a practice of desire and also in its constitution of alternative visibility and an objective to be gained of the
collapsed state of the normative–abnormative binary. Its limitations are restricting in terms of research into lesbian-specific knowledge or history, which prompted the exploration of other research paradigms in the current project. Although theories about lesbian and gay sexuality are transformed through the ‘queering’ process (Livia & Hall 1997:13), the concept of a lesbian language was still being postulated through subtle statements such as ‘the characteristics specific to lesbian speech’ (ibid:14). In this thesis, the approach to lesbian language and the social construction of inclusion is far from subtle or marginal as it was deployed within the memory-work process. Further consideration was needed in the explication of an inclusive form of lesbian language, and, as such, looking at ‘the role of discourse in identity construction’ needed to be considered, as suggested in Morrish & Sauntson (2007:15).

The memory-work participants spoke from both essentialist (sexual identity) and constructionist (gender, sexual orientation) perspectives, without much remark on essentialism or constructionism, although there was an apparent awareness of social and linguistic changes that saw the recent implementation of queer into alternative terminology. This perspective is verified in Plummer’s contention that ‘[c]ommunity members often believe passionately in a “folk essentialism”—that “homosexuals” are born this way—whilst sociologists much more generally take a constructionist line’; Plummer further suggests that this ‘tension […] cannot be easily resolved’ but that there are ‘multiple ways of seeing’ (Plummer 2000:55).

The theme of identity theory vs. social constructionism is considerably implicated as a topic for further discussion. This has been provided within the constructionist paradigm of memory work used with a group of women whose discourse largely
substantiated identity theory. Queer theory became one discursive corpus through which the social construction of inclusion could be investigated.

**Identity vs. Constructionist Theories**

Social constructionism is a paradigm that is capable of becoming ‘heavily ideological’ and often represents sexuality as a concept ‘as though these are the only means of understanding the visible world’ (Habib 2007:11). Another contemporary challenge to the constructionist paradigm is the suggestion of the normative assumption for the existence of ‘only two sexes’. This contention, while biologically false, is made ineffaceable through the linguistic institution of the gender binary (Garber 2005:55). Both Garber and Habib are speaking of ideologies framed within the discourses of sexuality and identity. ‘Discourse does ideological work’ which serves to inform society with sociological strictures responsible for the reproduction of disparate power relations including those ‘based upon gender’ (Fairclough & Wodak 1997:275). Other recent research questioning constructionist viewpoints is determined from the following perspective of the way lesbians experience themselves:

> Like the constructionist/essentialist debates, much of this work on lesbian performativity and queer theory more generally remains abstract, divorced from the lives and stories of ordinary lesbians, a point which has led some to question the usefulness of the queer-theoretical program, either as a political agenda or as a description of the ways in which lesbians and gay men actually experience themselves as lesbian or gay. (Esterberg 1996:260)

Esterberg’s argument that queer theory is somewhat divorced from the lives of ‘ordinary lesbians’ corroborates recent theories cited that members of the lesbian and gay communities may not have the same ideas as socialists in the debate on essentialism vs. constructionism (Plummer 2000:55).
In her book *The Social Construction of Lesbianism*, Kitzinger reports on empirical research conducted using a sample of lesbian-identified respondents. Although Kitzinger’s work is based in social constructivism, she obtained some data by deploying an ‘interview and questionnaire’ format which utilised identity-specific language. Her primary objective was to demonstrate the positive existence of ‘radical, feminist and lesbian separatist constructions’ (Kitzinger 1987:vii) individuated from the then contemporary construction of gay liberalism. Gay liberalism was intended to include lesbians, but Kingzinger contends that once a social component has been left out it is impossible to re-introduce it inclusively. There is also the argument that once a marginalised group becomes amalgamated, the potential for disappearance or, as Kitzinger contends, the potential to be ‘liquidated’ (a concept proposed by Berger and Luckmann and cited in Kitzinger 1987:46) occurs. The liberationist attitudes of the then newly evolving gay movement had eventually become ‘depoliticized’ social constructions which had ‘left lesbians out’ (ibid:vii), a concept confirmed by Reynolds (2007) in his book *What Happened to Gay Life?* regarding both the depoliticisation of ‘gay life’ and the contention that lesbians were being left out.

Lesbian (gay) identity could not exist outside the boundaries of a political construction (Gamson 1996). Threatening and disrupting patriarchy as being an ‘institution of compulsory heterosexuality’ (Rich 1980; Kitzinger 1987) was prevalent to the purpose of the constructed radical lesbian. The early radical-lesbian-separatist feminists, according to Kitzinger (1987) and Kleindienst (1999), viewed lesbian identity as a political strategy and this construction was aligned with concepts of separatism in the name of political activism. Decades of lesbian activism wrought significant social changes. Kleindienst suggests, for example, that ‘[s]ome of this work and thinking has significantly influenced the very language many of us use,
become part of the paradigms upon which our efforts are based’ (Kleindienst 1999:13).

Kitzinger’s research nonetheless demonstrates favourably for social constructionism and equates ‘natural’ lesbianism with paradigms of pathologisation in the pre-gay liberation stakes, and as a depoliticised concept and therefore ineffectual construct in the post-gay liberationist era where she posits that matters of lesbianism revolve around ‘choice’ and ‘personal’ activities of ‘fulfilment’ (Kitzinger 1987:45–48). In short, ‘lesbianism and heterosexuality were equal options to be weighed’ (Brownworth 1999:28), denoting different parameters of the constructionist argument. Esterberg agrees with Kitzinger’s contention that ‘[t]he notion that lesbian identities are socially constructed is not, by now, a new one’ (Esterberg 1996:259). Esterberg suggests that these concepts are ‘commonly accepted’ and that identity constructions are endorsed through ‘social and historical circumstances and communities’ (ibid).

Kitzinger does not mention language use as part of her research although her questionnaire used lesbian-specific nominal group descriptors, such as ‘butch’, ‘femme’, ‘dyke’, ‘lesbian’, etc., suggesting reciprocal speaker/listener comprehension at least at the level of codifiable lexical markers. This can be seen as a form of lesbian-specific language, constituted as a ‘self-reference’ syndrome. Labelling the difference between lesbian and heterosexual speech through lexical usage automatically implicates the speaker as gay or lesbian (Weiss 2005:83).

The social constructionist–essentialist debate has been thoroughly investigated by Stein and contemporaries in the anthology *Forms of Desire*, wholly devoted to articles on the positive and negative aspects of both paradigms. In his article ‘The essentials of constructionism and the construction of essentialism’ (a self-explanatory title),
Stein states that ‘[e]ssentialists hold that a person’s sexual orientation is a culture-independent, objective and intrinsic property while social constructionists think it is culture-dependent, relational and, perhaps, not objective’ (Stein 1990:324). He also maintains that the argument is far from resolved, and is, in all probability, unresolvable, with a further contention that it is possible for people to occupy both categories at one and the same time, that is, think both as an essentialist and as a constructionist (ibid:327–28). This contention corroborates much contemporary queer theory, as previously suggested. The perspective of the validity of both paradigms is supported by Weinrich, who in his article ‘Reality or social construction?’ supports the contention that social constructionism focuses on socially determined and learnt behaviours that differ from society to society. Habib (2007) contends that essentialist (identity) biologics are constant throughout every society, as well as history.

Regardless of whether innateness or social construction might be the accurate representation of lesbian or same-sex identity, contemporary musings, particularly with a post-queer orientation, suggest that both domains are possible, that is, not necessarily contradictory, and actually correspond on many points. For example, same-sex-identified children exist long before sexuality (as a choice) becomes an issue and although ‘many believe there are no gay children, these children do exist and their minds and souls are shaped as they gradually grow in the awareness that they belong to a group disdained by many, sometimes even by the people closest to them’ (Baker 2002:1). These contentions correspond to the current memory work project because when the participants imparted memories through narratives depicting their first lesbian experiences, most experiences had occurred during childhood.
While these theories cannot be described as unilaterally cohesive concepts, their ideas do correspond to the degree that a consistent paradigm exists that is moving away from the exclusively constructionist (and therefore queer) modality, without relinquishing it entirely. In relation to this dissertation, it confirms that the invisibilising of the lesbian in many social paradigms is about to change; and because ‘[a]ll languages are constantly in a state of change’ (Wardhaugh 1988:2), the current trends would indicate the possibility that support for a lesbian-specific language may well be evolving, as there is the possibility for a speech community to emerge within any cultural group (Gumperz 1962; 1971).

**CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

Critical discourse analysis (Fairclough & Wodak 1997) operates in a way that allows the analysis of language and discourse ‘in use’ to open up new meanings in texts (Dijk 1985:1). ‘Critical linguistics’ is ‘designed to get at the ideology coded implicitly behind the overt propositions, to examine it particularly in the context of social formations’ (Fowler 1996:3). Each and every utterance has a coded orientation that informs individuals in different ways in different cultures. Desire is a component of every semiotic choice we make and it underpins our very identity. Each speech exchange expresses our desire to be, and opens up sets of options for each speaker. These options express power and status, implicating the speaker in the location of a continuous historical chain of association, which is realised contextually through discursive fields. In terms of lesbian-queer discourse, these concepts are reiterated in Weiss’ article ‘Constructing the queer “I”’, which deploys ‘[l]inguistic encodings of desire [that] constitute not only distinct and describable phenomena … but meaningful choices from within the possibilities available in grammatical systems’ (Weiss 2005).
Discourse represents the meaning located within the structure of language as it is spoken and written. It is realised in its ability to convey coherence and to connect explicit clusters of textual information (Candlin & Maley 1997). Discursive reiterations produce patterns of information that in turn accumulates as a corpus of knowledge. Discourses as articulations of meaning-making systems give context to language as it is used in conversation and so ‘this is effected partly by more generalized processes in which the theory or ideology of a group is linguistically encoded, articulated and tacitly affirmed’ (Fowler & Kress 1979:189). Fowler and Kress also suggest that ‘language is an integral part of [the] social process’ (ibid). The maintenance of a discourse pattern as it becomes a solid construct in culture accumulates into bodies of knowledge and subsequently institutionalises (to the degree that a subject is born) into a set of linguistic signs, semiotic systems (Saussure 1983), operating as a form of cultural literacy through the production and negotiation of communication (Schirato & Yell 2000:35). The process of language maintenance, through various ‘cultural fields’(ibid) is able to equalise the construction of the dichotomous locations of ‘us’ and ‘them’. Power resides with ‘those who control most dimensions of discourse (preparation, setting, participants, topics, style, rhetoric, interaction, etc)’ (Fairclough & Wodak 1997:265–66). Discourse informs ideologies which, in turn, both represent and construct social relations (ibid:275) and supports an ‘ideology [that] is linguistically mediated and habitual’ (Fowler & Kress 1979:189).

Lexical selection in language is one mode of making meaningful choices. The construction of lesbian/gay/queer lexis implicates word choice and usage when subjects describe themselves. In doing so they are differentiating themselves from other social groups (Zwicky 1997; Weiss 2005). Weiss suggests that this constitutes a linguistic act of ‘[d]istinguishing oneself or one’s group implicitly’ (Weiss 2005:83),
and Zwicky contends that using specific gay / lesbian terminology, such as ‘dyke’ or ‘faggot’, for example, implicates ‘differences in the language and speech of people of different orientations’ (Zwicky 1997:21), specifying lexical differences and perception-dependent language.

The fundamental significance of using critical discourse analysis as a research paradigm in this project is that it is capable of elucidating power variables inherent in the different ideologies constituted by the discourses exercised by the memory-work group. The suggestion that ‘power is the ability of people and institutions to control the behavior and material lives of others’ (Fowler 1985:61) corresponds to the methods of language deployment demonstrated by the data. Language analysis of any social group requires an analysis of its culture and in the application of this premise to the discourses produced by the participants, the variable frequently in question was that of which party demonstrably had the greater control in the normative–alternative dichotomy. The substantiation of power imbalance and the subsequent reversal of this imbalance are confirmed as the interchangeability of the domains represented by the controlled rather than the controlling. These discursive imperatives precipitated my decision to consider a cultural analysis of the research data, supporting the contention that ‘[w]e use language to represent phenomena in the world around us’ (Hasan 1985:62). It can be used diversely as ‘a primary encoding of direct observation’ or for recording purposes, in effect, ‘representing a representation’ (ibid).

The conventions ‘turn’, ‘topic’ and ‘field’ will be used intermittently to describe some aspects of the language and discourse analysis dealt with in this text.
Humour, Fantasy, and Laughter as Discourse

This summary of critical discourse analysis would not be complete without consideration of the impact of humour and laughter as significant indicators of social inclusion. The use of fantasy triggered regular sessions of humour and laughter, where laughter in this instance is viewed as discourse (Jefferson 1974). These discursive modes were demonstrated with a considerable degree of consistency in this project. The group applied the concept of fantasy to variable facets of their discourse, including as a distancing device, as an inclusive device, as a release of tension, and as a means of discursively reconstructing that which was deconstructed. The implementation of fantasy was generally used as a vehicle for humour, realised as satire and irony, and occasionally used in the constitution of grotesque imagery in the quest for converting social power imbalances. This example of discursive behaviour was prevalent throughout the four sessions to the degree that its explication requires an entire data chapter (see chapter four).

The discursive domains of fantasy and reality are inextricably bound components of a dyadic trope, or extrapolation, on the ideologically constituted dichotomy of difference and heteronormativity. The examination of humour as a discursive concept corroborates the dissolubility of culture and humour, although there are different degrees of certainty about the extent and boundaries of this supposition. Sherzer states that while ‘speech play and joking are probably universal’ the discourses in which they are situated are not (Sherzer 1985:213), suggesting they are specific to particular cultures and communities. Humour is distinguished as an international or global unifying device that is ‘more or less timeless’ (Berger 2006:127) while the contention is that ‘comedies’, while universal, do not always traverse cultural boundaries without some ‘risk’ (Croteau & Hoynes 2003:34) of misinterpretation. However,
‘multidisciplinary intercontinental’ research has recently been conducted into the concept of humour realised through ‘markers of irony and sarcasm’ (Attardo et al 2003:243). These broader research perspectives were complemented by an exploration into the use of humour in more explicit discursive conditions.

The theoretical component of humour research in relation to its social implications is reported to be ‘a discursive boundary marker in social interaction’. The contention that humour is generally considered responsible for ‘the construction of ingroup cohesion and solidarity’ (Holmes & Marra 2002:377) is supported by the data produced by the current project. Lesbian-specific research on humour is explicated in the article ‘How many lesbians does it take to screw in a light bulb?’ as an argument for humour as a discursive means of ‘self-construction’. Humour is seen as an imperative for assisting the social negotiations between mainstream and alternative cultures (Bing & Heller 2003:157). Further research on lesbian-specific humour can be found in the manuscript titled ‘Fish, U-hauls and lesbian jokes’ (Michels 1995). The titles of these articles indicate the deployment of lesbian-specific humour, requiring cultural knowledge to produce discursive comprehension.

Using humour as a negotiating tool is also the theme of the Bonaiuto et al (2003) article ‘Arguing and laughing: The use of humor to negotiate in group discussions’, and the Adelsward and Oberg (1998) paper discussing joking and laughter in social negotiations. These articles provide information that supports the contention that humour, as jokes or satire/irony, accompanied by laughter, plays a significant role in the area of communication with a focus on negotiation. Negotiating different social constructs was consistently indicated in the current project, and humour was frequently used to assist those negotiations.
The assertion that humour is used as a protective strategy when ‘themes might be too volatile’ (Raymond 2003:101) is posited in an article titled ‘Lesbian humor as a normalization device’. Painter (1980) asserts a socialising and political component to lesbian humour. Laughter and humour are indissoluble counterparts in the area of Sherzer’s ‘speech play’ (1985:213). The analysis of laughter as discourse (Jefferson 1985) is also explored, and laughter in relation to politics can be posited as both supportive and subversive (Partington 2006). Laughter can also be used as a means for subverting oppressive ideologies, for example, in the area of racial discrimination (McBride 1999), representative of an extrapolative view of sexual discrimination.

In summary, these combined attributes of humour have been researched and presented in order to understand the consistent usage of this paradigm in the production of fantasy, given the degree to which it was deployed within the memory-work group. Similarly, the group members demonstrated an extensive use of negotiations in situations that resulted in their self-inclusion in both mainstream and alternative culture. How this component of self- and other-construction was achieved is explored in detail in chapter three through the parallel negotiations between dichotomous locations. The topic depicting the manner in which humour was used as a means for negotiating the social dyads is registered in chapter four.

Culture forms an intrinsic component of any language study and is an essential component of the current study. The language and discourse usage deployed by the participants provided the basis for the concurrent cultural analysis deemed necessary to further explicate the data.
ETHNOGRAPHY AND PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

Ethnographic research is a means of assessing cultures or cultural aspects of any group or society, and is usually undertaken through longitudinal studies. In recent years ethnography has been combined with the study of linguistics. Contemporary ethnographic theory, with the inclusion of language study into its research corpus, has been variously called ‘ethnographic socio-linguistics’ (Rampton et al 2004; Rampton, Harris & Small 2006), ‘linguistic ethnography’ (Bargiela 2006; Creese 2008), and ‘liminal ethnography’ (Bargiela 2006). Ethnographic socio-linguistics utilises the ‘practice’ of observation with a focus on social interaction in a specific cultural group setting (Rampton et al 2006:7).

The suggestion that lesbian identity or female same-sex desire can generate inclusion through language is in alignment with previous theories that a cohesive and identifiable lesbian speech community exists. This existence informs a queer or lesbian identity within a social habitus (Ross 2004:238), where lesbians alternately seek, reject, and ultimately ‘attempt to own their habitats’ (ibid). Language enculturation, as discussed previously through discourse analysis, also implicates patterns of inclusion, with the contention that speech communities are identifiable constructs (Patrick 2002) and that these linguistic communities ‘may consist of small groups bound together by face-to-face contact or may cover large regions, depending on the level of abstraction we wish to achieve’ (Gumperz 1962:101). Another definition from Gumperz purports that linguistic communities are identifiable as:

[A] system of organized diversity held together by common norms and aspirations. Members of such a community typically vary with respect to certain beliefs and other aspects of behavior. Such variation, which seems irregular when observed at the level of the individual, nonetheless shows
systematic regularities at the statistical level of social facts. (Gumperz 1982:24)

Gumperz’s research definitions of a language community speak to the loosely identifiable boundaries that constitute the participants of this current research project. The memory-work group was a consolidated ‘diversity’ (ibid) realised as a collective of women in regular contact for a specified period time, one of the pivotal factors for calling the memory-work group a speech community, representative of the broader community (as respondents through the national lesbian magazine advertisement), but within the confines of an ‘organised diversity’ (ibid). For example, the concept of ‘coming out’ would constitute a linguistic feature within the parameters of discursive context, and also within the parameters of lexical choice. The term coming out is, in this context, contemporaneously recognisable as a queer concept, both organised and diverse. Hymes and Duranti disagree with the definability of a ‘speech community’ or ‘language community’, suggesting instead that a group along the lines of the memory-work group, ‘sharing at least one linguistic feature’ would constitute rather a ‘social entity’ (Hymes 1972:54–55) or, at the very least, ‘the product of the communicative activities engaged in by a given group of people’ (Duranti 1997:82).

Another definition of a cohesive aggregate of community is the term ‘a community of practice’, which constitutes a collection of people who collectivise around shared projects with an objective in common (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1998). The parameters of value systems, relational systems, behaviours, and belief systems constitute a membership based on the ‘construction’ of shared viewpoints and practices (ibid). Identification within a community of practice confers a sense of belonging, which is not constrained by exclusivity. Membership can be secured in
many different communities of practice at the one time creating a ‘sense of place in the social world’ (ibid).

Ethnographically based observations are also integral to the study of social institutionalisation (Rampton et al 2006:7). In particular, the combination of ethnography and linguistics is capable of creating an opportunistic ‘point of entry into cultural analysis’ (ibid) and enables the exploration of consistent repetitive and repeatable accumulations of information. The validity of deploying ethnographic socio-linguistics in the study of a memory-work project is that the objectives of both research paradigms are primarily similar, with a ‘close analysis of situated language use’ being able to ‘provide both fundamental and distinctive insights into the mechanisms and dynamics of social and cultural production in everyday activity’ (ibid:2). The current memory-work process is based on a social constructionist approach (Crawford et al 1992:1) that looks at individual self-construction within a social cultural setting, for the purpose of historical analysis, constantly reinforcing a process of self- and other-awareness.

Both language and culture are in a constant state of changeability and flux (Berger & Luckmann 1966; Wardhaugh 1988), producing compatibility between the theoretical underpinnings of language and discourse analysis (Halliday 1978), queer evaluation (Butler 1997a) and an ethnographic socio-linguistic study. Difference and change within social groups is a variable to be considered. Does the audience’s understanding of a text equate with the speaker’s intention? Are the goals of the speaker/writer the same as or different from the goals of the listener/reader? Rampton et al suggest that from an ethnographic socio-linguistic perspective, ‘the meaning and interpretation of a linguistic or semiotic form is always influenced by the way in which people read its
This precept suggests that the discourses produced by the memory-work group, in this case as a lesbian-specific language, would be both directed and comprehended by that community. The speakers would produce systems of meaning that would be understood by the listeners, a concept that can be extrapolated to include both the current memory-work group setting, and its broader cultural infrastructure.

**LESBIAN LANGUAGE**

Lesbian language, representative of a lesbian speech community, is not a new concept. As well as the ethnographic concepts explored above, Romaine in a sociolinguistic study also defines a ‘speech community as a group of speakers … who share a set of norms and rules for the use of language(s)’ (1982:13), and Painter supports the existence of a lesbian-specific speech community which she defines as a collection of ‘interpretive procedures and external cues’, recognisable as an identification system between lesbians (Painter 1981:68). Identification was possible because it was considered possible by the users of this system (ibid:69). Painter also suggests that it is a form of naturalised behaviour for members of ‘hidden groups’ to recognise and identify one another (ibid), a concept also validated by linguistic research on language and sub-cultures (Halliday 1974).

As well as Painter, who provided early and definitive research on lesbian language, contemporary lesbian and gay theorists have also supplied a strong background for continuing that research. Zimmerman (1993) suggests that there exists a lesbian appropriation of language; Leap (1996) contends the existence of a gay men’s English; Barrett (1997) confirms the existence of ‘[t]he “homo-genius” speech community’; Moonwomon-Baird (1997) explores a study of lesbian speech, Livia &
Hall (1997) attest to a lesbian-specific performativity in linguistics; Queen (1997) validates in “I Don’t Speak Spritch”: Locating Lesbian Language’ the codifiable identification of lesbian language; and Morrish & Sauntson (2007) conducted a functional analysis on lesbian conversation. These theorists are representative of much recent interest in the study of gay and lesbian language, within both the queer and identity theoretical paradigms.

Queen (1997) was among the first to postulate, in her article “I Don’t Speak Spritch”: Locating Lesbian Language’ published in the queer-language anthology Queerly Phrased, the existence of lesbian language. Queen asserts that lesbian language does exist as a system of codified attributes, which are specific to lesbian understanding and more generally to queer audience comprehension (Queen 1997:233). Queen analysed a series of three different lesbian-specific cartoons chosen from the media to illustrate her argument that the language used by the lesbian cartoon characters represent ‘the ways in which lesbians are assumed to speak’ (ibid). Lesbian language is identifiable through Queen’s empirical sample because of the differently contextualised social and political conventions within the broader spectrum of normative society (ibid:233–34). Queen names her form of language analysis the ‘linguistics of contact’, a notion borrowed from Mary Louise Pratt which suggests a distinctive and regulated semiotic system recognisable among like-minded individuals.

However, in the same article Queen also contends that lesbian language is not explicitly recognisable ‘in terms of its grammar or linguistic system’, and is analogous to ‘woman’s language’ (citing Lakoff 1972). It is distinctly recognisable, however, through the contemplation of ‘axes of social difference’ (Queen 1997:238).
Queen suggests that this form of lesbian-specific identification, of a distinguishable community, ‘typically revolves around trying to specify who might or might not belong’ (ibid:234) whereas the ‘linguistics of contact’ operates to dispel exclusion and acknowledges difference among speakers.

The lesbian-specific content of language is ‘exploited’ in ways that render its usage indexed and codifiable and therefore understandable by diverse community members, but it is not contingent upon attaining ‘membership … in the abstract conception of the lesbian community’ (Queen 1997) that constructs the uniqueness of lesbian language. Queen sees membership as involving an ‘imagined’ lesbian group, in effect that it is an ‘abstract’ concept, and to exemplify this context Queen parenthesises the words ‘lesbian’ and ‘identity’, signalling their non-reality status. This perspective is supported by Lienert (2003) in her manuscript ‘Relating women: Lesbian experiences of friendship’, where she also suggests that the lesbian community is too diverse to be construed as a cohesive culture, and postulates those parameters as belonging to small individuated groups.

Queen’s analyses and observations suggest a stereotypical construction of lesbian language and the assumptions that can be projected onto a social group. This was identified through the production of four main effects. They were, briefly, a phonological ‘pitch’ effect; cursing; the use of lewd expressions about the male anatomy; and a lack of humour and joking, ‘especially in terms of sarcasm and irony’ (Queen 1997).

Lesbian language has also been investigated by Morrish and Sauntson (2007), published as New Perspectives of Language and Sexual Identity. Interactive recorded empirical data were analysed using ‘structural-functional discourse analysis’ (SFDA)
devised from the combined works of early linguists, such as Austin (1962), Halliday (1994, and cited as 1978, 1985 in Morrish & Sauntson 2007), and others, reflecting the utilisation of a combined discourse analysis and lesbian-language analysis. This construction is based on many of the early functional linguists (a move away from traditional grammatical linguistics). SFDA particularly reflects a structural and performative approach to language analysis. Morrish and Sauntson state that much previous research into lesbian language has been qualitative and content-focused and the suggestion is that such information alone contributes to a lack of ‘systematic analysis of the structures of conversations’ (Morrish & Sauntson 2007:28); their research was conducted in an attempt to fill that gap.

The research focus on ‘lesbian conversations as discourses of identity and resistance’ (ibid:24–49), is of particular interest to this current research project. It deals with recorded interviews of casual conversations between lesbian women only, and then provides a comparative study of recorded conversations between lesbian and heterosexual women together. The overall research results suggest that there is ‘no specific … lesbian code’ but that language is utilised by lesbians ‘to index social identity in various ways’ (ibid:24). These outcomes are similar to Queen’s explanation, that there is not a lesbian culture that can be defined as such, with a specific language, but that there are ways of using language that could be defined as a means to ‘index social identity’ (ibid). The concept that there is no specific linguistically (in a grammatical and structural sense) identifiable lesbian language finds corroboration with the research in this thesis, which therefore places focus on discourse as the critical inclusive linguistic factor, with a corresponding cultural inclusiveness. Codified discourse, dependent upon context and combined with particular lexically specific codes with a speaker/listener bond, can be built upon to
sustain culturally specific language as a form of language planning (Cooper 1990; Leap 1996).

Morrish and Sauntson describe their method of obtaining an indexifiable social identity as a ‘communities of practice’ (Morrish & Sauntson 2007:8) paradigm, which possibly parallels Queen’s method, as a ‘linguistics of contact’ (Queen 1997:233). Although Queen’s model is sociolinguistic, and Morrish and Sauntson’s model is linguistic, both would depend on contextualised settings, which supports the idea of inclusiveness as a key/central feature in lesbian-specific discourse, recognisable and indexifiable in language. Morrish and Sauntson present transcripts of two groups of women talking. The first group consisted of a mix of heterosexual and lesbian women. The second group consisted of lesbian only participants. Their description of ‘discourses of identity and resistance’ demonstrate indexifiable differences between the two sample groups to the degree that the participants in the lesbian-only sample used different lexical descriptors from those used in heterosexual company. This linguistic action constituted the incidence of ‘resistance to dominant gender norms and ideologies’ realised as ‘the intersubjective tactic of distinction’(original author’s italics). This is defined as the occurrence of the one ‘major contributing factor to a linguistic construction of gender identity’ (Morrish & Sauntson 2007:47).

Other specific research incursions into lesbian language are scarce, although lesbian-specific research is occasionally linked to gay-male speech studies (Leap 1996), or lesbian-specific themes can be extrapolated through gay-male research (Reynolds 2007). Since the advent of queer theory, however, inclusive as it is of all queer cultures and sexualities, lesbian research is considered to be inherent within the queer model. While this may not always be the case, it has opened the debate about the
invisibility (Kitzinger 1987) of the lesbian in theoretical research corpuses. Queer theory represented the ‘movement from social construction of sexuality to discourse construction of gender’ (Livia & Hall 1997:11) and the lesbian has all but disappeared from its research corpus (Esterberg 1996; McLaughlin 2003).

**LESBIAN LANGUAGE AND THE MEMORY-WORK GROUP**

Identity discourse is recognisable through the categorising or labelling of sexuality as a category different, and implicatively separate, from other sexual or identity categories. Public awareness of sexuality differences (usually implying abnormalcy) is now more prevalent and it would be surprising if these concepts (queer, identity) were still contained within the private realm. Regardless of public awareness of language changes, however, it needs to be considered that ‘generally, speakers are not aware of what is going on’ (Wardhaugh 1988:2). Within the current memory-work project, sexuality, as an identity-focused concept was used discursively by the participants to define their social contextualisation but the term ‘sexuality’ was not frequently utilised. ‘Bisexuality’ was a recognised concept and had been explored socially. This term was used as a descriptor by one participant to illustrate a phase she had gone through, while another participant used it to portray confusion and ambiguity. The youngest member of the group was ambivalent about whether to call herself ‘lesbian’ or ‘bisexual’ and she brought her concerns about this to the memory-work process. The following discussion excerpt demonstrates the use of identity discourse, utilising self-descriptive labels, but with the fluidity of ambivalence and choice that also denotes queer discourse, for example ‘girls and boys’.
Beth

Well (...) you see with me um when I was younger, I considered myself bisexual (...) so I would (...) bring uh (...) girls and boys (...) basically and uh (...) So it’s never (...) really been an issue ...

The terminology utilised within the memory-work group was primarily identity discourse, with overlapping queer discourse at infrequent intervals. The concept and terminology of queer was understood, however, although not within the parameters of theoretical concerns such as constructionist paradigms. Identity terminology was utilised, with self-referents such as ‘lesbian’ and ‘dyke’. This concept was consistently amplified by the use of inclusive pronouns such as ‘we’ and ‘us’ when referring to the broader lesbian community, without specifying the geographical parameters of that community. The concept and terminology of queer was understood through the oppositional usage of pronouns such as ‘they’ and ‘them’, signifying markers of normative and heterosexual discursive exclusion. Hence, social construction is a workable theory from the perspective of the memory-work methodology used to obtain data in equitable research conditions, but it is worthwhile to note, given the self-defining nature of memory work and collaborative effort, that although the participants were involved in this paradigm they did not present with knowledge of the concept, or with terminology indicating knowledge.

The term ‘queer’ was used once each by the three younger members of the group during discussion sessions, and the term generally signified an alternative context without actually including themselves within that reference. For example, they could use the term lesbian as self-identification, and locate that self in a queer situation or circumstance (as in Evie’s “queer world”), transferring the context of queer to a
broader social construct. In this manner, the memory-work participants did embrace both paradigms while not presenting with an externalised referent for this adherence. There was a sense of naturalness about the use of identity-specific terminology, which was evidenced also in the naturalness with which heterosexual community was defined. This implies again the lack of remark or topic to explicate the terminology.

Similarly, while the participants did not use labels such as ‘essentialist’ and ‘natural’, the inference from informal group conversation and observation is that the participants generally felt they were ‘born this way’, that it wasn’t a matter of choice.

The following excerpt demonstrates the use of identity terminology, and also supports the idea of lesbian-specific identity discourse, recognisable in the writer’s choice of nominal groups as self referents.

*Narrative 1.1 ‘Lucky Lezzo’*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evie thinks that it’s all brilliant. It’s a life force. She feels excited and wonderful and lucky every day to be a leso. … How come I got to be this lucky?’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[Session 5]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evie writes (in third-person context, then switches to first-person) in a narrative generated in session 5 that she feels “lucky” to be lesbian and that it is a “life force”.

In this excerpt the capacity identified by Weiss for determining both identity and queer discourse—he contends that the use of this form of self-descriptive terminology ‘constructs’ ‘the speakers’ through the process of ‘self-categorizations’ (Weiss 2005:82)—is demonstrated.

The significance of the memory-work group’s use of identity discourse is supported by recent research which suggests that homosexuals across history and cultures share ‘the most basic conscious knowledge’, that their sexual desires are ‘different from the
dictates of standard social sexual currency’ (Habib 2007:25). Furthermore, Habib contests the idea as ‘dubious and illogical’ that historical and traditional prohibitions could ‘lead to the creation of a people who did not previously exist’ (ibid).

**LANGUAGE, CULTURE, AND INCLUSION**

The semiotics of language and how it is used to convey meaning within variable contexts is critical to understanding how inclusiveness is a distinguishable construction within the process of memory work. Language contextualises the subject, in this case the participants of the memory-work group, and the circumstances that inform their practices of inclusion. Language is a socialising device where people can develop particular orientations to meaning and in this way become members of a particular group (Gumperz 1962; 1971; Patrick 2002). It is contended, both empirically and theoretically, that through remembering and narrating subjects can become the active creators of their own historicity. The idea of actively producing one’s own form of history is implicated in Godard’s statement that the ‘gendered reader who may receive and construct a text is historically formed, shaped in and through language’ (Godard 1990:113). Stacey (1983) queries the possibility of a feminist ethnology and Weedon (1987) suggests that language forms the basis for all thought and speech patterns and these create the semiotic systems from which knowledge can be gained about our surroundings. Weedon contends conclusively that ‘[m]eaning and consciousness do not exist outside language’ (1987:32).

Contemporary researchers appear to be looking for other ways to describe lesbian / gay / queer culture, which is a sign that things are changing. Reynolds, for example, suggests that ‘gay identity’ is a creation of the past that has not disappeared, but has transformed into a new concept (Reynolds 2007:192–94). His empirical research on
gay men suggests a non-identity approach. However, queer theory and practice is not indexed at all, so Reynolds’ suggestion that things have transformed into a different kind of gayness, specified as ‘something else’, is neither identity- nor queer-specific. It is ‘exciting and potentially liberating’ (Dines & Humez 2003:5) to be involved in an approach that is able to theorise and speak to gender construction and social construction generally, while maintaining an identity approach. As Plummer asserts, multiplicity and open mindedness is the key to being involved in the production of social research (Plummer 2000:55).

Through the application of the memory-work process, the group members were facilitated to construct a sense of their own social power through the use of specific discourses and the subsequent transformation of normative ideologies. The group was spoken by and also spoke to the discourses as both the products and producers of discursive freedoms and constraints. All language changes and shifts over time, so the implications for the recognition of lesbian language as an arbiter of change have been realised in the deconstructive and reconstructive discursive performances within the group, suggesting therefore that ‘language is a part of, as well as a result of, social process’ (Fowler & Kress 1979:189).

This chapter has been engaged with the social construction of inclusion in lesbian language pertinent to its theoretical framework, exploring theoretical constructs of memory work, queer theory, critical discourse analysis, enthographic socio-linguistics, and lesbian language as a research corpus. The current research project has also been contextualised within early lesbian constructionist research realised through the work of Kitzinger (1987) to provide a political background to lesbian research through the early and now historical radical-feminist and lesbian-separatist paradigms.
Although it is not intended to present a linguistic analysis of the data, the discursive and ethnographic analyses are backgrounded in, and supported by, a study of systemic functional linguistics (Halliday 1974, 1978, 1994, 2002; Bloor & Bloor 1995) and in the study of ‘systems of meaning or social systems which regulate human behaviour’ (Martin 1985:21) as well as language and gender studies (Poynton 1985). Conversational analysis was also researched (Eggins & Slade 1999) as was cultural literacy (Schirato & Yell 2000). Linguistic concepts and definitions were provided by Trask (1999).

Lesbian language as a theoretical paradigm was supported primarily through the study of written text by Queen’s (1997) sociolinguistic research, and Morrish and Sauntson’s (2007) linguistic research. Gay (male) language theory also provided valuable background information (Leap 1996; Barrett 1997; Reynolds 2007) and the formative gay anthropological research corpus provided a queer ethnographic perspective (Lewin & Leap 2002; Leap & Boellstorff 2004). Identity theory was juxtaposed to social construction theory and/or queer theory, with the outcome that each paradigm was validated by different theorists, including the contemporary proposals to amalgamate the two paradigms.

The following chapter provides an in-depth explication of memory work as a methodology as it was utilised in the current research project. This is followed by the presentation of data obtained from the memory work process in chapters 3, 4 and 5. The data results and the discussion of those results are presented together in each of the data chapters. The reason for this arrangement is to eliminate the potential for anaphora prevalent in the depiction of spoken data. As this project is data-driven, there are many examples of spoken texts, as speech exchanges, and utterances,
involving from one to six speakers per excerpt. The probability for anaphoric confusion, over a significant textual distance, is prohibitive. The results are also lively representations of discourse, exemplifying the incidence of inclusion as a social construct. Consequently, the results and discussion components have been presented together throughout the three data chapters.
CHAPTER 2
MEMORY WORK AS A METHODOLOGY FOR UNDERSTANDING

Memory work is a feminist methodology devised by Frigga Haug ([1987] 1999) and colleagues, and is established in both feminism and post-structuralist paradigms. Memory work is a qualitative research technique, which enables the flexibility required for evaluating interactive social processes. A good deal of ethnographic, social, and/or linguistic studies can all be defined within the parameters of qualitative research, based as they are on observation, experience, interaction, and also usually conducted in the field (Wadsworth 1997; Johnstone 2000; Rampton et al 2004, 2006).

This particular memory-work group process was a longitudinal study conducted over a period of four weeks, with one two-hour session held each week and a fifth session held as a farewell session. Written and spoken texts were used to determine the dissertation’s objective, the social construction of inclusion in lesbian language, and these were produced through a series of weekly, written narratives and discussions ensuing from the reading of the narratives. Each group member provided her own memory-based story each week, for group discussion. The narrative topics for each week were predetermined by the participants. The interactive nature of the group increased as the sessions progressed, and the degree of social distance decreased with each session.

In this chapter, memory work is outlined in relation to previous research and then further defined in relation to the current project, using examples of the group’s texts to demonstrate specific points. How memory work operates, and my reasons for deciding to use it as the most appropriate research tool to obtain my objective, will also be justified. An investigation into the strengths and limitations of memory work follows, as well as an overview of the process undertaken to activate this research
A brief description of the participants and an exploration into crucial components of their involvement with this memory-work project will follow. I provide a transcription key toward the end of the chapter to clarify details of language and discourse descriptions and analyses undertaken throughout the thesis.

One of the basic premises of constructionism is that individuals are simultaneously constructed by, and self-construct within, the societies in which we live. Social construction and self-construction are both performed through multiple means, including the simultaneous concurrence of linguistic and cultural attributions, enabling the representation of society and the individuals (re-presented) within it. In order to create a comprehensive database, additional theoretical paradigms were used in its explication. Although the project was a group process, methodological and theoretical decisions were made by me, as were any matters relating to choice of data presented as textual examples. The reasoning for my veering away from the usual constraints of memory work, as prescribed by its initiators (Haug [1987] 1999; Crawford et al 1992) will be discussed further under the sub-headings **Memory-Work Strengths** and **Memory-Work Limitations**. The theoretical paradigms of critical discourse analysis, ethnographic sociolinguistics, sociolinguistics, and queer theory have been used to complement the methodology of memory-work. The broad aim was to provide the best possible means for analysing and evaluating the data obtained through the memory-work process.

**DEFINING MEMORY WORK**

Memory-work method focuses on the way individualised social beings are inserted into the existing social structures, including a study of the perpetuation and recreation of those structures (Haug [1987] 1999:33). A primary focus of memory work is also
the relations of individuals within the parameters of externalised and normative structures. Individuals locate and recreate themselves through their relational processes within the broader boundaried sites of pre-existent cultural normalcy. Haug’s general philosophy behind memory work is to investigate the potential for the social construction of women, by women, in order to implement a historicity of cultural inclusion of women, previously subsumed under a broader and traditionally masculinist perspective of assumed knowledge. The historical recording of women’s social construction has been largely ignored, rendering women socially invisible (Small 1999:26–27). Contentions for a ‘female socialisation’ (Haug [1987] 1999:33) can be extrapolated and thus amplified to include the process of ‘lesbian socialisation’, which features the supposition of additional marginalisation strictures (Wolfe & Penelope 1993:5).

‘Memory-work is considered innovative and a method aligned with a feminist social constructionist paradigm’ (Small 1999:25) where ‘everyday experience is the basis of knowledge’ (Small 2000:2). Memory work operates toward establishing an understanding of the sense-patterns we construct out of our memories, or the events that precipitated the memories. The retrieved memories can be one basis for analysing the construction of social relatedness and its reconstruction. This is because of ‘the power of memories over time to bring the past into the present’ (Ingleton 2000:4). To exemplify this assumption from the data, one of the participants (Sophie) mentioned during a tea-break that this was the first time she had had the opportunity to explore her past experiences and subsequently evaluate them in a manner beyond just remembering her experiences in isolation. Within this group process Sophie was able to make sense of, and contextualise, her memories into a structure of enabled understanding.
Memories are typically re-formed into narratives in order to give individuals some semblance of order and meaning in their lives, and in order to make some sense of the frequently inexplicable events of the past. The procedure of writing and talking out these stories of remembered experiences becomes the governing structure from which to reconstruct events into identifiable patterns for closer assessment (Ingleton 1999:5). Memory work utilises actual individual memories as cultural productions (Johnston 2000:11). Contemplation of one’s past is the key to social construction and as a result of this concept Haug initiated the use of memories, reconstituted as narratives, as her database. Ultimately, each memory creates a mental record from which some portion of one’s identity is formed (Small 1999:28) and consecutively proliferates into the broader social identity.

**MEMORY-WORK GUIDELINES**

There are three phases to the memory-work process: (a) written memories, (b) collective analyses, and (c) contextualisation of the analyses within academic theories. These phases are realised through the practices of (i) writing the memory, (ii) writing in the third-person context, (iii) discussing group opinions and ideas, (iv) defining the commonalities and differences, and (v) rewriting the memories in a generalisable manner (following Haug [1987] 1999:33–73 and Crawford et al 1992:43–49).

The group process in memory work, as opposed to individual sessions or interviews, allows memories to be recalled from a trigger word or phrase, as a ‘cue’, which is decided upon by the participants (or sometimes by the researcher). The memories are then written down as narratives and presented back to the group for collective reflection/discussion. These sessions, including both the reading of the narratives and the discussions that ensued, were recorded and transcribed by the author, for the
purpose of producing this dissertation. The process of exploring past experiences from a present experience/environment provides the potential for these events to be reconstructed—from an altered perspective, allowing for a different understanding. ‘Spoken and written narratives are powerful ways of exploring meaning in past events’ (Ingleton 1999:5). The collective sharing of these memories as narratives provides the basis for a reconstruction of the meanings behind the experiences.

**The Group**

The following table provides information about the participants of the memory-work group. Their names have been altered, their ages are recorded as they were at the time of the memory-work sessions and, rather than providing identifiable biographical details, beyond stating the demographic that most of the participants were educated to a tertiary level, denoting a predominantly educational middle-class category, I have included the participants’ reasons for wanting to be involved in this project. In respect of the concept of a collapsed researcher–researched methodological construct, my details and participation have also been recorded anonymously, and I am therefore included in all references to the participants, the group, the members, and so on.

The following additional demographic information is provided: four of the participants were born in Australia, one was born in another English-speaking country, and one was born in a European country; five were from English-speaking backgrounds while one was from a non-English-speaking background. The cultural heritage mix of the group, as far as could be ascertained within the memory-work setting, was Anglo (English / Irish / Scottish), European, Scandinavian and Middle Eastern.
**Table 2.1 Memory-Work Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Reason for Joining this Research Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beth</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>I enjoy these sorts of things because I love doing self-analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clare</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>I have a really strong interest in any new research in the area of health and wellbeing of lesbians and our communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evie</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>To meet some Sydney women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgie</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>I’ve never thought about lesbians having a language, and I’ve not talked much about my lesbianism, having come out later in life, so am looking forward to this opportunity to be in a lesbian group, talking about lesbians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophie</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>I wanted to support an academic lesbian research project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daria</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Lesbian and gay communities have the highest incidence of adolescent suicide (Western world); much more research is needed to alleviate this heart-breaking situation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to demonstrate the degree of interest in this lesbian-language, and memory-work, project, I have included below some of the other responses to the advertisement (Appendix A) placed in a national lesbian magazine from women who were unable to attend due to either geographical, employment or time constraints but who expressed support or interest.

**Table 2.2 Responses to Advertisement in Lesbians on the Loose Magazine**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PhD student</th>
<th>I saw your ad in LOTL and I’m interested although I live in Victoria. Would you like me to complete a written part or is this not possible? I’m happy to help out any way I can.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PhD student 26 y.o.</td>
<td>I saw your ad in LOTL and I’m interested in participating; It would be really hard for me to get out to Sydney, so I just thought I’d find out some details from you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linguistics student 37 y.o.</td>
<td>Your lesbian lingo research project sounds great. I would love to participate in the data collection sessions. So little research has been done on women’s language and even less on dykes’ language. Transport might be a problem.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
University student
20 y.o. | I think that this project sounds fascinating. I also think being involved in something like this sounds like quite a unique and provocative experience about both myself and the community I live in. I am more than willing to take part in the research.

Teacher
42 y.o. | I am interested in your group for two reasons. Professional, my interest in culture, diversity, and how society and subcultures work. Personally, as a growthful experience for myself. I am interested in how we create our journey.

Unknown | I’ve got a new job so can’t make it. I hope the project goes well.

As well as this support from women wishing to be involved in the project, there was also much verbal encouragement from those not wanting involvement but who were interested in the project topic—lesbian language—and its outcome. The social support engendered by the research topic demonstrates the concept of inclusion of a different nature, involving the broader outreaches of lesbian community and therefore reinforcing the concept of a lesbian speech community from an ethnographic and sociolinguistic perspective.

The participants’ real names, and all identifying details, have been changed or deleted so that they may remain anonymous, in accordance with the University of Western Sydney’s Human Research Ethics Committee (HERC) regulations (Protocol No. HE01/023).

**THE PROCESS**

The methodological and theoretical organisation of this thesis is supported by adjuncts to the process, namely, the advertisement in the local and national lesbian-specific magazine *Lesbians on the Loose*, located as Appendix A. The selection process was simple. Each participant who responded to the advertisement was
required to fill out an application form (Appendix B) and was then provided with an information package (Appendix C) and a consent form (Appendix D), which had to be filled out and brought to the first session. Each person who responded and attended became a group participant.

The narratives, which were written from remembered experiences resulting from the weekly cue, were written within and sometimes between the weekly sessions. The memories written as stories form an integral part of the memory-work process and are intended to provide both a basis from which to discuss the cue topics, and also to provide, through the process of discussion and rewriting, a unified text which would result in generalisable data. Copies of the narratives are located as Appendix E. The recorded and transcribed discussions transpired after the narratives had been read out to the group.

The group sessions were held in the group room at the Leichhardt Women’s Health Centre, Sydney, which was hired for this purpose. The group sessions lasted two hours each, per week, with a fifteen-minute tea break within that time frame. The first four weeks were recorded, but the fifth was a ‘farewell and thank you’ session, to which participants brought written narratives, which were collected but not discussed (Appendix E). I have transcribed the four weeks’ recordings of group discussions. There were 167 pages (approximately 50,000 words) of recorded and transcribed dialogue (see Table 2.3 below). They have not been admitted as appendices, in total, due to the identifying and therefore confidential nature of some of the data, and in agreement with the participants. However, a compendium of all the dialogues (approximately 4,000 words) used in this thesis is presented as Appendix F, listed in order of usage per chapter and is used within the body of text referenced as, for
example: Session 1–4, a or b (‘a’ before, and ‘b’ after the tea-break), followed by the page number (p1, etc). Each dialogic segment is also titled, for easy identification.

A partial transcription has also been conducted by a research assistant (RA) for independent verification working through approximately ten percent of the chosen samples (see Appendix G). The percentage of agreement between transcribers was approximately 95%. The differences were not indicative of any significant difference in the data base. For example, where I have transcribed: “You must be very secure”, the RA transcribed “More superior” (chapter 3, discussion 3.2, Georgie, move 6). Given that the analysis of that excerpt involved an investigation into the overlapping of past and present contexts in Daria’s utterance in move 1, the discursive context of “secure” and “superior” in Georgie’s move does not impact on the outcome of the analysis. Another example of an anomaly occurred where I have presented Georgie exclaiming “Yeah!” followed by Evie exclaiming “Not her!” (chapter 2, discussion 2.3, moves 3 and 4). The RA transcribed these two moves as one move and uttered by one voice only, that of Daria. Once again, this difference has little relevance to the data outcome, as it was the meaning-content that was significant in this excerpt, rather than the person uttering the comment/s. Given that the primary data obtained were analysed for discursive and ethnographic patterns of language use rather than as a strict linguistic analysis of each word and move, the differences presented are considered insignificant. Exact comparisons can be sighted by referring to Appendices F and G.

The narratives are qualified by the assumed name of the writer and include the week in which they were utilised in the memory-work process. In each instance of use, the cue relevant to that particular session is provided, for contextualising purposes. Casual
conversations also took place during the tea-breaks, and after the session during clean-up, which was usually a group activity. My role in the memory-work group was as convener, and writer of the project/thesis, but not as facilitator, rather as a participant, one of the researched in accordance with the regulations of memory work (Haug [1987] 1999:35). The advantages and disadvantages of this research design are described in detail below, under memory-work strengths and limitations.

The table below details the amount of oral and written data that was produced by the current memory-work group. The narratives were written each week by the participants, and are replicated in Appendix E, presented alphabetically (by assumed names) in weekly succession, and headed by each session’s cue. I transcribed the dialogues soon after the sessions ceased, and the RA did the same more recently. The data are self-explanatory, with only two anomalies. In session 1b, note that there were only two pages of transcriptions recorded. The participants had not read the introductory package and therefore most of the second part of session 1 was allotted to procedural description. In session 5, note that while the session commenced with narratives and the intention to record a memory-work session, it quickly transformed into a ‘farewell party’ and the discussions were not relevant to this project. The choices of data for this thesis were entirely mine, including the narratives used, and the samples of dialogue used. While it was apparent that there were a few underlying themes within the data, I was mainly interested in primary pattern production, in both written and spoken texts. The excluded data included a significant theme on eating disorders during the youth of some of the participants. This was not included in this thesis because it did not fit with my search for inclusion in language use and also because it was obviously an entire topic that could be separately explored. Other data samples that were not included in this dissertation were those which replicated the
information explicated below. Also data which could identify the participants were also excluded, and all participants were given the opportunity to express their desires about what was specifically not to be included. This only occurred on a few occasions as some of the discussions did become very personal. Excluded also were discussions that were deemed irrelevant to this dissertation, such as talk about food, people not present in the group, and conversations about outside stimuli (aeroplane noises, dogs barking, for example).

The transcription choices ultimately made were all based on the production of this dissertation, and the participants supported that goal wholeheartedly. This aspect of the project had been included in the advertisement to which they had initially responded. The pattern which stood out most significantly throughout the data was the production of binaried discourses. Based on this parameter, the narratives and samples were chosen that best exemplified the binarism, explicated in chapter three, and intimately scrutinised in chapter four as one primary binary. These results were amalgamated with another pattern of institutionalised language in chapter five, and samples of text were again utilised to demonstrate this pattern most adequately. In summary, the data in this thesis are based on the analyses of the narratives as written text, and the 4,000 words of spoken text, presented as interactive discussion segments.

Table 2.3 Quantitative Data Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Cue</th>
<th>Narratives</th>
<th>Discussions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>words/page = n.402</td>
<td>words/page = n.202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(4016w x 10 pages)</td>
<td>(3434w x 17 pages)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 1</td>
<td>‘first lesbian experience’</td>
<td>6 narratives produced (1 retracted)</td>
<td>1a. transcriptions 15 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1b. transcriptions 2 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session</td>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Narratives</td>
<td>Transcriptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 2</td>
<td>‘adolescent experience’</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2a: 23 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2b: 26 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 3</td>
<td>‘coming out to a family member’</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3a: 24 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3b: 24 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 4</td>
<td>‘effect on relationship’</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4a: 26 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4b: 27 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 5</td>
<td>‘happy experience/ending’</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Recorded, not transcribed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(non-memory-work session)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MEMORY-WORK CUES**

Each memory-work narrative-writing segment has a trigger word or phrase, determined through group discussion where possible. In this memory-work project the cues for writing the narratives were chosen by the participants in the first session and reflect what they felt was important in terms of remembered experiences. These, in turn, became the cues for the group discussion which occurred each week after the reading of each individual narrative. The first cue decided upon was ‘first lesbian experience’. The participants wanted to work in chronological order and proceed in age cues each succeeding week. The second cue, for week two, was ‘an adolescent experience’; the third week’s cue was ‘coming out to a family member’, and week four’s cue was ‘a relationship experience’.

**THE NARRATIVES**

The participants were directed to write of just one experience for each cue, rather than providing a recount of opinions, or a personal journal/diary article, in accordance with the guidelines for the memory-work process (Crawford et al 1922:43–49) They were
also requested to write their narratives, and discuss them after the readings, in the third-person context, with the objective of de-personalising the stories, and enabling a distancing from the subject matter, thereby providing the potential for the universalising and generalising aspects of the process. The memory of an initial event in itself may be a reconstruction of the actual happening/s and therefore a reference point from which to articulate the remembered experience. For that reason, ‘the accuracy of the memory is not an issue’ (McCormack 2000:8). The experience of retrieving memories has value in the process of their reassessment rather than the strict accuracy of the event. Finding meaning in a memory can become more pertinent once it has been reflected upon (ibid).

The practice of remembering and telling stories as a process ‘may well be a cultural universal’ (Miller & Moore 1989 cited in Miller 1994:158). This means that an accurate memory of the event is not the greatest signifier but the process of speaking out one’s experiences to an audience is pivotal to the idea of inner and cultural change. This action produces ‘a shift from recounting the past event which will be in past tense, to re-enacting the past conversational exchange in the here and now’ (ibid:163–64). The individual has a memory, shares it through writing, reading, and reflection with the other participants in the group, and in this mode the information becomes one of the bases for commonality. The concept, therefore, of a micro-construal, represented by the memory work process, affecting a macro-construal, represented by the broader community, designates the process as very dynamic in terms of cultural and linguistic change, impacting both the ‘individual experience and wider social structures’ (Johnston 2000:1).
The group was structured so that each person would read her narrative aloud, and the very public experience of this behaviour has its own corollaries. For many of the participants it was the first time their experiences had been made public in a more formal setting than among friends and family. ‘The act of reading is one of the modes by which we acquire our social—indeed gendered—orientation to or identification with the world, as a form of cultural contact’ (Bauer 1988:3). It defies probability that most of the participants had not experienced an accurate gendered ‘orientation’ or ‘identification’ (ibid) in terms of their sexuality.

**THE STRENGTHS OF MEMORY WORK**

**Conflation of the Researcher–Researched Positions**

Empirical research is usually about controlling humans, that is, the researcher is ‘objective’ in the study of group behaviour (Haug [1987] 1999:36). Memory work is based on the deconstruction of the traditionally dichotomous relationship between the researcher and the researched. It does this by conflating the categories of subject and object. In effect, in a social performance essentially involving the act of talking to oneself, seeing the researcher–researched as ‘one and the same person’ (ibid:35) is critical to the memory work process. Memory work as a research technique is different from traditional research methods in this context, because the researchers are not *asking* questions to which they then receive answers. Rather the focus is on the participants *telling* their narratives, or *telling their memories* as narratives. This is an enabling process in that the participants can govern the extent of their participation, that is, they can ‘control … what and how much’ they are inclined to contribute (Small 1999:33). Memory work in this way can be said to align itself with the established practices of ‘participant observation’ as the field-research component frequently utilised in anthropological and ethnographic research. Participant
observation is regarded as internationally understood in its capacity for ‘sociological description[s] of reality’ (Flick et al 2004:223).

The idea behind memory work is not to separate oneself from the researched, or from the research itself. In becoming the researched, the gap between subject and object is collapsed. In aligning oneself with the researched, the two polarised localities of theory and practice are automatically collapsed as well. In this manner memory work ‘bridges the gap between theory and practice’ (McCormack 2000:10) at the same time as it constructs an impartial research dynamic. That is, memory work, in its collective equitable capacity, ‘provides an opportunity to reduce the power imbalance between the researcher and participants’ (ibid:9) as well as reducing the power imbalance inherent in differentiating the paradigms of theory and practice. The action of the researcher joining the process instils ‘trust within the research group’ (Cadman et al 2007). However, it is worth recognising the contrary position that the researcher still has overarching control in making the initial decisions, the overall design and steering the project, in view of the necessity to complete the project and produce a dissertation.

**Emotional Aspect of Memory-Work Research**

Memory work ‘directs research towards feelings and contexts’ (McCormack 2000:7) allowing for the ability to use personal experiences as a locus of personal and social change. By identifying and/or recognising these feelings, participants can accept or alter the context in which their social construction was established. The act of writing the memories, or narratives, go toward both deconstruction and then reconstruction of the participants’ social domain, which serves to operate as an ‘empowering’ aspect of memory work (ibid:8). Rewriting/reconstructing past experiences through different perspectives and contexts demonstrate the feminist paradigm denoting the value of
women’s experiences in the construction of social historicity. ‘Conducted within a feminist framework, memory work values women’s … experiences, and the written recording of these experiences, as sources of knowledge’ (ibid).

A significant aspect promised by memory work, and which assisted in determining my choice of methodology, was the fact that it considers the emotional context of a research corpus. It reputedly ‘directs research towards feelings and contexts’ (ibid:7). As well as individual recordings of emotions and feelings within research projects, memory work involves multiple perspectives involving a broad range of social variation. This can include family members, friends, schoolmates, work-colleagues, neighbours. In the narratives of the participants in this project, all of these categories are involved in the remembered experiences. How the members feel about events and those who peopled the episodes was brought frequently into the group discussion.

In the following example, the group is discussing the coming-out process of one of its members. The dialogue’s focus is on the aftermath of an episode where Daria tells her family that she is lesbian, and in this segment she describes one of her parent’s reactions to her news. The discussion is a result of Daria’s narrative reading (Appendix E) where she details also the reaction of her other parent, which was more severe, and which was discussed at length in the same session. However, Daria requested the dialogue not be published, although she was fine about the narrative being made public through this thesis.
**Discussion 2.1 ‘It’s Not My Fault!’**

| 1. Daria | And [mother] looking up slowly: ‘it doesn’t run in my side of the family’. |
|———|———|
| (group laughter) | |
| 2. Daria | Ob-obviously it was something that was (...) h- h- w- you know (...) passed on (...) through somebody. So it’s interesting that (...) |
| 3. Evie | → Everyone trying to not (...) be blamed for it (...) as parents |
| 4. Daria | ↓ Mmm, yeah maybe that’s it, yeah. |
| 5. Evie | Really (...) ‘it’s not my fault! I didn’t do it!’ |

Marginalisation underpins the context of this discussion excerpt. Daria’s sexuality does not have a location in her family group, although exclusion does not occur (see narrative, Appendix E), a detail which compounds the context of a number of the participants’ stories. This sample explores the negotiations of inclusion through the polarities of dichotomous social locations in which Daria found herself through a remembered experience. The implication is an ambiguity of location, that of not quite fitting, but not necessarily of full-scale rejection. One aspect of the dialogue above is Daria’s memory of her family’s response to her coming out. The partial negation ‘[not] in my side of the family’ (Daria, move 1) demonstrates a form of rejection which is transformed by Evie in move 3 into a parental shift in responsibility. Daria agrees with Evie’s statement—“maybe that’s it” (move 4)—which gives Evie permission to amplify it in move 5.
Memories such as the one above can be constrained by fears and pain often repressed (Farrar 2007:8) or allowed out in small palatable doses. This implies that ‘what is [usually] remembered’ can be ‘significant, problematic, unfamiliar or in need of review’ (Ingleton 1995:326). Daria’s remembered experience has moved from a stage of private recollection to a stage of public information, as collective experience. The other members of the group could interpret, claim, add or subtract from their own remembered experiences of coming out and in doing so, through memory work, create a different set of emotional responses, and therefore a different kind of social construction, in the manner of enabling Daria to take back her power in that situation. The parents became the focus of the event that did not quite fit, whereas previously it was Daria, because of the reaction she received, who had not quite fit. ‘Together in one text, the stories are a distillation of the struggle for agency in the lives of girls growing up into heterosexuality. Separately, they do not have this impact’ (Gannon 2000:13)

The ensuing discussions to the narratives again involved, as it must have done previously about the past events, a re-evaluation of these factors. ‘The lived experiences most remembered are imbued with strong emotional, imaginary and sensory perceptions’ (Farrar 2007:39). Each remembered experience in all its complexity, emotional and otherwise, is shared with the group and consequently transformed into ‘common meanings’ implicating a ‘broader social, cultural context’ (Cadman et al 2007).

The theory behind memory work is that the public sharing of memories enables participants to individually relate to the emotional experiences imparted through this communal group process. The characters in the stories, the locations, the complication
or problem, are all shared through the depiction of one reader’s story. Through the act of writing and disclosing, the group has the potential to transform the event from one socially constructed site to another new and different site. The event can be taken from a negative perspective, for example, into a positive perspective. By means of shared texts and shared emotions, experiences become multiply sited within a greater spectrum of events and experiences, instigating the progression from the personal to universal or generalisable events. Writing up and speaking out memories sets up a ‘transgression of boundaries’ with the corollary that private experiences are transformed into public events (Haug [1987] 1999:36). What was initially a private experience is now available as both prospective accumulation of information and personal reparation. ‘Retrieving what may not have been previously spoken or written or perhaps even remembered, is a personal achievement’ (McCormack 2000:9).

THE LIMITATIONS OF MEMORY WORK

Researchers into memory work frequently cite differences in rule adherence (Ingleton 1999; Gannon 2000). A degree of flexibility is available to the memory-work parameters because it is essentially a ‘dynamic process’ (Ingleton 2000:9) implying that ultimate control of the process is in the hands of the group involved. The alterations made to the current memory-work project rules were not limiting as such, but are mentioned here as variables to the prescribed process. The data obtained were not to my knowledge hindered by the changes in the structure and in fact created a bond through the process of collective negotiation and agreement. As will be seen by the investigations, the group demonstrated many of the ‘strengths’ of memory work in some of the choices they made to alter the procedures.
There were limitations to this group’s memory-work process, which are explored below, seen as a deviation from the rules of memory work, as devised by its originators (Haug [1987] 1999; Crawford et al 1992), although, because collectively negotiated, the changes that the participants decided upon did not constitute limitations. Limitations that were somewhat restrictive were that (a) the participants were unfamiliar with the memory-work process and (b) the participants, on a spontaneous basis, did not always comply in other areas of the process.

**Knowledge of Memory Work**

The group participants were unfamiliar with the memory-work theory and rules. Not one of them had read the information package containing details of the dissertation objective and an outline of memory-work theory (Appendix C). This unexpected factor meant that a good deal of time was spent in the first session explaining both the theoretical intentions and the method and group procedure. The result was that in the first session I was positioned as the facilitator and as a consequence it was difficult in this session to return to the researcher–researched structure of group process. The reasons presented for not reading the introductory material were almost unanimously that they wanted to be involved in a lesbian research project, as advertised (Appendix A), and that the research methodology was up to the researcher / thesis writer. Another reason could have been that although the quorum, bar one, were educated to tertiary standard, they were not currently from scholastic communities and were not interested in acquainting themselves with academic theory. “Didn’t want to” was one of the responses, as well as murmurings of “you do it” and “we trust you”.

Despite the memory-work intentions for the collapsing of power-differential roles within the group, it was apparent at this early stage that the individuated roles of the
researcher and the researched ‘were so entrenched it was difficult to equalise them’ (Small 1999:31). This particular constraint was alleviated in the subsequent sessions, as far as narrative writing and dialoguing was concerned, through the production of group familiarity that occurred within the parameters of this longitudinal study. Guidance was also initially needed in other practical matters, such as starting and finishing times, and reminders of cues, again reinforcing the facilitator role.

Third Person, Present Tense and First Person

The participants had decided by session 2 that they did not want to speak using the third-person pronoun ‘she’. Although it could be considered a limitation that the participants made this decision, as a participating member of the group I supported the change, significantly because it was the unanimous choice of all the other participants. This tangent was mitigated by my request (still a directive!) that they at least write the narratives in third-person context, to maintain a sense of distance from the stories. This is an essential aspect of memory work, which is designed to produce a sense of distancing from one’s own text, allowing a gap for reflection and collective generalisation and avoiding the pitfall of journal/diary writing, and the potential for that data triggering a counselling session.

The reasons given for not wanting to speak in third-person context are presented below, using relevant samples of dialogue where the participants are discussing this topic. From a linguistic perspective, regarding the use of present tense in narratives, I deferred to the group also because ‘the moment of fear [read also ‘any emotion’] is real, continuous, and has an element of necessity’ (Hasan 1985:63) when spoken in first-person context. Other memory-work groups also experienced this phenomenon, because in one instance the participants felt they ‘needed to disrupt [the] insistence on
its truth with a more direct assault than talking about “she” would allow at this stage of the process’ (Gannon 2000:4), and another case in point was where the third-person perspective ‘was often ignored’ because it was also seen ‘as a constraint’ on what was ‘otherwise natural behaviour’ (Small 1999:31).

The current memory-work group complied with the rule that they write in the third person but speak in the first-person context. However, as is evidenced by the many examples of text used to demonstrate particular points in this thesis, the pronouns I and she were frequently interchanged within the narratives, with occasional lapses from first to third person in the dialogues, leading to quite a degree of confusion, both in the sessions and during the process of transcribing the session recordings. The following dialogue is an example of the interchanging of these pronouns within the same sentence where Evie refers to herself as “I” in the first instance, and “she” in the second instance, causing her to self-interrupt, and laugh.

Discussion 2.2 ‘I Was … She Was’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evie</th>
<th>And that was okay, and it was, and like, I was (...) just (...) she was surprised about that (laughs).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

[Session 2, p4]

The third person is used as a self-distancing mechanism for the author of a narrative, allowing for increased expositions and decreased autobiographical recounts (Ingleton 1999:5), and is therefore useful as a technique for obtaining abstraction or depersonalised texts. However, other research projects have welcomed the autobiographical aspect, citing, for example, that the texts could be ‘passed on to the next generation’ (Small 1999:31) or that they became in effect collective biographies (Gannon 2000:2–3).
The excerpt below presents the discussion held by Sophie, Georgie and Evie in which they state their reasons for not wanting to speak in third-person context.

Discussion 2.3 ‘Me and I, Not Her’

1. Sophie I think it’s um (...) I mean, writing the story in (...) you know, like, writing a story in third person (...) may be quite a useful thing, but (...) like you, Evie, whenever I’m talking about feelings (...) and they’re my feelings, I wanna say plenty, I wanna say…

   (group laughter)

2. Sophie … ‘me’ and ‘I’.

3. Georgie Yeah! (laughs)

4. Evie Not her!

5. Sophie Not her! (laughs) Yeah! (laughs) It wasn’t her that’s done the work, it’s me!

   (group laughter)

[Session 2a, p6]

It is apparent from this segment that the reasoning behind speaking in first-person context has an emotional-political basis. The emotional aspect is evidenced in Sophie’s comment that “they’re my feelings” and “I wanna say plenty” (move 1). This is reiterated in move 2 and agreed with by both Georgie and Evie in moves 3 and 4: “Yeah!” “Not her!” Sophie shifts the context from emotional to a mixture of emotional-political discourse in move 5 when she states: “It wasn’t her that’s done the work”. Using the term “the work” is significant in that it implies more than just a conversation about feelings. “The work” implicates the silence–coming out binary thematic that prevails throughout the texts, both written and spokent. Sophie’s comment indicates a degree of intensity that goes beyond attending a group for the purpose of research.
Altering the rules for the project is an example of the researched taking charge and truly becoming the researchers, as well as taking charge of the process, which most memory-work researchers consider a strength (Haug [1987] 1999; Ingleton 2000, Gannon 2000; Cadman et al 2007). It reveals the factor of the ‘collective’s rejection’ of outwardly imposed guidelines, which ‘[suggests] that the researcher was indeed capturing a moment of the normal social construction process’ (Small 1999:31). In itself, this move to change an important component of the memory-work process could be construed as an inclusive practice as well as a theoretical strength because it demonstrates unanimity, resulting in an example of commonality. Seeking commonalities is an important aspect of memory work and in their act of defiance (of the rules) and yet solidarity in their undisputed alterations, the group produced an example in this episode of inclusion through negotiation and cohesion. It was clearly an instance of ‘the social bond that describes the social relationships of solidarity … as basic to the development of identity and self-esteem’ (Ingleton 1999:3). In another part of this discussion segment, Sophie had described the matter as an issue of “self identity”, expressing concerns that speaking in third-person context was like “having to give it away” when the concern was just a “theoretical reason” (session 2a, p5).

The group’s resistance to speaking abstractly, corroborating the outcomes of other memory-work research, still contravenes Haug’s initial premise that the third-person context was essential for the extended theoretical process, going beyond the actual group experience, to being able to generalise the data to enable the production of compact and reproducible data:

However important it may be for women to speak and write of themselves as “I” and thereby to register a protest against the pressures on them to leave their own selves out of account—to attempt—… to find a place for themselves
within the categories of abstract and impersonal thinking, it is nonetheless essential to use the third person in memory work. Writing about past events is almost impossible, unless we have some way of distancing ourselves. The very fact that we learn not to take ourselves and our own interests into account has the effect, in memory work, of reducing the time and trouble spent in writing about ourselves. (Haug [1987] 1999:45–46)

Haug further suggests that ‘conditions of production’ (ibid:46) would be difficult to reproduce if limited to the generalisable data that can only be construed from personalised experiences. While these arguments are acknowledged, the memory-work group participants in this current project were adamant that the historical tradition of being silenced around the issue of lesbian identity, and the invisibility accompanying that state, meant that the importance of speaking in first-person context outweighed the importance for the purposes of research of third-person context. In the context of collapsible binaries in the name of equitable power relations, the ‘researcher/researched’ binary also equates the ‘speaking/silent binary’ (Cadman et al 2007:4), and this latter component took precedence in the current group process.

In view of the strong objections raised by the group about speaking in anything but the first-person context, it was my considered opinion that to have enforced that ruling would have resulted in less enthusiastic participation. The participants could potentially lose interest, leave the group, or even produce less dynamic texts. It was considered, therefore, that the requirements of the memory-work process demanding third-person contexts within both the narratives and the dialogues were counterproductive to the overall methodological objectives of a vibrant and self-generating mode of social construction. The methodological stricture was negatively viewed by the current memory-work participants, suggesting, through general consensus (hence generalisable, universalisable), that it was going against the grain of
expression while privileging the more ideological components of academia. The participants’ primary need within this process was to be able to express themselves as themselves. Haug’s contention that the ‘conditions of production’ ([1987] 1999:46) would be ungeneralisable and therefore problematic to reproduce is not sustainable given the outcome of data produced in this current project, and given the memory-work objectives of women/[lesbians] producing contributions toward the development of their own historicity.

Rewrites

The rewriting of memory-work narratives is another distancing device, serving to concentrate the data, making it more articulate and often including more detail in a generalised manner. The technique is that once all of the participants had written narratives in response to the week’s cue, the group would then discuss the narratives and rewrite them based on the main points raised, discussing them together and looking for the commonalities and differences in all of the stories, and in all of the presented memories. However, the rewriting of narratives was passively resisted by the current memory-work group, by which I mean that they did not do the rewrites as requested, and then also actively by stating a lack of interest or desire in rewriting their stories. Although some of the participants did attempt to produce, they were not actually rewrites; they were more sequential and therefore effectively serialised new narratives. For example, “I just didn’t wanna go back there,” wrote Evie, and presented this as her version of a rewrite. In actuality this reads like a sequel to her lengthy narrative about a relationship break-up (see Appendix E, session 4). In one session, Sophie announced, “I didn’t rewrite mine” and laughed, and Beth asked to be excused from doing the rewrites because she couldn’t think of anything to “add to” the originals. In Small’s memory-work project, creating collective summaries was
resisted as being ‘too difficult’ (Small 1999:31); it was also opposed in Gannon’s
group process by the ‘mavericks [who] for the most part resisted … suggestions that
we should keep working away at the same stories’ (Gannon 2000:2–3). Due to the
inconsistency of the results produced for this aspect of the memory-work process I
made a unilateral decision not to incorporate them into the data, expecting that it
would not be possible to come to any universal or general conclusions with this
partially reworked material. The only pattern to emerge from the rewrites component
is that the group resisted doing them.

Another constraint to be considered regarding rewrites, and the intended reworking of
the original written material, is that the current group session times were dictated by
external factors, regarding the venue, transport, etc. The rewrites, generated by the
previous week’s narratives, are generally processed (read and discussed) at the
beginning of each session prior to the reading of the current week’s narratives. In
effect, each participant was supposed to produce a re-written version of the previous
week’s narrative as well as a new narrative relevant to the current week’s topic or cue.
However, including also the time it took to discuss each narrative, it then became an
unwieldy and almost impossible task to expect the participants to read, discuss,
rewrite, and rework four to six narratives per session within the time constraints (two
hours). Some memory-work groups report memory work processes that last for ‘three
and a half hours’ (Cadman et al 2007:5) but, again, in that instance it was an academic
group with topical and methodological familiarity and desire. Notwithstanding my
desire to use memory work as an innovative methodological tool, the remaining
participants had different objectives, pertaining more to the ‘lesbian visibility’ and
‘being heard’ aspects of the project. It seemed that the participants were keen to focus
completely in the ‘moment’ (Hasan 1985:63) of their feelings, from the past into the present, rather than to focus on a method of data collection.

**Other Variables**

The group participants instigated a few more variables to the memory-work process. For example, in session 3 Georgie announced that she hadn’t written a narrative because her story was too long and complex and so she told her story, which is recorded as a narrative (Appendix E, session 4). Beth also requested, in session 3, that she be allowed to write as well as speak in first-person context because she could not relate to writing or speaking in third-person context. This change was agreed to, on the principle of the participants’ equitable research positions (Ingleton 2000:3).

The impact of age difference in memory-work groups has been previously researched: it was considered that ‘the researcher can’t be a co-researcher of other age groups (according to the method) as she does not belong, she cannot position herself with the other age cohorts’ (Small 2000:6). In the current group, age difference was not problematic in the same manner. This was because of the different objective underlying the process outcomes. Inclusion through lesbian language was not considered to be an age-specific project, and therefore the different ages of the participants was a valuable component in the production of data. First of all, age difference implicated the outcomes of practices investigating similarities or differences, regarding both perspective and discursive construction. The age difference within the group provided variables that impacted on the data. For example, the experiences of coming out would vary greatly between an 18-year-old lesbian and a 52-year-old lesbian. Different social conditions prevailed, and the degree of public social exposure has altered significantly during that period of time,
including the advent of a more public lesbian habitus, and a theoretical paradigm in queer theory, enabling a unified public voice. These aspects of difference are further explicated within the data analyses. Secondly, it was important to assess the contemporary experiences of all the participants: how were they, at their different ages, experiencing homophobia, or love, or friendship, or employment, both historically, and contemporaneously.

An interesting feature of the age-difference research project is that a ‘researcher is less able to position herself with older age groups’ than with younger (original author’s emphasis) (ibid:11). This is because ‘the researcher has experienced childhood’ and indeed all ages up to her present age. This aspect was evident in the current group because Beth, as the youngest participant, aged 18 at the time of the project, was unable to identify with some of the experiences of the older participants, and she also felt unable to attend the session on ‘an adolescent experience’ because, as she explained, she was “still in that experience”.

The final step in the memory-work process is the ‘reappraisal of the analysis in the context of theory’ (Ingleton 1999:5), which is the working domain of the co-researcher. The collective theorising of the results, using rewrites and an impartial summing up of commonalities and differences was of no interest to the participants—they had already made it clear that they did not want to theorise their stories, that they were content to leave that part of the process to me, for the dissertation. In this respect, the ultimate researcher position could be perceived as imbalanced, due to the power differential enabled by the final decision-making aspect of the process. However, in an alleviating construct within the memory-work process, each participant did have the right to be involved in decision-making processes, and also
did have the right to withdraw in part or wholly from the research project at any stage, suggesting the potential for a more equitable degree of power relations. These issues are dilemmas peculiar to participant observation as a methodological technique because the researcher (who functions also as the researched) needs ‘to adhere to their scientific standards and tasks as distanced observers’ while simultaneously acting as a part of the observed process (Flick et al. 2004:223).

Consequently, the latter part of the memory-work exercise, the selections and the writing up, has been undertaken at my sole discretion, thus diverging again from the memory-work parameters as expiated by Haug ([1987] 1999), Gannon (2000) and others, although realistically appraised by Ingleton who stated that ‘the outcomes would not have been identical if the writing up had been shared’ (Ingleton 1995:325).

Several memory-work projects have been adopted in writing up doctoral theses and by necessity the outcomes could not be a shared process to any substantial degree. Although the textual patterns have determined those choices, that is, the search was for patterns of linguistic and discursive inclusion within the text, it is ultimately the writer’s research perspective that determines those choices. This aspect of memory work has previously been considered a limitation (Ingleton 1999; Gannon 2000).

There may appear to be more limitations than strengths in this memory-work project. However, it would be inaccurate to position this outcome negatively because, in a qualitative sense, the listed strengths are major factors and the limitations, in hindsight and in view of the subsequent data produced, have proven to be strengths in disguise. For example, this point is validated by the degree of social closeness that developed in session two once the group had decided to work in the first person rather than following the rules and working in the third person. This process was particularly
bonding and engendered group cohesion. The primary and crucial benefit of memory work is the factor of the trust demonstrated by the participants (Crawford et al 1992:43; Cadman et al 2007:3), that was a direct result of the researched–researcher, theory–practice, and silence–speech conflated binaries that underpin all memory-work processes, notwithstanding slight variations in the dynamics. Despite non-compliance with some of the rules, the group was theoretically operating within the parameters of Haug’s feminist methodology, but the major component of compliance or adherence to the method was mine. The other participants became their own researchers, but redefined areas of the model to suit their individual and collective needs. These changes were effected through group consensus, in accordance with the collectivity constituent of memory work.

**DATA TRANSCRIPTION**

Transcription is a means of obtaining data from a contrivance that focuses attention onto that which is ‘speakable, [and] culturally intelligible’ (Fuss 1991:4). The result may be quantitative, or it may be something ‘obscure and unstable’, depending on the areas that receive the most attention (Jefferson 1985:25), and should reflect ‘selectivity’ that shows the transcriber is ‘conscious of the filtering process’ (Ochs 1979:44). Jefferson also suggests that the issue is not the transcription itself but the choices involved in what is chosen to be transcribed (Jefferson 1985:25), the particular objective of a scientific report, for example. This suggestion is supported by Edwards and Lampert (1993) cited in Bloor and Wood (2006), who state ‘two general design principles … “authenticity” (the need to preserve the information in a manner that is true to the original interaction) … and “practicality” [that is], “easy to read”’ (Bloor & Wood 2006:169). Speech patterns have been replicated as closely as possible to the manner in which they were spoken. For example, some of the
participants, some of the time, used words such as “gotta” and “wanna”, while others spoke more formally, such as “got to” and “want to”.

While all transcribing and transcription procedures were my domain, the choice and application of a practical and yet informative transcription key transforms the data into a collective project, able to be comprehended by the co-researchers and other readers of the current project. Some of the transcription conventions are based on those used by Tannen (2005:209). (The following transcription key can also be located in Appendix H.)

**Transcription Key**

The Data:

( ) indicates transcription impossible

(…) noticeable pause or break in rhythm (less than one second)

(pause) lengthy pause, usually signifying topic closure

] [ over-talking, overlap

→ interrupting

(laughs) individual laughter

(group laughter) group laughter

? marks yes-no question rising information

! marks exclamatory information

, marks phrase-final intonation with more to come

[…] deleted segments, for reasons of confidentiality

The Discussion of the Data:

“ _ _ _” quotes from participant narratives and dialogues

‘ _ _ _’ quotes from references only
The following example will be used to expiate some of the advantages in utilising a transcription key in language and discourse analyses. In linguistic and discursive studies, pauses and repetitious utterances can constitute significance, but in this current project they may or may not necessarily determine inclusion. For example, the following sample demonstrates a transcribed excerpt of repetitive pauses, indicated by the convention ‘(…)’.

**Discussion 2.4 ‘Um ... Uh’**

| Georgie | And just like, you know, the daydreaming, you know, I’d never actually allowed myself to really (…) let the daydreams get to a point of (…) confronting myself with the um (…) the reality of what I was (…) I was uh (…) fantasising over (…). The self-censorship had sort of kicked in pretty strongly, I guess, (…) from (…) the earlier (…) stuff. |

[Session 2b, p9]

These attributes could be ascribed to nervousness with little relevance to the notion of inclusion or, conversely, they could indeed be indicators of discursive inclusiveness, explicated through the oppositional location of metaphoric silence. These utterances may point to a lack of available discourse when the topic is female same-sex desire, or lesbian desire. Inclusion could be construed from repeated pauses where patterns of silence configure as a commonality.

Women are born into, or inserted into, established societies, with traditionally non-equitable power constructs. This notion was the focus of the prototype memory-work research project initiated by Haug, who was interested in ‘the process by which women “grow into the structures of society”’ (Haug [1987] 1999:40). For example, if Georgie did not have an available cultural construction in which to be inserted,
knowledge of language and discourse would not be readily available either. It is easy to imagine, then, that struggling to find the correct or accurate words to describe oneself could also be construed as a commonality. Cultural constructs into which one grows (Halliday 2002) are not readily available to women, on the one hand (Haug [1987] 1999), and even less so to marginalised groups, including those identifying as lesbian, on the other (Kleinert 2002). This topic is dealt with in greater detail in chapter 5, as an aspect of accumulated knowledge.

Similarly, speaker interruptions, talking over one another, can be interpreted as markers of social closeness, or they can be interpreted as instances of power differentials between speakers; for example, who interrupts, and who chooses the topic, who takes the most turns, and so on. For example:

Discussion 2.5 ‘The Cat Among the Pigeons’

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Evie</td>
<td>Imagine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Georgie</td>
<td>→ … that I was ostracised by the three of them after that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Evie</td>
<td>Imagine the difference if she had’ve had a positive response (...) to you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Daria</td>
<td>Mmm!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Georgie</td>
<td>↓ No!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Daria</td>
<td>↓ It would’ve been</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Georgie</td>
<td>↓ It would’ve put the ↓ cat among the pigeons, wouldn’t it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Daria</td>
<td>↓ that would’ve been a united force</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Session 2b, p13)

In this segment, Evie chose the topic (move 1), interrupting (→) the previous speaker; Georgie, interrupted (→), holds to her topic and finishes her move (2). Evie, however, continues on her own topic (move 3). Daria contributes a non-verbal “Mmm!” (move
4) and Georgie does then respond to Evie’s topic in move 5 but is talked over ‘\|’ in move 6 by Daria, who also follows Evie’s topic. Move 7 has Georgie taking up Evie’s topic, transforming it into a metaphor. Overall, Daria maintains the field but interrupts Georgie twice. Georgie and Daria speak over one another in the last four moves, competing to hold their topics. However, the field, or context, is homophobia, and there is unity in their utterance choices. In summary, although changing and holding her topic, directing the field-context and being followed in topic by the other speakers, Evie is positioned as the primary force in this segment. It could, however, be seen that this power differential is equalised because each speaker interrupts the other. Power relations would appear to be reasonably equal among the three speakers, and the degree of social distance would be minimal. Also, the dialogic event would be casual rather than formal. The incidences of equal utterance behaviour show greater commonality than the incidents of dominance through power-over moves, implicating markers of inclusion.

Talking over, and also talking on behalf of, one another were common occurrences throughout the sessions. For example, in the following segment Sophie is describing an instance where she walked into a lesbian pub (hotel) and saw her cousin. The cue for the session was ‘coming out to a family member’ and this was Sophie’s outing (realised as the concept depicted as ‘coming out’):

**Discussion 2.6 ‘Sprung!’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sophie</th>
<th>Apparently she—she, when she first saw me um (...) she thought (...) ‘oh shit! It’s Sophie!’ (laughs) | you know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evie</td>
<td>| she’ll she’ll find me out!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Session 3a, p1]
In move 2 Evie interrupts, maintaining Sophie’s topic choice, but does so in Sophie’s first-person voice, that is, Evie speaks on Sophie’s behalf, but from her first-person self. This example of speaking as a collaborative effort (Holmes & Marra 2002:379) is a demonstrable interpersonal component in many of the group’s speech interactions. The united-voice demonstrates a high degree of social closeness, and when frequent repetition constitutes a pattern of speech, it could be said to implicate inclusiveness in language. The imbrication, then, of lesbian-specific discourse within linguistic inclusiveness, realised through Evie’s move above (“she’ll find me out!”) would validate the objective of this thesis. With this topic as the overall aim of the memory-work project, chapters 3, 4, and 5 present a comprehensive observation of the speech and/or discursive patterns obtained from the data.

It is worth noting here that there was an inordinate amount of laughter produced by the written narratives, in the first instance, and also by the tangential fantasy stories that were spontaneously told, created to impact upon a particular issue that may have arisen. These episodes are interspersed throughout the data, but laughter itself is one of the focuses of chapter 4 as it is contextualised in relation to fantasy and humour.

This chapter has outlined the memory-work process and detailed the specific memory-work project of this thesis. It provided a description of the participants and the process used to obtain the data, as well as demonstrating the strengths and limitations of memory work in a number of different categories. One of the primary strengths of memory work is the conflated researcher–researched location as a form of participant observation. The researcher’s traditional position of asking questions is reversed, and the telling of stories becomes part of the process. Another strength is the emotional support given and received by the participants. Memory work, the theory,
pioneers this qualitative aspect of research, which claims that women’s knowledge expressed through emotional experiences can be validated and recorded as historical tradition. The subsequent collective sharing of the outcomes of narrative writing of events and experiences results in the reclamation of personal and collective power. Memory work ‘stresses collective theorising’ (original author’s emphasis), implicating the collective’s active participation within the ‘intersubjective nature’ of this modality, as opposed to a ‘subjective or objective claim’ for knowledge produced by other research modalities’ (Small 2000:9).

Memory work uses emotional experiences as a basis for analysis, which is specifically a feminist and woman-centred research model. It also works on the principle that unresolved memories are the ones ultimately remembered which constitutes what comes to be known as our realities. The combination of working with emotions and unresolved memories results in the reconstruction of the participants’ lives by reconstituting meaning. Ingleton contends that she chose memory work as a methodology because she believed it enabled her ‘to access people’s experiences of emotion’ (Ingleton 2000:2). By extension, as a public project, memory work also provides universalised data which operates to produce change on a broader social perspective.

Memory work is designed to produce inclusive practices in diminishing the gap between researcher and researched but the current group transformed the rules to rule out the homogenisation of individuals. Inclusion within this group of lesbian women was an outcome of the memory-work process. This point is validated throughout the thesis. Inclusion also resides in the process of conflation of researcher–researched roles. The resistance–compliance dyad to rules was not affected by this research
project alone. Johnston also records that ‘[m]emory-work is in danger of being reduced to a set of rules. Rules evolved by ourselves and for our own use are one thing; rules given to us by others bring a whole other set of implications’ (Johnston 2000:9). Johnston also cites Haug regarding the matter of rules by quoting the nominal (noun and qualifier) group as an ‘emancipation from ossified ways of thinking’ (ibid, citing Haug 1992:ix). Using Johnston’s premise, what appears as a limitation in this current project could be realised as progression, as a deviation from the establishment (academia), which consequently provided raw and passionate experiential data despite the departure from regulated form.

Memory work was for this project a comprehensive and unique theoretical and empirical research mode which involved a process of recruitment, data collection, analyses and conclusions. One of its primary benefits was its capacity for self-evaluation, and group- or other-evaluation. In this instance, the evaluations of linguistic and cultural patterns produced provided the basis for data selection.

The following three chapters present and discuss the data obtained from the recorded narratives and dialogues of the memory-work process. Chapter 3 looks at patterns of social inclusion generated from the narratives of the participants’ past experiences, and how these operate to inform current social inclusion within and outside of the normative social dichotomies into which they were, as social subjects, inserted. Chapter 4 amplifies these patterns of social exclusion–inclusion by focusing on one binary, specifically that of the fantasy–reality dyad, as the primary social performative produced by the memory-work participants. The production of fantasy, represented through humour, realised as satire and irony, proved a significant component of the group process. Chapter 5 builds on the discursive and culturally specific results
produced in the previous two chapters by demonstrating the broader social implications of the social construction of inclusion within lesbian language.
CHAPTER 3
PARALLEL TENSIONS IN THE PRODUCTION OF INCLUSION

In this chapter the parallel tensions that operate to produce inclusion in lesbian or female same-sex desire are investigated using the texts generated by the memory-work group process. One of the primary patterns produced by the participants through their narratives and discussion was the positioning of their contexts into a binaried paradigm. That is to say that the binarisms produced operated to inform the outcome of the patterns of language use, as well as providing a means for the participants being able to socially locate the themselves in terms of spoken and written text.

BINARIES: DUALITY AS AN INCLUSIONARY DEVICE

The varied concepts of dichotomous locations were explored in the data, with a particular focus on the primary binaried locations that constitute the social construction of heteronormativity and its’ designated opposite. The dichotomy of heterosexuality–homosexuality was extrapolated to include the production of further collapsible binaries, including the oppositional paradigms of identity theory and queer theory. In the first instance, a narrative example from Evie—*In and Out Together*—is used to explicate a non-scholastic approach to queer (as identity rather than as theory), as well as her approach to lesbian identity theory. Then a normative–difference dyad is presented through an excerpt of memory-work group discussion in which the participants noted a lack of a socially constructed location in which to insert themselves, and in which to speak, as lesbian-identified adolescents and children.

The next segment under investigation in this chapter is the negotiation of lesbian identity within the normative social construct, and this exploration is supported by another dialogic text demonstrating the memory-work participants’ experiences of
themselves in their self-constructed social locations. The dichotomous locations of normativity and abnormalcy are explored in depth through the analysis of the narrative, *In and Out Together*, written by Evie, and of Beth’s narrative *Not an Ordinary Girl* and the accompanying discussion excerpts supporting their narratives. This is followed by an analysis of Sophie’s narrative, *The Buxom Nun*, which also explicates the concept of binaries, with a focus on the private–public dyad.

The following table summarises the narratives and discussion segments used in this chapter to demonstrate the participants’ practices of negotiation between the binary locations in their social construction of inclusion.

*Table 3.1 Narrative and Discussion Excerpts*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narratives</th>
<th>Discussions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: <em>In and Out Together</em> (Evie)</td>
<td>1: What Are We?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: <em>Not An Ordinary Girl</em> (Beth)</td>
<td>2: Smug Lesbians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: <em>The Buxom Nun</em> (Sophie)</td>
<td>3: It Was Wrong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4: Proud of Me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5: Ten Girls Touching</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2 below summarises the primary binary pairs utilised in this dissertation to explicate the discursive and cultural construction of the social domains as they were negotiated by the participants in the past, evidenced through the narrative contents, and re-negotiated in the present, evidenced in the discussion segments following the reading of the narratives within the memory-work process. There is some overlapping of terminology usage, for example, the terms ‘heteronormative’, ‘normative’, and ‘mainstream’ have been used interchangeably, as did the terms, alternative, abnormal, and other, as well as Sedgwick’s term, ‘homosocial’ (1985).
Table 3.2 Primary Binaries Utilised in this Thesis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive—‘Good’</th>
<th>Negative—‘Bad’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>Homosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heteronormative</td>
<td>Alternative or Homosocial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insider</td>
<td>Outsider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>Abnormal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative-Mainstream</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reality</td>
<td>Fantasy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Us</td>
<td>Them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>Subordinant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The term binary signifies a duality of some thing, suggesting concepts involving division or separation, of ideas, of things, of class. The transitivity, or process, surrounding these descriptors suggests a complementariness that construes both positively and negatively positioned perceptions. Negativity and positivity underpins virtually any dichotomous category (McLaren & Giarelli 1995:8; Wetherall, Taylor & Yates 2001), and this is easily interpreted as the evaluative bad–good dyad that also subsequently correlates to homosexuality–heterosexuality in its binaried format (Quero 2006). The good–bad configuration is frequently taken further, for example, into the areas of us–them, or conflated with the insider and outsider domains, which can be extrapolated, in the instance of the current data production, into an ultimate collapse into the polarised domains of heterosexuality and homosexuality. In terms of the juxtaposition of queer theory and identity theory in opposition to heterosexism and heterosexuality (refer Table 3.2) the language use provided by the group participants demonstrated that queer and identity terminology became interchangeable.
while heterosexuality consistently remained other in the us-them binary. The configuration of queer and identity as binaried opposites to heterosexuality are thus pertinent to this participant-centred, memory-work context.

In this chapter, data samples are presented that show the memory-work group participants negotiating the binaried locations of exclusion and inclusion, realised primarily through the dichotomy of heterosexuality–homosexuality. The analytic justification for this configuration is explored in detail as the objective of this chapter. This dichotomy underpins all of the other binaries used in this thesis because ‘the silencing of homosexuality is predicated on the construction of a heterosexual / homosexual binary’ (Dalley & Campbell 2006:12).

The value of the memory-work process reviewed in the examples provided in this chapter is that it supports the argument for inclusion realised as negotiable constructs within the normative and alternative realms. Commonalities were sought through patterns of repetition of content, at one level, and, at another level, through the interpersonal relational discourses used. By negotiating the dichotomies listed above, the memory-work group members, wittingly or unwittingly, negotiated their way through commonalities and differences by utilising the parallel lines of tension, realised as discourses that ran between the polarities. The analysis of this mode of self-construction is based on an assessment of the degree of commonalities (and differences) displayed by the members through their written texts and was further verified in the discursive expression of the patterns of inclusion used when reading and discussing their narratives.

The participants demonstrated their inclusiveness within the normative domain through their written narratives. They produced inclusion within the memory-work
process by making their exclusion, or silent inclusion, public. In this manner, the participants negotiated the binaried locations in which they found themselves acculturated, as well as negotiating the binaried locations in which they actualised their discursive reconstruction during the memory-work process. These practices of negotiation between the binaried locations were core to the implementation of discursive and cultural inclusion.

The memory-work participants reveal their negotiations between the polarities of binaried sites. They do this through their texts, with me operating as a participant/researcher working through different theories of dichotomous social landscapes. The multiply sited locations are collapsible into the divisive construction evidenced in Table 3.2. The current memory-work process extracts such information in its search for self-constructed inclusion within an insider location, while simultaneously self-constructing within the outsider state, evidenced in the samples below. The data present frequent textual examples of the participants occupying dual locations within the dichotomies. In particular, the pattern of negotiating self-inclusion in heteronormative realms is evidenced in the remembered experiences of the past, while renegotiation into new and different insider inclusiveness is actively demonstrated through the memory-work process.

The primary objective in this chapter is to investigate how inclusion occurs in the tensions between the dichotomous polarities, even when the traditionally normative social constructions serve to marginalise homosexuality and to centralise heterosexuality. Several consequences of marginalising, committed by the imposition of normative social ‘structures of alienation’, are maintained by a ‘splitting, and identification’ or labelling process ‘which together produce a self and an other, a
subject and an object’ (Fuss 1991:1–2). The categories of heterosexuality–homosexuality are ‘presented in a culture as symmetrical binary oppositions’ and the implications for this construction is a tightly woven interdependence (Sedgwick 1990:9). The implication of this premise is that the ‘ontologically valorized’ mainstream culture of heterosexuality is not in fact superior to the subordinated marginalised homosexual culture. This is because heterosexuality ‘depends for its meaning on the simultaneous subsumption and exclusion’ of homosexual culture and its inherent discourses (ibid). However, in the context of the data produced by the group, it is through these very binaries that the participants negotiate their inclusion. In this manner lesbians and women of same-sex desire include themselves, first of all in their remembered experiences presented as narratives in the memory-work group, and secondly as they activate the practices of inclusion through discussions ensuing from the narratives.

The tensions between the polarities were navigated by the participants through their spoken and written texts to the degree that there was consistent evidence of the reversal of the mainstream or insider location of the binary with its opposite marginal or outsider location. The participants of this current memory-work group insided themselves, and projected outsiderness onto the heteronormative culture from which they had equally frequently been excluded. The practices of exclusion or inclusion were not remarked by the participants as an experienced phenomenon but the substantiation exists within the narratives and dialogues produced through the group process. The production of both inclusion and exclusion appear to eventuate through a series of negotiations that form part of a broader naturalisation process. The naturalness of their experiences, that is, of traversing between the domains, was deemed an essential, and indeed, unavoidable, component in their search for sexual
identity, and/or how to live their different sexual identity in the mainstream construct. This dual construct has been called ‘the phantom other’ (Fuss 1991:3), confirming the idea that homosexuality is a necessary social component for the validation of heterosexual primacy. The ‘phantom other’ reconstructs an insider location from the outsider projection and thrives through its negotiations.

Another perspective on binaried projections is the idea of couples and pairs. This complementary and more edifying connotation of dichotomies or binaries as significant social and cerebral locations was a determining factor in the analysis of the group’s data. It indicates, on the one hand, that the practices of pejoration and marginalisation were inherent in the construction of the normative–alternative binary and, on the other hand, that there were inhabitable gaps within both projections of the habituses and semiotic systems accompanying those dyads.

There is therefore the probability of a diverse cultural value system operating on the continuum between the normative and mainstream dyad, sustained by the gaps located within the binaried structures. The us and them, insider and outsider classifications, as tropes for the primary binary heterosexuality and homosexuality, makes it possible to perceive the extremities in terms not necessarily oppositional (as in opposing) but in the more fluidic discursive definition of ‘opposite’ as it equates with the concept of ‘difference’ (different from) (Seidman 1997; Plummer 2000). The locations of us–them, mainstream–other, heterosexual–homosexual relate to desire, and need not be minimised into factional and opposing components. Where difference is involved the connotations are generally universalised into the positive–negative dyad, suggesting the valorisation of one location at the expense of the other. The negative cultural values accompany not only the division of binaried locations (pertaining to queer
theory), but also the elimination of the differences that abound on the separate sides as a continual factor of information. For example:

What would it mean to acknowledge difference without surrendering its otherness? It would be a difference that refuses assimilation, that resists surrendering its “alien” status, an otherness that cannot be erased by being rendered a mere variation, instance, phase, or inferior subordinate moment. (Seidman 1997:99)

Memory work, as a theoretical corpus, also operates from a foundation of equitable principles and aims to reduce the impact of dominant and marginal dichotomies. Diversity as a practice of inclusion is embraced by both queer theory and identity politics, constituting compatible standards with memory work. Memory work ‘revisits “difference” and relates it to political economy, aesthetics, and the designed environment, allowing paradoxes and unresolved difficulties to surface—instead of presenting a false front of unity when diversity is the dominant flavor’ (Ingram et al 1997b:7). The narrative and dialogic examples presented below demonstrate the participants’ ability to inhabit the sites of difference while enabling their unresolved difficulties to emerge. As can be seen from the topics of their narratives, their objects of social and other desire were achievable, but not without the inconsistencies inherent in negotiating the dominant and invisible locations they inhabited.

Where this dissertation differs from much other research is that it does not seek to negate the identity paradigm. The memory-work group participants were utilising the binaries in order to achieve their objects of desire. Individually, from within their remembered experiences, and together, in the production of narratives and discussions, they negotiate their inclusion by redefining, reversing, recreating, and reclaiming their roles. The participants thus materialise lesbian spaces and lesbian
language between the dichotomous and overtly diverse locations. The implication is that the dichotomies, the polarised constructions which had been the habitus of their childhoods, and continued into contemporary adulthood, became territories to explore in the search for their lesbian identities. That which had sought to impede and subvert, does in fact enable an exciting and exotic exploration of discovery.

**QUEER AND IDENTITY**

This chapter also explores the theoretical relevance of queer and identity theories as binaried paradigms used as relevant textual referents in the participants’ dialogues. The identity–queer debate, which implicates the other paradigms deployed in this thesis, locates the current memory-work process within a combination of the paradigmatic approaches mentioned. This production implicates the different perspectives evolving from the analytical paradigms utilised.

**In and Out Together**

The following example shows the way in which the term ‘queer’ was used in one of the very few references to it throughout the four, recorded, memory-work sessions, and it is used here to explicate its connotative use. The use of queer terminology is interspersed in this sample with identity terminology. It would appear that the two descriptors and their connotations are interchangeable as far as the speaker is concerned, socially implicated rather than theoretically implicated.

The first narrative, *In and Out Together*, by Evie, demonstrates her interchangeable use of lesbian- and queer-specific terminology, explicating the practice of binary negotiations at this simple lexical level. Evie uses this terminology to describe the different domains that surround the actuality of having to negotiate whether to be closeted or out in a particular social setting. Evie’s story is about a relationship she
had with a partner Lisa, from a Catholic background, who chose to remain closeted. On the most basic contextual plane, Evie and her partner Lisa negotiated their relationship within the parameters of the heterosexual–homosexual dichotomy, not without difficulty, because one was out, and one was not. On a third and more complex plane, Evie is renegotiating the events of the past by presenting this story in a public setting. Her partner’s closetedness is now reversed, or reconstructed by its public explication in a field-context and culturally-comprehensible location. The participants, as audience, and by extension representing the public could therefore understand these negotiations without remark.

Evie writes in third-person context (see Appendix E, Session (4) for full narrative version):

**Narrative 3.1 ‘In and Out Together’**

Lisa was from a heavily Catholic […] country. At home, she was well used to being completely hidden from public view – nobody outside of her family or close circle of friends knew she was a lesbian […] Lisa’s world was actually very straight. Evie, however, was well used to being out. She always lived in gay or lesbian areas/suburbs, always sought to live in gay-lesbian households, had mostly queer friends, went to queer venues and events, etc, was out and accepted by her family. Her world was very queer. […] for Lisa, this was a very different experience. She was not too interested in being suddenly out everywhere. She respected and valued the privacy of not being out. So it took a while for them to agree on where to live – “out” in a queer house, or “hidden” as two single, travelling, non-sexual girls sharing a room (this was not uncommon in [city]). Evie really didn’t like hiding, it felt like her soul was lying, and Lisa was absolutely uncomfortable having her private life open to the world.

[Session 4]

In this example, Evie appears to be using the terms for identity and queer interchangeably, providing similar connotative information. That is, the word ‘queer’
appears to replace the term ‘gay-lesbian’, locating them as interchangeable descriptors of the same discourse, rather than using them to differentiate different cultural groups. This point is significant in that it does not reflect the theoretical information available, as identity and queer theories, as discernable and usually oppositional locations. It is relevant to this chapter in its context as a negotiated dichotomy, and the manner in which this would impact the data produced through the memory-work process. One half of a dichotomous location provides an example of duality containing two individuated, but not necessarily separate, dimensions. When duality implies distinction it does not also need to imply the dominance–oppression dyad. It could imply distinction and amalgamation, demonstrated by Evie’s written production above, of Plummer’s ‘folk-essentialism’ (2000:55), combined with queer identity, with its interchangeable gender-sexuality construction (McLaughlin 2003:152).

The position advocated here regarding the acceptance of binaried locations, as opposed to the practice of the acceptance of one half of the equation, is specific to the data produced in the current memory-work project and in no way disregards the power differentials that exist socially in many areas relating to class, gender, race and sexuality. ‘Power refers to the extent to which the participants are positioned as equal and unequal’ (Schirato & Yell 2000:117), and there are, of course, obvious and significant socially constructed inequalities. When dichotomies are placed within a value system of inequality then the domination and subordination representation exists, and it is an established understanding that heterosexuality is the dominant social construct over the many other sexualities that come under the rubric of queer (Foucault 1984; Sedgwick 1990; Butler 1997a; Kleindienst 1999). That the participants spoke from an identity perspective, evidenced by the data that follows in this chapter, does not necessarily implicate exclusionary behaviour, that is, the non-
alignment of the group with the potential for a greater proportion of queered discourse cannot be seen as an indication of separatist political inclinations. The project leading to the present thesis was advertised as a lesbian language project, with the objective of looking for the social construction of inclusion through language. It would be presumed, then, that the participants were from the outset predisposed to using lesbian-specific terminology.

While the terminology in the narrative above contained lesbian-specific components, the field or context of their discourse was consistently political, where this term denotes visibility politics through the many variations of that domain. For example, Evie contextualises her lesbian identity by using the term “always” in the context of her living arrangements in “gay-lesbian households” and geographic locations, as well as discussing whether to be “out” or “hidden” while “pretending to be two single … girls”, and so on. Some of their reference points were queered contextually, for example, Evie had “mostly queer friends” and frequented “queer venues and events”, and this can be construed as a form of code-switching within the participants’ discursive moves. There was evidence of a general regard for an all-inclusive context through use of the gay and lesbian terminology as a discursive mode. In negotiating the boundaries between dominion and oppression, the participants of the current memory-work group created “[v]ariations from the norm” (Warner 1999:59), an action that once set in motion implicates multiply constructed social options.

The oppositional positions can be diffused through the collapsing of identifiable locations, the ‘us–them’ or ‘researcher–researched’ binaries, for instance. The continuum presumed from this conflation is paralleled by the fluidic nature of queer theory and its performative component. Identifiable locations are collapsed, as
simply are the interpellations of the identities. Identities are produced and reproduced on a daily basis through the discourses in which they are constructed. Discourse produces the speaker in a ‘chain of binding conventions’ because ‘self-determination does not necessarily result from self-naming, since the names themselves have their own historicity, which precedes our use of them’ (Butler 1993:228). This argument implies that a lack of agency makes things difficult to understand, and therefore produces an inability to construct oneself socially as an identity without also constructing the pre-existent historical definitions as social attachments. Therefore, to identify as lesbian discursively and culturally implicates the speaker even before she has spoken. This means that one’s acquired or chosen subjectivity designates a social and cultural location, and the language acquisition pertinent to that space carries connotations beyond mere definition. Because queer theory theoretically dissolves identity categories, discrimination is minimised. Negative interpellations are less possible with multiple sites of construction.

Interpellation is the means by which social or community members can be labelled or categorised, because they can be ‘hailed’ or called by those labels (Butler 1997a). Interpellation can operate in both positive and negative aspects. Multiple sites of construction, as implied by queer theory, disrupt the binaried oppositional categories which signify the social construction of normal–abnormal, or normative–alternative, and the various labels that can arise from those constructed sites (McLaughlin 2003:152). The possibility of negative interpellation leaves an opening for abject subjectivity. This particular dyad, normative–alternative, is significant in relation to the current memory-work group because its application is frequently configured into their texts. There is an explicit series of referents depicting degrees of awareness of self and other.
The significant difference in terms of memory work, and the participants’ equitable power relations delegated by the researcher–researched conflation, is that they present their interpellated selves in its positive aspect, where it has been previously located as negative. That is, abnormalcy, defined as lesbian-identity in this instance, is not considered in its negative aspect. The ‘chain of binding conventions’, rather than resulting in ‘becoming subordinated by power’ (Butler 1997a:2), is transformed into a position of performative awareness that implicates social self-construction through the format of a memory-work process. The association is that the disruptive nature of a queered text destroys the normal–abnormal dichotomy (McLaughlin 2003:152) and yet constructs and retains a subjectivity that maintains its power equability (Ingram et al 1997a:59).

Hence the importance of maintaining open relations between dichotomous locations and in particular those subjects striving for multiplicitous inclusiveness. As mentioned previously, the participants did not remark on their subjectivity but spoke with an inherent knowingness of their social locations. This is evidenced in Beth’s and Sophie’s narratives below and is explicated through the group discussions that follow. In each of the stories, the main character, or hero, is located as different from the normative construct, and because this position is noticeable yet unremarked within the text, an inherent knowledge of alternative subjectivity is noted.

The sex-gender differentiation was the normative social construct in the related past experiences. In the narratives presented below (Beth in her story Not An Ordinary Girl and Sophie in her story The Buxom Nun), it is apparent that Beth and Sophie were both independently aware of their difference from the norm. Neither of these participants articulated this state at the time of the incidents. However, both could
articulate it at the time of writing about these events of the past. Their situations could be adequately described as being ‘the enforced products of binary gender constitution centred on and by a “heterosexual contract”’ (Honig 1995:225).

Are we prepared to imagine a social space with no center, no ground, no endpoint, or are we simply gesturing toward the “other” to ensure that we do not lose ground to the invasion from the margins? (Seidman 1997:99)

In both narratives presented below the participants were constituted as other to the normative construct, and the most significant component of that construct was heterosexuality. Because of the age differential of the two participants (one an adolescent, the other in her late forties) but their similarity in social location as lesbian subjects, it can ably be surmised that the othering of same-sex desire was a performance that had its own ‘historicity’ (Butler 1993:228).

**NEGOTIATING TENSIONS IN THE NORMAL–ABNORMAL BINARY**

During the course of the four sessions it was apparent that the participants negotiated their way through the constructions that constituted normalcy and abnormalcy to the degree that there was inclusion in both domains. They were, evidenced in the examples presented below, discursive residents of the normative habitus but operated as though the mainstream world was abnormal and, conversely, residents of the abnormal world, as normal subjects, operating in both domains without loss of lesbian identity and yet without loss of normative subjectivity. The participants were, in effect, able to code-switch their socio-discursive affiliations. The group could be seen as ‘working on the inside’ and at the same time ‘holding tenaciously to the outside’ (Fuss 1991:5). Can this be seen as a compromise? Could the participants be ‘short-changing’ themselves? As can be observed in the texts throughout the memory-work
process, the participants achieved the objects of their desire. They did so from within
the normative–alternative dyad.

The dialogue below followed the reading of all the narratives responding to the cue
‘first lesbian experience’. Daria and Clare are discussing the topic of identity and
attempting to summarise the commonalities produced through the narratives. It is
notable that Daria speaks with many pauses and gaps so that cohesion is limited, as if
an adequate discursive system were unavailable to them, or that there was not a
semiotic system within ‘the institution of heterosexuality’ (Epstein 1997:183) which
could be adapted to their identity. The text therefore indicates that the binaries of
normativity and alternativity are being negotiated. This occurs when the participants
attempt to explain their feelings about their narrated events, and the language is not
easy to come by, or flowing in any sense. There is a concerted effort to describe
events that may not be discursively available and there is a hesitant usage of language
and discursive concepts that perhaps cannot adequately contain the feelings conjured
by those particular memories.

Daria’s narrative character was 14 years old and Clare’s was eight. In this segment
there is some overlapping between first- and third-person pronoun use prior to the
group decision to speak in first-person context only. Daria makes an attempt to
summarise the discussion and seems to be searching for descriptors to describe their
general experiences.
Discussion 3.1 ‘What Are We?’

1. Daria But um (...) stories (...) of kissing, but doing other things. You know, like we were (...) it’s (...) or that the children were experimenting or doing something but it wasn’t actually ... I didn’t hear that (...) can’t find it (...) [...] That it wasn’t acknowledged. We didn’t know what we were, basically. I didn’t, uh, Daria didn’t know that she was attracted to Jenny (...). Clare and Carla were rehearsing ...

2. Clare ➔ ( ) the right way to do things

3. Anon Yeah.

4. Daria ➔ and were play acting.

[Session 1a, p1]

Daria states in move 1 that there was physical and sensual contact because they were “kissing, but doing other things” and goes on to say that the pattern was “experimenting or doing something” and continues with “but it wasn’t actually...” After these linguistic gaps Daria concludes with the statement “that it wasn’t acknowledged.” The linguistic gap signifies the lack of a definitive semiotic system from which to speak but does not preclude the knowledge that their sexual identity was not acknowledged. Move 1 sums up the content, and also gives the impression that there is not a workable taxonomy from which to speak of same-sex identity and desire. The terminology used in moves 1 through 4 indicate an awareness that the terminology is lacking, using words such as “rehearsing”, “right way”, and “play acting”. The definitive statement in this excerpt is from move 1, when Daria states “we didn’t know what we were”, consolidating the premise of discursive lack.

This scenario has an interesting discursive duality. On the one hand, Daria and Clare were occupying a heteronormative habitus demonstrated by their use of the words
“experimenting” and “rehearsing”. These terms suggest that they were performing their roles, as “play acting” (move 4), in preparation for their eventual immersion into adult heteronormative culture. Daria and Clare were apparently preparing themselves for normative social positions, for probable boy/girl relational constructions with the eventual consummation into male/female relationships and marriages. Even though their experiments and rehearsals were with other girls, they were still positioned as normative performativities explicated as a linguistic gap in the field of desire. The suggestion of difference or choices available to explore differences was not operational.

The second demonstration of negotiations between the polarised domains of heteronormativity-homosociality is noted in the discussion above as a capacity for enjoyment of same-sex identities from childhood and early adolescence, regardless of the hesitancy or exploratory moves at attempting to explain these feelings. This can be seen as an example of the ‘social difference and the multiplication of identities’ (Seidman 1997:131) that would come light during the memory work process. Each participant must undergo a thorough discursive and even lexical search to explicate the feelings inherent in the events, and in the retelling of the events in a public setting. Although it is apparent that there was not an available taxonomy to discursively explore their same-sex sensuousness, Daria and Clare, through the reconstruction of their experiences in the memory-work process, were able to express their remembered aspirations and contextualise them in the current location. They managed to do this in part by naming that which they were not, that is, discussing themselves in terms of rehearsals, and the unknown, play-acting and experimentation. By naming that which they were not in the past, they were able to negotiate understanding of that which they felt they were, that is, identifiable lesbians, in the present context.
Negotiations between the realms of heteronormativity and female same-sex desire were operative from the commencement of the memory-work process. Heterosexuality co-opts vast tracts of discursive territory and constructs it as normative: the naturalised ‘social construction of categories … such as the family, the domestic domain, and sexuality’ (Blackwood & Wieringa 1999:53). This segment of spoken text supports the contention that ‘heterosexuality, gender and the materiality of the body are interrelated regulatory fictions’ (McLaughlin 2003:152). The fiction that desire and gender are fixed heterosexual states is negated by Daria and Clare who, although expressing their practices with difficulty, left no doubt about their knowledge of the existence of the heteronormative–alternative binary.

NEGOTIATING LESBIAN IDENTITY WITHIN THE NORMATIVE SOCIAL CONSTRUCT

The example of dialogue below has been used to reveal the ease with which the memory-work group participants acknowledge their lesbian identity, from an adult perspective through memory-work participation. In the discussion excerpt below Sophie and Daria talk about how they feel about their sexuality. It is notable that the contextual ‘voice’ that imbues the first move by Daria seems an adolescent one. This is verified in Daria’s statement (move 1) that she felt “smug and superior” and concludes with the comment “about adults”. This statement’s point of departure is the first-person and present-tense context when Daria says “I also have …” It could be presumed that the intention had been to say that she was feeling these things in relation to heterosexuals, recontextualising the speaking voice from an adult perspective. Daria’s ambiguity is realised and remarked in move 5 when she states that she has transferred her feelings to her sexual identity, meaning that she is now in the present and talking about the heterosexual–homosexual binary, and not the
adolescent–parent binary of move 1. It is a significant confusion because the two binaried pairs could be interchangeable in terms of traditional power relations of dominance–submission, and the enforced distance between these domains, both naturalised yet not necessarily ‘natural’.

Discussion 3.2 ‘Smug Lesbians’

| 1. Daria         | But I also (...) have that smug and superior feeling (...) about (...) adults. |
| 2. Sophie       | Being a lesbian? |
| 3. Daria        | Pardon? |
| 4. Sophie       | Smug and superior about being a lesbian ] (laughs) |
| 5. Daria        | ↓ Yes (laughs) I think it’s (...) transferred now to um (...) being a lesbian |
| 6. Georgie      | → You must be very secure (laughs). |
| (group laughter) |
| 7. Sophie       | Yes, we are (laughs). |

Daria and Sophie are the main participants in this dialogic excerpt. Sophie introduces the term “lesbian” (move 2) as she interprets Daria’s previous statement about feeling “smug and superior”. Sophie then repeats Daria’s comment in move 4. Daria and Sophie both use the term “a lesbian” when describing themselves, signifying an alignment with identity theory. Georgie asks or states that they must be feeling “very secure” to be able to feel so positive about their sexuality. Daria and Sophie are the two older members of the group and came out as young women, while Georgie, now in her forties, came out at a later age compared to the other participants, while in her thirties. Sophie answers Georgie’s question in the affirmative, using the inclusive or
possessive “we”, speaking on behalf of Daria as well as herself, a micro-construction of inclusion.

The identification of the term ‘lesbian’ as a category or identity juxtaposed in this segment demonstrates the participants’ knowledge of the reality of dichotomous relations, and that attributes and attitudes exist around those categories. By using the term ‘lesbian’ to self-describe, Daria and Sophie both imply a discursive division, because if the self can be represented by this gendered descriptor, it stands to reason that there is knowledge of other to that state. This is in sharp contrast to the previous excerpt, where one of the participants stated that as children and young adolescents they did not know “what they were” (discussion 1). In the second excerpt they are speaking from an adult perspective, although partly with an adolescent voice, and from this perspective their sexuality is recognised and acknowledged. The existence of binaried social states, in particular the ‘binary sex system’ (Seidman 1997:149) is generally negatively constituted. This is because binaries, particularly when they concern heterosexuality and marginalised groups, generate ‘rigid psychological and social boundaries’ (ibid) and this occurs ‘ineffaceably even when invisibly’ (Sedgwick 1990:11–12). Sexuality and identity can be seen as a ‘particular problematic’ that structures value into binaried cultural hegemonies (ibid). The binary formulations around sexuality are generally negatively positioned and actively disseminate systems of ‘dominance and hierarchy’ (Kress 1995:115; Seidman 1997:149). Daria’s use of the terms “smug” and “superior” constitutes a different perception of that binary. The suggestion of positivity in the above segment deflects that which is usually negatively constituted and in so doing suggests a negotiation of identity within a normative social construct.
The constraining dichotomy of heterosexuality and homosexuality results in the potential for abjection, which could be created by the silent imposition of heteronormative culture on alternative culture. In the same manner, the conflation of sex and knowledge as ‘conceptually inseparable from one another’ (Sedgwick 1990:73), becomes a significant reality in the constitution of difference without division. In the domain of sexuality, knowledge, and its binaried opposite, ignorance ‘is more than merely one in a metonymic chain of such binarisms’ (ibid). These chains constitute ‘the privileging of heterosexuality as the model and basic grid for family, kinship, and sexuality’ (Blackwood & Wieringa 1999:53). Entire associations of cultural normalcy determine the basis for the rigid constructions of being an insider or outsider within the dichotomies.

The group’s acquiescence of Daria’s perspective, the sense of knowledge of her own position imbued in her comments, is asserted through the laughter and comments of the other participants. In choosing those particular adjectives (“smug”, “superior”) to describe her “feelings”, where those feelings intersect to initiate a different kind of chain of female same-sex knowledge, Daria’s discursive context encapsulates a break through the normative dichotomous standards. The binary that is supposed to rigidly constrain Daria in her identity develops into a vehicle for inclusion through the spoken responses of the other participants. This occurs because once a speech act has become visible the binaried value system attached to a particular location can be reversed. The ‘exclusions and deprivations such outsiderhood imposes’ (Fuss 1991:4) converts into insiderhood due to its newly visible status.

The episode above, between Daria and Sophie, also demonstrates a negotiation between the dichotomous locations of normalcy and abnormalcy, where the term
“adults” represents heterosexuality and the term “lesbian” represents other to that normative and dominant (realised through the interchangeability of the terms ‘adult’ and ‘heterosexual’) domain. There is a sense in this text of reclamation in the participants’ use of the term “lesbian”. In combination with the words “smug” and “superior” and appended with both group laughter (between moves 6 and 7) and individual laughter (moves 4, 6 and 7), the term “lesbian” is imbued with significance, with a sense of perceived pleasure. There appears to be no attribution of abjection or other ‘bad’ connotations that would typically attend the alternative designation on the normal–abnormal binary, or the primary heterosexual–homosexual binary.

The speakers have created a variable caste of power by performing a different taxonomy of sexuality resulting in a ‘queering [of] power’ (Corber & Valocchi 2003:10–11). In this instance Daria, Sophie, and Georgie, plus the group as it is represented by the “group laughter”, contradict the inference that ‘the dominance of heterosexuality often operates unconsciously or in unmarked ways that make it … difficult to expose and dislodge’ (ibid). By transforming the adult–adolescent imbalance into a normative–lesbian construction, the externally imposed dominance and marginalising structure usually perpetuated by binarism was exposed and dislodged.

These negotiated incursions into discursive inclusion constitute the tensions between the different binaried locations. The inclusions inherent in the brief excerpt above demonstrate ‘new cultural and sexual arrangements’ that are made possible by the discursive ‘movements and transmutations of pleasure in the social field’ (Fuss 1991:5). The participants of the memory work group demonstrated, through their discursive choices, that they defined themselves as other to the heteronormative
world. This was achieved in their use of the word “lesbian” linked to the comment “smug and superior” which establishes the concept that they were, in their youth, other to “adults”, in the memory context, and that this has culminated in the idea of being other to heterosexuals in the group context. The group discursively created a place to belong, or to exist culturally, or ‘homosocially’ to use Sedgwick’s term (1985:2).

NEGOTIATING BINARIES

The following segment uses two narratives to demonstrate the means by which the participants negotiated the parallel tensions that run between the polarities of the primary socially constructed dichotomies representing the normative and the alternative domains. The binarism is textually embedded and realised through the consistent discursive division of the fields, or discursive content. The division is invariably heteronormative–abnormative. The first narrative is by Beth. Her narrative was written in response to the cue ‘first lesbian experience’. It provides an example of the polarities of heteronormativity and lesbian or female same-sex desire, and also demonstrates the means by which same-sex desire can be simultaneously produced and oppressed within the same domain.

Not an Ordinary Girl

Beth’s narrative Not An Ordinary Girl was chosen to demonstrate different sets of negotiations, involving a developing lesbian or queer sexuality from childhood. This narrative revolves around the explorations of the sensateness of discovering same-sex identity in early childhood. Beth’s investigation into her identity was conducted in secret, enveloped in the discursive silence that accompanies a gap in the discourses available to their developing subjectivity. Beth has a ‘crush’ on her female teacher
and this is realised through exploring body sensations. While she pursues this phenomenon within the narrative presented to the memory-work group, Beth’s memory also retrieves another set of contextual markers denoting exclusion. Her current perspective deploys homophobic text, inherent in her subsequent awareness that what she was experiencing was not what other “ordinary girls” experienced. Beth’s narrative demonstrates her negotiations between same-sex desire and the heteronormative social construction that provides the background of this story. The negotiation exists because she could obtain her goal (inclusion), within a homophobic domain (exclusion). The renegotiation in the current memory-work process is explicated by the excitement generated in her text, and by the group’s commonality deployed through their own texts.

Beth’s narrative describes a teacher and student interaction, which occurred at preschool when she was three years old. An interesting feature of this narrative is that Beth talks about the main characters of the story in terms of body parts rather than as participants. This is written in the third-person context from the perspective of the narrator, and the main characters are represented as “a pelvis” and “a nose”, specifically, the female teacher’s pelvis and Beth’s nose. It is the relationship between these two body parts that provides the pivotal aspect of this story.

**Narrative 3.2 ‘Not an Ordinary Girl’**

In preschool, Beth had one teacher which she really liked. The name and even the face of this teacher didn’t matter. It was just the height of this teacher that was important. When Beth used to hug this female teacher (which she did quite often), Beth’s nose lined up perfectly with her teacher’s pelvis area and the smells that Beth got were just fascinating. Beth was always very secretive about these incidents for it was not the sort [sic] an ordinary girl did. She felt very weird and almost dirty, when she would hug this teacher.
Beth’s desire in the retelling of her memory is palpable because in the narrative’s textual construction it is evident that these body parts are the essential feature of the story. The teacher is represented by a series of attributes rather than as a participant. Beth declares this in her second sentence when she states that “the name” and “the face” of the teacher “didn’t matter”. What was important was “the height of the teacher” and also the stipulation that the teacher was “female”. The reason for this was that “Beth’s nose lined up perfectly with her teacher’s pelvis area”.

The imagery depicted creates an immediate focus on the interrelationship between the teacher’s height and Beth’s nose. The word “just” used in relation to “the height of teacher” creates a degree of anticipation as does the lining up of body parts to enjoy “the smells that Beth got”. The combination of the words “smells” that were “got” and “were just fascinating” locates the text as sensual discourse. The discourse can be viewed bilaterally in this narrative. First of all, it can be construed as a tale of difference, qualified by the topic of same-sex sensuality as its basis. Secondly, the text can be construed in a political context because the last two sentences act as a discursive shift. When Beth writes that she was “always very secretive” about her sensate feelings for her teacher, the implication constitutes a sense of knowledge about her alternative location. “Ordinary” girls did not do this “sort of thing”.

The sense of shame that could be construed from Beth’s set of circumstantial descriptors is confounded by her choice of the word “almost”, which modifies the word “dirty”. This conjuncture is significant because on the one hand it implies abjection, and on the other hand the word “almost” explicates only a degree of dirtiness, rather than a complete state. The abject state of shame is implied in Beth’s use of terminology, such as “weird” and “dirty”, prefixed by the word “secretive” in
the preceding sentence. Beth as narrator expresses a degree of the social construction in which she performs when she says that her act of sensuousness “was not the sort of thing] an ordinary girl did”.

When Beth describes herself as “not an ordinary girl” in the narrative she effectively interpellates herself and introduces the idea of normalcy and its opposite location of abnormalcy. She recognises her difference and her choice of language invites the listener/reader to share the knowledge of her abnormalcy, but because an ordinary ‘address constitutes a being within the possible circuit of recognition’, Beth places herself ‘outside of it, in abjection’ (Butler 1997a:5). However, the course of identification in this instance comes from a source that coexists with presumed normality. In the following discussion excerpt, which followed the reading of her narrative, Beth amplifies the final statements of her narrative by confirming her contention that what she “had been doing … was wrong”.

**Discussion 3.3 ‘It Was Wrong’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beth</th>
<th>Well (...) I probably wouldn’t have been able to find the words for it back then but there was something about me that I didn’t want to tell anyone (...) what I had been doing (...) because it was wrong ( ).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

[Session 1a, p1]

The knowledge of what was right and wrong is spoken from the perspective of Beth’s adult agency in the current memory-work group. As the narrator of *Not an Ordinary Girl*, Beth has othered herself by introducing the idea of something not quite normal, something other than being “ordinary”. Butler’s proposal that ‘[l]anguage sustains the body’ (1997a:5) is adequately illustrated by Beth’s case because her experience of self and a sensate experience includes the binary of what is allowable and what is not in public, as well as instilling the dichotomous relations of normativity and abnormalcy.
Discussion 3.4 ‘Proud of Me’

| Beth | Think it was knowing that someone older than me was proud of knowing me, even if what you felt was, ummmhh. |

Beth retains the memory of sensuousness, conveyed into the present time even though she has acknowledged a sense of abjection and shame brought into existence because of her feelings for her teacher. The positive memory of the “incidents” is reiterated when Beth expresses a paralinguistic (non-verbal communication) utterance of “ummmmmh”, presented in the excerpt above, which occurred as a discussion after the reading of her narrative.

Beth’s marginalised and oppressed self-construction is fixed in time as a negative coda to a fascinating series of “incidents” until she transforms that state into a collective construction by revealing her story to the memory-work group. In the practice of speaking publicly, abjection, as part of the narrative’s conclusion, is not seen as the only outcome of Beth’s performative moment. As well as abjection, ‘there is a strong sense in which the body is alternately sustained and threatened through modes of address’ (Butler 1997a:5). Beth has interpellated herself both negatively and positively, in a sense both sustaining and threatening her self-construction, in ‘the process of becoming a subject’ (ibid:2). The degree of duality Beth experiences as she expresses her early same-sex sensuousness shows the degree of imposed normalcy that existed as the only location and discourse available to this remembered experience from the past. The act of sharing her story with the other memory-work participants demonstrated both a contribution to the overall pattern of commonalities, as well as a moment of sustenance in collective social construction. Beth negotiated
her way through the domains of normativity and difference both within the past incident and within the group experience.

The Buxom Nun

*A Buxom Nun* was written by Sophie and, as with Beth’s narrative, describes an event that occurred at school, when Sophie was eleven years old. Sophie’s narrative also has a similar theme, in that she had a secret crush on her teacher. The descriptors used to portray Sophie’s teacher (the buxom nun) demonstrate the achievement of her desire object. The negotiations occur because Sophie is able to worship from afar, in silence and secrecy also (as with Beth’s desire), and yet she is able to realise another goal simultaneously, that of academic success. The criticalness of maintaining secrecy in her same-sex identity explorations is divulged as a later complication to the narrative, when other girls are accidentally outed at her school. The contrast portrayed by Sophie’s retrieved version of her memory, of success in remaining silent, and pejoration in being out, in this setting, is clarified by the subsequent outcomes of these dual textual themes. Sophie negotiated inclusion through silence and achieved academic success, avoiding exclusion by remaining closeted, unlike the other outed girls.

This data will explicate Sophie’s negotiated social inclusion in the dual locations of normativity-abnormalcy although the incursion into the public-private domain is also a focus of this example. This application produces another aspect of the cultural practice of self-construction, which was realised as inclusion within both polarities of the public–private binary. Both Beth’s and Sophie’s narratives are based within the institutional field of education. This is significant in the context of non-normative desire and availability of its expression in normative public spaces. Systems of
education could be said to be ‘institutions which actively work to promote heterosexuality’ (Town 1999:1). This statement signifies that there were practices at schools which ‘have been identified as [maintaining] silence surrounding sexualities in general and homosexualities in particular’, also called the ‘pathologisation of (homo)sexuality’ (ibid:2).

Sophie’s narrative was written as a response to the cue for the second session of the memory-work process, ‘adolescent experience’. Sophie is in early high school in this story and the discursive mode is that of a narrative within a narrative. The outer narrative is about Sophie’s object of desire, and the inner or secondary narrative is about an incident involving the outing of lesbians at the school. In the discussion following the reading of Sophie’s narrative, the other group participants were focused on the public incident of the outing, rather than the private event of Sophie’s secret desire. The dialogic excerpt to follow the narrative demonstrates this point.

**Narrative 3.3 ‘The Buxom Nun’**

Sophie wanted people to like her, she would do what she could to please them. Her father said she was the diplomat in the family. She was at a girls’ school, in [year 8]. [In year 9] Sophie wanted to be in academic strand, not commercial or home economics. Sister Mary was one of the head nuns – she was buxom and brilliant and it was rumoured she had decided to become a nun after having led a very colourful life. Sophie looked on Sister Mary with wonderment and awe. One day when Sophie was sitting in the front row, she overheard Sister Mary in the corridor mentioning her name to one of the girls in her class. The girl said, “No”. Sophie thought she was saying that Sophie wasn’t capable of being in academic strand and was devastated. Later that day Sister Mary came into the form room and announced that 10 girls in the class had disgraced themselves, been reprimanded and their parents informed as they had been found touching each other in PE storeroom. Sophie had a best friend – Anne. Sophie had been to Anne’s place and Anne’s parents seemed to like Sophie. A few months after that, just before the end of the year, Anne’s parent refused for Anne
to associate with Sophie and Anne wouldn’t talk to Sophie. Sophie didn’t understand why. Sophie did get into academic strand and was very happy. Thru her studies she felt she could be true to herself and please people at the same time.

[Session 2]

The point of departure (the beginning of a story, denoting theme) of Sophie’s narrative is a declaration that Sophie “wanted people to like her” and that she “would do what she could to please them”. Her desire is expressed in sensuous terminology and represents her feelings for Sister Mary, who is described as being “buxom and brilliant” and who had led “a very colourful life”. Sophie’s narrative is backgrounded in mainstream culture, and emphasises the importance she places on being acceptable to “people”, in particular “her father” and the “family”. Sophie’s primary theme for both strands of this narrative is same-sex desire, one of which is cerebrally located, and one of which is depicted in an incident played out among some of the other students, forming the secondary narrative strand.

In the orientation component in this narrative, Sophie’s father said that “she was the diplomat in the family” and Sophie confirms that she is interested in the “academic strand” which was one of the scholastic options at her school. Pleasing parents, teachers and being diplomatic with scholastic achievements and academic aims symbolise social acceptance. Sophie’s desires and objectives were focused on and within the institutions of school and family, and they are presented as interdependent goals. Pleasing her family and succeeding at school are represented in terms of equal significance in Sophie’s narrative. These are the normative social establishments that construct the performativities that Sophie needs to occupy in order to live out her same-sex desire. Sophie’s narrative demonstrates the negotiations through which she can be socially constructed as scholastically successful as well as remaining “true to
herself”, implying her same-sex desire, personified by the object of desire, Sister Mary. This is the social construction that Sophie must occupy (“her father said”), and as she does she also constructs an entirely different alternate dimension. The student who is “pleasing people” is also secretly gazing at the “buxom” nun. The reader’s attention is directed away from what is normal/mainstream and into that which is exotic and denotes desire different from the norm.

Sophie is performing dual identities in this text. As the narrator, she describes the experiences of two different domains, one normal and one alternative, one public and the other private. The private domain of sensuous same-sex desire is interrupted by a very public outing of a group of “girls caught touching each other in the PE storeroom”. The arena of the classroom is interrupted by an eruption of lesbian activity. Sophie has simultaneously been secretly “in awe” of Sister Mary, instituted within the primary theme of the narrative. However, within the secondary theme Sophie records that she has been outed in an event that did not include her. Through this incident of misunderstanding, Sophie’s dual performativity is disrupted and the private realm (signified by Sister Mary) is transported into the public view.

The heteronormative and institutional fields portrayed in Sophie’s narrative are equally disrupted. The gains and losses inherent in the themes are multiple and interchangeable, as interchangeable as Sophie herself, who is concurrently visible and invisible, in both the private and public realms within a normative institution. The promotion of heterosexuality and ‘pathologisation’ of homosexuality (Town 1999:1) is evidenced in the language Sophie uses to describe the “girls touching each other”. They “had disgraced themselves” and been “reprimanded” for their same-sex activities. The usual private location of lesbian and female same-sex desire suggests
that ‘the set of norms that make heterosexuality seem natural or right and that organise homosexuality as its binary opposite’ (Corber & Valocchi 2003:4) was operational in producing a situation where such desire could be admonished as disgraceful. This situation operates by ‘preventing homosexuality from being a form of sexuality that can be taken for granted or go unmarked or seem right in the way heterosexuality can’ (ibid). Heterosexuality is the naturalised and normative social construct presented by Sophie, to the extent that diverging from it, through the act of “girls touching”, causes a disruption to the naturalisation process of heteronormativity.

There are a series of consequences evolving from this episode within the narrative, including Sophie’s implication in the act of the touching girls. Sophie depicts the consequences of her implication in the event as a series of abject reactions involving betrayal (by Sister Mary) and loss (of Anne’s friendship). Silence was one component of the chain reaction to Sophie’s implication, and this has been called ‘an isolation of secrecy’ (Blackwood & Wieringa 1999:40). However, Sophie dislocates the projected subordination and “disgrace” by declaring in her narrative’s coda that in the face of all that had occurred, she “could [still] be true to herself” and “please people at the same time”.

The excerpt presented below is the discussion about The Buxom Nun that followed Sophie’s reading of it to the memory-work group. The thematic pattern of this segment is similar to the narrative’s theme, with the first few moves, and the final few moves, replicating Sophie’s narrated objectives, commencing with the topic of being in the “academic strand” and closing with the topic of “pleasing people”.

121
## Discussion 3.5 ‘Ten Girls Touching’

1. Georgie  So, you’re saying in that you were named as one of the ten girls  
   yes?

2. Sophie  ↓ That’s what they were talking about and I thought that (…)

3. Georgie  →] This was talking about academic

4. Sophie  ↓ The, the head of the thing was asking this kid in the class  
   whether I should be allowed to go in the academic strand or not.
   (group laughter)

5. Sophie  And she was actually asking whether I was one of the girls (…) with  
   (…) in the  ↓ PE storeroom (laughing while talking)

6. Evie  ↓ Aaaah!

7. Sophie  (laughs)

8. Evie  Were you?

9. Sophie  No! I was so um

10. Daria  → So there were ten girls at your school touching each other?

11. Evie  (laughs)

12. Georgie  Oooh wow!

13. Daria  Yeah wow!

14. Evie  Shees!

15. Daria  We have envy!
   (group laughter)

16. Evie  We have envy!

17. Anon  ↓ (    )  
   ↓ (group laughter)

18. Georgie  ↓ Maybe there’s something to say for the Catholic system after all.  
   (group laughter)
19. Sophie    D- you recognise this feeling? [to Georgie]

(group laughter)

20. Sophie    But, I-I, but th- then, and that was 12, it was well and truly established in me (...) that there was no room for me emotionally (...) my sexuality or anything like that and I was focused totally on academic … That’s the only way that I felt that I could (...) be myself and please people at the same time (laughs). Or please my parents, you know, be the good little girl.

The discussion shifts into sensuous discourse in move 10 when Daria declares, and/or questions Sophie: “So there were ten girls at your school touching each other?” This move instigates a reaction from other participants amplifying the theme with laughter, paralinguistics, and questions until Daria further expands this intensive interactive mode by exclaiming, “We have envy!” Daria uses the inclusive pronoun “we”, which demonstrates a degree of social closeness similar to that which occurs in Beth’s narrative above. Daria’s declarative is echoed by Evie in the following move 16 and the echoed exchange creates an eruption of laughter, which complements an eruption of desire that is satirised. Being in a position to satirise one’s text demonstrates a sense of close social proximity, which is also evidenced in the talking-over sequences ‘] [’ and interruptions ‘→’ throughout the dialogue. There is a sense of closeness as well with the paralinguistic utterances such as “wow” and “oooh” which can be seen as a proliferation of excitement about the topic, which is comprehensively understood, denoting a broader level of inclusion.

The significance of Daria’s statement, which intensifies the focus of the topic around the incident of “ten girls touching” is that a body of desire is formed, both textually about the narrative and intertextually about the group participants, finally producing
these ‘daring articulations of lesbian desire’ (Garréta 1996:208). The group itself becomes a body of desire, reacting and responding to the statement that qualifies the experience of same-sex desire as it occurred in the past. Lesbian and female same-sex desire is, in this manner, outed in the group context, as much as Sophie was outed in the schoolroom context, relocating the text and the participants from insiderhood to outsiderhood.

The occurrence of inclusion, discursively realised through the binaries played out in Sophie’s narrative and the ensuing discussions, is teleological because the practice of envy presented in Sophie’s narrative is located in the past, as the remembered experience of one participant of the memory-work group. The process becomes naturalised in the thematic movement from past to present, creating a procession of historicity. The sense of continuity resides in the theme of something that is remembered, which is concurrently projected into the present group situation, reconstituted as a collective event. Continuity in the form of reconstituted historicity creates a sense of inclusion, where language and culture form a sense of identity and therefore a sense of belonging. Ambiguity persists in the statement “we have envy” because it can be read either contemporaneously or as memory. The declaration of envy by the other participants has rearranged the field-context, from within which Sophie negotiates her particular social gains and losses. Sophie’s coming-out process was in contradiction to her statement in the discussion segment that she was being “a good little girl” and focusing on other goals. Sophie was outed by events outside of her control, and the silence and perceived betrayal surrounding the event was in some way repaired through reproducing the incident in the memory-work group. The negotiations of the past resulted in achieving some of her objectives, such as family and educational successes, and the negotiations conducted through the presentation
within the memory-work group of her texts, both written and spoken, resulted in the achievement of the other objectives, such as identifying as lesbian in a public domain, in an act of “being true to herself” (from the narrative).

The secondary outing that occurred within the memory-work group process in relation to *The Buxom Nun* series takes place through the group’s validation of Sophie’s experiences at school, and transforming the experience into a positive memory. This performance occurred through the new experience of public and shared collectivity of the remembered events. The participants recreated Sophie’s experiences by sharing in her memories, and therefore being discursively included within the events. Sophie, who was accidentally outing in the past event, has successfully renegotiated her own outing, maintaining her past goals, and achieving other same-sex desire goals in the contemporary situation. In this manner Sophie has been successful in both the normative and alternative realms. When Sophie presented her gains and losses to the group she constructed a degree of ‘cultural value’ (Schirato & Yell 2000:153) which reconfigured as personal support and political currency, both of which were components of the memory-work process. In taking the remembered incident from the past and presenting it publicly, locating Sophie as the hero of her own story, this memory-work process has provided an opportunity to self-construct, and also to other-construct, as the participants included themselves in Sophie’s gains and losses. Sophie’s private world was socially reconstructed within a public and therefore mainstream and normative domain, constituting inclusion for herself and for the other group participants, and subsequently for the broader social community as readers of these texts. Sophie’s empowerment exists in direct relation to the degree of access to public discourses that is available (ibid:156).
Sophie’s final statement (move 20) of this excerpt replicates the closure of her narrative above, where the theme of pleasing people was the coda, when she wanted to please her parents by being “the good little girl”. This is interesting because of the idea of repetition creating a process of naturalisation. The idea that is repeated is that the social structures that are inherent in normative institutional situations, that of the family, and the classroom, and the importance of success in either or both situations, is important to Sophie. Her tendency was to hold onto the heteronormative structure that provides the basis for the event of lesbian desire. This intrusion into her narrative is significant because it implies the importance of both social locations in her story. Sophie makes it thematically clear that while lesbian or female same-sex desire is exciting and becomes the exotic aspect of the narrative, it is imperative that she maintains the heteronormative boundaries in which the scene is located, because of her expressed desire for other goals as well.

The three narratives analysed and presented above were chosen as they best exemplified the objective of the social construction of inclusion in lesbian language realised through the participants' dichotomous negotiations. These negotiations included retrieving past experiences and their social locations within these, as well as recontextualising their memories within the group as part of the negotiating process.

Sophie’s current negotiations within the memory-work group as with Evie and Beth in narrating their memories of previous negotiations, is explicated through the renegotiations of their narrative codas or outcomes. The commonality displayed by these three participants demonstrates the negotiations they deployed into their construction of inclusion in the oppositional binaries of normativity and abnormalcy. In doing so, they achieved various degrees of success in both domains, and were
therefore inscribed inclusively in both domains. Reconstruction occurred for all within the group setting, where silence was no longer necessitated by the constraints of difference, because the negotiation was the reversed reconstruction of the normative site. The group participants normalised their historical pasts by relating them into the present public comprehension.

**NEGOTIATIONS OF INCLUSION**

This chapter’s investigations show that inclusion could be negotiated through the binaried locations of heterosexuality–homosexuality, and the multiply sited corresponding dyads denoting the normativity–abnormalcy and public–private domains, realised through discursive and cultural analyses. The narratives and discussions resulting from the memory-work group participants have demonstrated that the parallel tensions that exist within these dichotomies were successfully negotiated by the participants through their remembered and current experiences processed within the memory-work group. The group demonstrated their utilisation of the socially constructed heteronormative domain in which they were located and reconstructed their lesbian or female same-sex desire within and around these locations.

The repetitions and reiterations from the remembered experiences to the subsequent speech utterances of the current group process simultaneously instigated the production of inclusion. Using examples of narratives and dialogues, the texts demonstrated that the word publicly spoken by one of the participants and the acquiescence (or disagreement) of the other participants in itself constituted inclusion. The unanimous public voice, in agreement or disagreement, produces an instance of historicity. The concept that ‘outsiderhood’ is ‘a position of powerlessness,
speechlessness, homelessness’ (Fuss 1991:5) is discursively denied in these three narratives. These appellations are the potentially abject locations that could be, and in some instances were, available to the lesbian subject in this project. However, the data in this chapter have demonstrated that the participants of the present memory-work process produced a different habitus, evidenced in both their written narratives from the past and also from their contemporaneous self-construction.

In the first instance, the writing of the narratives confirmed the secretly constructed existence of lesbian and female same-sex desire, with each excerpt above confirming the constitution same-sex desire existent within heteronormative desire. Lesbian and female same-sex desire coexisted with normative desire in a normative social construction. ‘Subjection consists precisely in this fundamental dependency on a discourse we never chose but that, paradoxically, initiates and sustains our agency’ (Butler 1997a:2). In terms of the memory-work process, the writing, reading and subsequent group discussion of the narratives brings into reality the probable existence of a different social construction, a different habitus. The term ‘habitus’ is used in the context that the continuous generation and regeneration, that is, ‘integrating past experiences’ (Bourdieu 1977:83) of an action by a group of people which desires its reproduction brings about undeviating transformation, or perhaps a “conversion” of consciousness’ (ibid:74) which can be evidenced in the establishment of identity through reiterated discourse. The ethnographic implications of this concept are apparent in the premise outlined in chapter one on the inseparability of language and culture. The trajectory from the past into the present and from written text to spoken text implicates many degrees of transformation compiled subsequent to the negotiations between the opposing binaried locations. Reiteration and repetition were essential ingredients in the process of transforming the
past into the present, constituting a reconstruction process, producing inclusion both through the process itself and through the results of that process.

This chapter has introduced the concept of negotiating the parallel tensions between dichotomous locations, primarily based on the heteronormative–alternative, public–private dyads. With the investigation into inclusion through the negotiation of binaries in mind, chapter 4 will look into the primary dichotomy to highlight a significant pattern throughout the memory-work group sessions. The binary of reality–fantasy construed a major component of the memory-work process, being strongly and consistently utilised by the group participants in each session. The investigation of the social construction of inclusion will be performed into the binary construct of fantasy-reality, and its ultimate conversion.
CHAPTER 4
REALITY AND FANTASY IN THE PRODUCTION OF INCLUSION

In the previous chapter the influence of binaries on negotiations of inclusion were identified. The objective of this chapter is to identify patterns of discourse use, both written and spoken, that will determine how social inclusion is produced through the binary construction of reality and fantasy. The memory-work group produced many instances of textual fantasy to deconstruct the enforced production of what was constituted as the realities of past experiences. The theme of fantasy was abundantly produced and became an intriguing concept with which to engage because it was accompanied by humour and laughter. However, this concept must be explored in tandem with the concept of reality, as both domains were implicated in the deconstruction of the remembered experiences and their subsequent transformation into different and equitable experiences. Reality and fantasy were key players in this transformative process. The discursive and cultural explorations of the participants were particularly apt when assessing the production of inclusion, which also does not exist without exclusion as its binaried opposite.

This chapter is segmented into two main compartments to explicate the presentation of the data generated by the memory-work group. The first section begins by looking at aspects of reality, in its definitive field as a social construction. This paradigm is explored using a cluster of dialogic examples, and is further amplified by the analyses of Sophie’s narrative She’ll Be Into Boys Soon and Evie’s narrative The Wandering-Handed Lemon and the accompanying discussions. These narratives explicate the idea of reality as a means of establishing the way this concept was perceived by the participants. The second section of this chapter presents an in-depth investigation into the memory-work group’s use of fantasy to construct a different kind of reality.
Daria’s narrative, *Sit with Me*, with the accompanying dialogues, is presented as the most appropriate example of humour that serves to demonstrate the points of commonality and inclusion raised by the data. In this instance, the fantasy is realised as both grotesque and humourous. The narrative *Go Granny*, written by Evie and its accompanying discussions is presented to explicate the use of fantasy as a deconstructive device, enabling the reconstructive process of binary inversion, as well as individual and collective reparation through the memory work process. The production of both the reality and fantasy concepts instigate a series of individual and communal laughter sequences that operate at different levels of inclusiveness.

The episodes of fantasy and humour deployed in the expamples incited both individual and group laughter which has its own set of implications quite beyond that which stimulates its occurrence. Laughter can be used as a distancing device, as can the humour that usually precedes it (Holmes & Marra 2002:382). Laughter used as a distancing stratagem, creates a degree of space between what was painful and what was presentable. Laughter in the production of inclusion is also measured as a bonding mechanism for the participants, creating a sense of cohesion and solidarity. Fantasy/humour as a discursive construction was positioned in opposition to the normative construction of reality. The facilitation of solidarity as reparation was inspired by the feat of ‘effecting an “infectious laughter”’ (McBride 1999:141) and, as such, is a significant generator of close interpersonal relations.

Another marker of inclusion through the use of laughter is its capacity to operate as *one voice*. This discursive behaviour is textually precipitated by the fact that laughter itself cannot be recorded as itself. That is, ‘laughter appears to be among the activity types that do not require, not lend themselves to reporting their particulars’; in other
words, laughter ‘is named, not quoted’ (Jefferson 1985:27–28). The representation of laughter as the one transcribed word gives it an interpellative quality in that it cannot be reasonably or extensively quoted (‘ah heh heh heh’, for example) does not readily textually exist outside of its naming (ibid). Laughter must, by default, be named and, as such, in a transcript reading it can appear to be a potent reiterating fixture to many interactions. With the examples presented in this chapter the intention is to analyse both the incidents of fantasy, and the practices of laughter as they occurred within those discursive devices that constituted the shaping of humour and comedies, represented also as a frequent expression of ‘absolute joy’ (Baudelaire 1955:24) in this group.

Both reality and fantasy can be seen as concepts that are ‘embedded in its social conditions’ (Fairclough & Wodak 1997:279) and this idea is crucial to the representation of the fantasy/humour segments. This chapter concludes with a focus on the approaches used by the participants to negotiate inclusion in both realms. How they achieved this through the memory-work process and their use of language and cultural knowledge will be explored. The following table summarises the narratives and discussion segments used to demonstrate the participants’ practices of negotiation, leading variously to inclusive practices, through the binaried locations of reality–fantasy.

Table 4.1 Narrative and Discussion Excerpts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narratives</th>
<th>Discussions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1 She'll Be Into Boys Soon (Sophie)</td>
<td>4.1 The Guesy-World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Wandering-Handed Lemon (Evie)</td>
<td>4.2 Let’s Celebrate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Sit With Me (Daria)</td>
<td>4.3 Coming-Out Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 Go, Granny (Evie)</td>
<td>4.4 Dismissed as Cute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.5 Not Knowing Why</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REA LITY AS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT

Reality has many representations and while an exploration of definitions may be useful, the meaning of reality in this study will be restricted in its application to the semiotic system pivotal in the social construction of institutionalisation. ‘Social meanings are produced within social institutions and practices in which individuals, who are shaped by those institutions, are agents of change, rather than its authors’ (Weedon 1987:25). Not fitting into the social construction of reality means that one is excluded, as an agent of institutionalised reality. ‘In order to create a blueprint for making community, the heteronormative realities of particular places and environments must be contested and reconstructed’ (Ingram et al 1997b:14). Reality in its equation to heterosexuality finds a natural opposition through the generation of fantasy.

I will be using the depictions of that term as they were presented or utilised by the group, in order to explicate the concept of reality and to investigate its ideological underpinnings relative to the social production of inclusion within the realm of lesbian identity or desire. The participants did initially refer to the term and concept ‘reality’
as an identifiable concept, and their perception of it was established in the first session through the use of terminology such as “real” in relation to the them–us binary. In describing reality they used terminology such as “didn’t know”, “the right way”, “not knowing”, and “their world”. These verbal and nominal groups are vaguely non-specific but manage to convey a sense of the existence of normativity and its difference.

Reality was often equated with generalised and non-definitive descriptives, such as things being “okay” and “natural”. The concept of reality was used in a way that indicated its understanding as a naturalised belief, an idea that was in all probability taken for granted and subsequently adhered to as common-ground ideology. Language and same-sex desire can be posited as a resource for the representation of reality, constructing images of experience that were considered within the dichotomy of reality and non-reality. The participants constituted same-sex desire as a component of non-reality from the perspective of a normative, or heterosexual, social ideology.

As the concept of reality is fluidic and open to multiple conjectures within the many paradigmatic structures inherent in Western ideology, the definition of what is considered its natural opposition is also open to speculation. In particular the collapsing of the domains that represent what is real and what is normal does not necessarily equate with a natural dichotomy incorporating the concept of fantasy. When reality is conflated with the meanings of truth and normalcy, the positions open to that polarity could represent lies and deviance as well as the many connotations of abnormalcy. Even the idea of difference is implicated. So while reality appears an
easy concept to proclaim as a natural state, there are risks attendant upon its potential definitions.

In this dissertation the oppositional concept to reality that was most frequently utilised as a discursive pattern by the memory-work group was fantasy. The reality–fantasy dyad presented a workable format from which the participants could deconstruct and simultaneously reconstruct through transformative processes their social exclusion–inclusion. The term ‘fantasy’ in these instances represented that which was other to the concept of reality, and was remarked as such in the excerpt below.

This pattern of fantasy repetition performed a disruption to the concept of reality. Reality was undermined in these instances due to the irreverence that the participants displayed for iconic markers of traditional heterosexuality, replacing them with fantastical new markers of lesbian identity. The group participants undermined reality as it was realised through the construct of heteronormativity, from which lesbians are generally excluded, through episodes of tangential humour, discursively performed through exaggeration and irony. This had the effect of ridiculing normative social icons and satirising their own (the participants’) social construction within that humour. This discursive pattern was observed by one of the participants, Evie, who noticed that the group was inventing new stories to replace the lesbian construction from a habitus that did not necessarily apply to them, to one that did. Evie named the process, calling it a “guessy-world”, a label encompassing the disruptive and humorous episodes, creating a location from which to produce different outcomes.
Discussion 4.1 ‘The Guessy-World’

1. Evie It’s like we’re creating this kind of, you know, guessy-world of coming-out parties and getting onto the bus and announcing it.

2. Daria Well I found it really boring, you know, to (…) I- I think that you’ve known for nearly my whole life (…) I- I hate all those little comments. And they always trigger me. ‘Ooh there’s a nice husband for you.’ I go ‘I’m a lesbian!!’

(group laughter)

[Session 3b, p18]

The dialogic excerpt above demonstrates the degree of cultural complexity that is required to understand one’s ideological position. Evie invents the term “guessy-world” to describe the group’s pattern of discursive behaviour. Evie refers to the comments that the group had made previously, summarised as the metaphoric statements “getting onto the bus” and “announcing it [lesbian identity]”, both referencing a public outing of their lesbian identities. Evie has noted these fabrications or fantasy stories and named them, underpinning the essential conflict between the two ideological perspectives of reality / heterosexuality and fantasy / homosexuality / lesbianism. This is in contrast to Daria’s response, which refers to the aftermath of coming out to parents. The juxtaposition of these two topical moves appears incongruent, but it serves to highlight the comprehension of knowledge-forming concepts. Evie’s allusion to a different way of being demonstrates a different kind of knowledge that does not have its own specific language. This excerpt demonstrates the construction of a different kind of habitus, and this is exemplified by the implicit understanding of context. The participants conjure a wish list of celebratory responses forming a discourse of welcome and produce it in opposition to the reality of their outcoming, constituting a “guessy-world” or a world of fantasy.
While humour was a constituent of all four sessions, the deployment of fantasy as a discursive theme was instigated in session 3 as a speech topic. The participants had been discussing the results of the session’s cue—‘coming out to family’—when it was noted by Daria (move 1 below) that some family members had known about their (the participants’) lesbian identity but had not acknowledged that they knew. This resulted in a discussion on this pattern of silent knowledge which metamorphosed into a theme of celebration of their lesbian-ness.

**Discussion 4.2 ‘Let’s Celebrate!’**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Daria</td>
<td>What- what I find interesting is th-that y-your (...) mother knew (...) but didn’t tell you. Like if (...) if my mother had known (...) or if anyone had known (...) I would’ve loved them to tell me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Beth</td>
<td>Mmm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Daria</td>
<td>So that I’d have an idea that it was okay or something.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Beth</td>
<td>Maybe it was kept hush-hush because (...) it wasn’t right. In their eyes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Daria</td>
<td>Yeah, yeah (...) obviously it was something (...) it wasn’t something that you’d celebrate, like.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Beth</td>
<td>Yeah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Daria</td>
<td>You know, ‘I think your daughter’s a dyke!’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Beth</td>
<td>Ooh wheee!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Daria</td>
<td>Oooh! Lavatska!!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(group laughter)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Daria</td>
<td>‘She’s only eight, let’s have a party to celebrate!’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Sophie</td>
<td>Wouldn’t that be wonderful!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(group laughter)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Session 3a, p4]
Daria acknowledges the pattern of family silence around same-sex identity in moves 1 and 3 and her point is amplified in move 4 by Beth, who uses the diminutive term of “hush-hush” to try and explain the reasons for the familial silence. Daria agrees (move 5) and suggests that “it wasn’t something that you’d celebrate”, and then proliferates that abject concept into a positive theme in moves 7 to 10 by paraphrasing imaginary adults celebrating their imaginary daughter’s lesbian identity, culminating in the imaginary suggestion of a celebratory party. The other participants in this exchange, Beth and Sophie, amplify Daria’s fantasy and the group laughter at the segment’s close encapsulates entire group acquiescence.

The memory-work group participants demonstrated two primary perspectives of reality that unfolded within the narratives and discussions in the group. The first perspective was that of a cultural outsider, and the second was that of a cultural insider. This is evidenced in the speech exchange above between Daria and Beth (discussion 4.2), when they discuss the silence surrounding their families’ knowledge of their same-sex identities. Daria states that if someone from her family had implemented a discourse about her lesbian identity, then she would have had “an idea that it was okay” (move 3). This exemplifies her outsider status within a broader social group.

The knowledge of this social standing is amplified by Beth’s response implying non-acceptance by a group metaphorically represented by the term “in their eyes”. The outsider–insider delineation is clear. The projections of the concept of reality from these two perspectives form a considerable part of the material that supports the demonstration of social construction. In some instances, reality was discursively represented as mainstream society, as the insider location, and at other times reality...
was positioned as lesbian culture, in particular the culture as it was represented within the group process. When the participants produced texts that positioned themselves as insiders, and what was inside was the reality position, then they were observing reality from the inside, and the mainstream social group were the outsiders and not within the location of insider reality. Examples of this form of status reversal were frequently produced and are exemplified in this instance by the transformative move in discussion 4.2 above, when Daria declares “let’s have a party”, using the inclusive and elided “us” to implicate insiderhood, through paraphrasing a member of the newly designated outsider group, the normative mainstream.

As a result of the above excerpt, the group discussion continued on the topic of family merriment at lesbian identity when Clare announced that she knew of a family that had celebrated their daughter’s coming out as lesbian at the age of twelve. They gave her a celebratory party. This theme, of celebrations and parties, is repeated frequently, evidenced in the excerpt below, which occurred later in session 3.

Discussion 4.3 ‘Coming-Out Party’

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sophie</td>
<td>Clare knows somebody who (…) they had a coming-out party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Clare</td>
<td>A celebration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sophie</td>
<td>at the age of 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Georgie</td>
<td>Oohh! Isn’t that fantastic!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Session 3b, p7]

The discursive and cultural behaviour performed by the participants in this memory-work process confirms the idea that ‘language is a part of, as well as a result of, social process’. The social process available to them led the participants to take control / power and to create different locations of inclusion, substantiating the concept that ‘language is an integral part of the socializing process’ (Fowler & Kress 1979:189). In
discussion 4.1 above, Evie names the phenomenon of not having a language in which to speak their celebration of being lesbian. She gives it the name “guessy worlds” which in effect describes the discursive behaviour of the participants in each session. The discussions in examples 4.2 and 4.3 demonstrate the actualisation of the guessy worlds by using descriptions and words to invent or create a theme of celebration and coming-out parties thrown by parents to welcome their differences.

The discourses in these instances involve a theme of celebration for same-sex or lesbian identity which then became a reference point in a number of sequential episodes where silence and non-acknowledgement were the linguistic pattern, culminating in Evie’s interpellation of this discursive behaviour, that of the group’s pattern of converting reality into fantasy, in effect creating “guessy worlds”. The dialogic samples presented in this chapter replicate this theme, representing a consistent manner of talking and being, constituting potentially a new habitus. The repetition and thematic instances perform a tangible substitute for the domain of reality, which obviously could not meet their expressive linguistic needs.

Any concept of reality could be said to constitute who and what we are and our place in the world. It informs our version of these ideological principles. In this manner, social subjects are also discursively constructed as being culturally similar or different depending upon the considerations of gender and sexuality. ‘Discourse constitutes society and culture’ and it is conversely also ‘constituted by them’ (Fairclough & Wodak 1997:273). The concept of reality has many definitions and perspectives but there is a resolute set of meanings associated to the concept which collapses the notions of truth and normalcy into an ideological paradigm that may or may not be entirely accurate.
The perception of reality and truth / normalcy as a consistent and impermeable discursive substance can be constituted as an ideological performativity in Western society (Butler 1997a). Discourses inform the ideologies of society and culture and within these domains the concept of reality is frequently aligned with positive imagery, and social areas constituted as other to reality are negatively construed. Anything other to the concept of normalcy is constructed from the discourses that inform abnormalcy and difference. Reality and normalcy are therefore represented as one and the same domain and performative locations can be seen to represent areas of society and culture that pre-exist the subject’s insertion into the domain.

The impression created by these memory-work texts is that reality, or heterosexuality, or normativity in its contemporaneous form cannot remain a fixed concept. If the participants of this group project, in their attempts to talk about their place in the social habitus, a need to invent words or concepts to include them, then it can be seen that the nature of reality is a variable construct. That is to say, the concept of reality available to them through heterosexuality, or heteronormativity, did not meet their discursive needs, and so a different kind of reality had to be created. The construction of reality is brought about by different cultural experiences, different cultural means of measuring events, and the different discourses that inform these standards. In this way, the group’s notion of reality, and its lack or unavailability, led to the propagation of fantasy as a substitute form.

Relative to the current memory-work group, the participants viewed the idea of reality and their social location as being contingent upon the ideological constructions through which they were compelled to explore their sexuality, through the prescribed social constructions into which they were born. Another perspective of reality was
realised through the participants locating themselves as adherents to both insider and outsider realities simultaneously by synchronising their subjectivities as required. This phenomenon is exemplified by Sophie’s narrative below, where she was able to be inside the domains of same-sex desire and outside in heteronormativity proportionately and as needed. Sophie’s object of desire was maintained in silence, and yet she remained an insider of her broader social group. The participants regularly re-negotiated their desires by conducting a discursive and textual slaloming between both the normative and alternative zones, enabling substantial performativity in both realms.

**She’ll Be into Boys Soon**

Sophie’s narrative was written in response to the cue ‘first lesbian experience’ and exemplifies the concepts of knowledge and silence as definitive markers of reality.

**Narrative 4.1 ‘She’ll Be into Boys Soon’**

Sophie had a little friend. She can’t remember her name, but she can remember how she felt about her friend’s mother. Sophie was about eight at the time and she and her friend would go to her friend’s place. Sophie would sit and gaze at her friend’s mother, listening to every word, watching every movement, absorbing her smell, tingling at her occasional touch. Everyone in the neighbourhood knew about it but they just laughed, thought it was cute the way Sophie adored Barbara so much. “Sophie wants to be like Barbara,” they said to each other. “She’ll get over it soon, she’ll be into boys soon.” Sophie wonders if they’re still waiting for it to happen.

In the first discussion segment (below) from session 1, Sophie offers a perspective on reality that encapsulates the us–them binary. She has also used the metaphor of the “world” to expand her narrative’s message (see Appendix E for the complete narrative). This consists of sense descriptors, describing how she felt about those who
peopled her social world. When Sophie was “about eight”, she “would sit and gaze” at her friend’s mother, “listening to every word, watching every movement, absorbing her smell, tingling at her occasional touch”.

Sophie’s social group at that time, namely “everyone in the neighbourhood”, just “laughed” about it and “thought it was cute”. They presumed she “would get over it soon” and would “be into boys soon”. The coda or finale of Sophie’s narrative (which ends with “Sophie wonders if they’re still waiting for it to happen”) moves the memory from the past into the present. Reality was binaried in this sample because Sophie was able to enjoy her sensuous physicality in the presence of her object of same-sex desire while remembering awareness of her textual past. Sophie’s desire wasn’t acknowledged as such and in this way she was able to negotiate between her insider and outsider locations concurrently.

In the coda of She’ll Be into Boys Soon, Sophie expresses the concept that normative society (represented by the broader social group in her narrative) may still be waiting for her to drop her same-sex desire, represented by Barbara, her friend’s mother, and become interested in boys instead. Displaying knowledge of the oppositional social locations for normative desire and same-sex desire signals the transformative aspect of the memory-work process. In writing about her experiences of same-sex desire Sophie performs a disruption of heteronormative reality, because ‘[h]eterosexual desire and romance is thought to be the very core of humanity’ (Warner 1999:47). As “everybody in the neighbourhood” would confirm in Sophie’s narrative, heterosexuality is ‘the bedrock on which every other value in the world exists’ (ibid).

The excerpt below encapsulates knowledge of the distinction between the insider and outsider realms that comprise the concept of reality, as it exists within Sophie’s
remembered experience. That is, remembered knowledge of the existence of either realm, acceptable insider and unacceptable outsider, demonstrates the duality that comprised reality at that time. The description of the division, which may or may not have been abstractly known at the age of eight, is remembered as the social construction inherent in her story.

Discussion 4.4 ‘Dismissed as Cute’

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sophie</td>
<td>But if it (...) if it’d been (...) if (...) if they hadn’t dismissed it as cute, and something else, there would have been shame. But what you said (...) was basically, they (...) they didn’t see it for what it was, and (...) they, you know, kept us in (...) in their world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Daria</td>
<td>→ And made it palatable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sophie</td>
<td>→ Yeah, so (...) so, you know, so (...) that you don’t feel the shame when they do that, but if they knew the truth you would feel shame.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Public validation of Sophie’s desire was not available in her narrative where a heteronormative version of female reality was the only social construction publicly available. This involved performing cuteness and otherwise remaining silent in the face of a sentence into heteronormativity, realised in the comment that Sophie would “be into boys soon”. Silence in this construct operates as a safety valve against rejection, whether wittingly performed by Sophie at that stage, or by those around her (Coleman 1982:33). A female child is discursively and culturally gendered into a social performative from an early age, evidenced by the gender disparities that are a major occurrence in the English language (Poynton 1985). Transformation of the division that results from the gendered perspective can occur only when a thing can be spoken, when it can reside within a discursive location (Fairclough & Wodak 1997:258). That is, the spoken word creates a set of parameters that can be either
accommodated or transgressed. Sophie’s comment (above, move 1) that her same-sex sensateness was “dismissed … as cute” represents her knowledge of gender disparities, and in making this statement, transgresses the gender divide. This is further confirmed when she adds “or something else”, that is, something other than the way she perceived herself and her lesbian identity in her adoration of Barbara. The presumption of normative knowledge is evidenced in Sophie’s awareness that being “into boys” was the natural gendered expectation, minimalising her desire with same-sex identification.

Sophie engages the political field in move 1 (above) in its correlation to visibility politics. She introduces the plural and expansive “us”. They didn’t just want to keep Sophie in “their world”, they “kept us” there: “they didn’t see it for what it was, and they, you know kept us in, in their world” (session 1a, p7). ‘The plural … form displays the added complexity that the source claims to speak of and for [herself] and on behalf of someone [else]’ (Fowler & Kress 1979:201). This move not only transforms the field from personal to political through a shift in context, it also conveys an added dimension of social intimacy through the use of the inclusive ‘we’ pluralised as ‘us’. This use ‘implicates the addressee in the content of the discourse’ (ibid), at once consolidating the difference between the memory of reality and the current state of reality.

Sophie has taken an experience from the past and converted it into the present context and is able to imply her sexuality using the referent “it” that “they”, her social contemporaries at that time, “didn’t see … for what it was”. Because of this lack of visibility, her peers described within her narrative as her social group at the time constructed same-sex desire in terms of invisibility by compelling Sophie to remain “in
their world”. In this mode a personal past memory exemplifies her broader cultural context. This is an outcome of the politicisation of her narrative. By introducing the inclusive and possessive “us”, implicative of “we”, Sophie adapts what was once her personal story into the broader context of lesbian community.

Daria amplifies Sophie’s representation of reality by suggesting that same-sex desire was made “palatable” (move 2) in mainstream society by keeping it ensconced in “their world” (Sophie’s move 1). Sophie then introduces the topic of “shame” in move 3, contending that because her same-sex desire was maintained in silence by both the insiders and outsiders of her domain she managed (in the past) to avoid a sense of shame. She retrospectively states that had her desire been public knowledge rather than silent knowledge, realised in the statement “if they knew the truth”, then “you would feel shame”.

These themes, of insiderness and outsiderness constituting the domain of reality into which subjects are inserted, are confirmed in the excerpt below by Beth, who also contends that there was a sense of “not knowing” about same-sex desire or lesbian identity. There was the knowledge that it “wasn’t okay” but also the lack of knowledge about why this was the case.

**Discussion 4.5 ‘Not Knowing Why’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beth</th>
<th>In most of the stories there’s a sense of (...) uh (...) it wasn’t okay. But not knowing that it was (...) not okay. Not knowing why.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

[Session 3b, p20]

The concept of reality is implicated in the excerpt above because Beth is able to locate the difference between the public–private, insider–outsider dyads. That which wasn’t “okay” at the time of the experiences is confirmed as having been that which was not
known. The unknown in this instance implicates a lack of language through which to speak their desire or their identity, rather than not knowing what it was that they wanted.

In the following dialogic excerpt Sophie names that which can be constituted as reality and that which remains unreal.

**Discussion 4.6 ‘Having To Be Hidden’**

| Sophie          | I think (…) um (…) this whole thing of having to be hidden really affects our relationships. You know, like (…) a heterosexual couple can be natural with each other (…) and get acknowledgment for that. (…) No matter how w- well developed we are we’re still (…) looking to see if it’s safe. You know, like, we’re still monitoring the situation. We’re not reacting spontaneously. We’re still ( ) |

[Session 3b, pp20–21]

Heterosexuality is defined as “natural” because it exists in the public sphere and does not need to be hidden, as same-sex desire does. ‘Non-standard sex has none of this normative richness, this built-in sense of connection to the meaningful life, the community of the human, the future of the world. It lacks this resonance with the values of public politics, mass entertainment, and mythic narrative’ (Warner 1999:47) where resonance can be equated to inclusion. The segment above represents reality through the insider–outsider binary, and it demonstrates knowledge of difference, and is constituted as visibility politics discourse again. This is a recurring theme with most of the participants’ texts.

In the following excerpt Daria’s use of the term “natural” confirms Sophie’s definitive use of the term “natural” (above), although it is related this time to same-sex desire, where previously it was equated with heterosexual desire. This example of using the
same discourse to describe two different factions of the one binary—heterosexuality—homosexuality—suggests the cultural shift mentioned previously, where the participants reposition themselves as either insiders or outsiders depending on the context of the discourse used. In effect, Sophie ‘naturalises’ heterosexuality in her example, and Daria ‘naturalises’ homosexuality in her example.

Discussion 4.7 ‘Quite Natural for Us’

Daria  Seems that what, what (…) we were (…) we were doing was (…) was (…) quite natural for us but (…) we were being confronted with (…) with other people’s disapproval.

[Session 1a, p1]

An action or activity that has no name cannot have an ‘actor’ and therefore cannot be said to exist. The participants juggle their nominal groups (noun descriptors) as they attempt to find a discursive construction that operates toward inclusion in their texts. Struggling for self-expression is also a consistent theme throughout the narratives and dialogues. Interpellation or being hailed can only occur if a discourse exists in which to speak or name the action committed, because ‘discourse is constitutive as well as socially shaped: it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people’ (original author’s emphasis) (Fairclough & Wodak 1997:258). The participants interpellate themselves by co-opting discourse that would normally not be relegated to their cultural construction, exemplified in the multiple uses of the term “natural” in the two samples above.

The Wandering-Handed Lemon

The following segment involves an analysis of one of Evie’s narratives as well as two discussion segments that ensued from the reading of The Wandering-Handed Lemon.
It is notable that the group participants define the concept of reality indiscriminately, relating it to various taxonomies. This series of texts has been chosen to explicate the different means by which the memory-work participants deploy their depiction of discursive notions of reality as they attempt to re-evaluate their past experiences. The different configurations show constructions of inclusion through themes of commonality, interpersonal relational discourses, and demonstrations of solidarity. A lesbian-specific habitus, with cultural and language commonalities, can be verified through textual examples revealing the performance of appropriating heteronormative discourses and adapting them to express the participants’ experiences of lesbian identity and desire.

Evie’s narrative below presented an interesting group dynamic in that some of the memory-work participants did not approve of the events in *The Wandering-Handed Lemon* that led her to distinguish between the interpellative domains of “lemon” and “lesbian”. However, Evie maintained her right to both self-interpretation as a “lemon” and also to include herself as a “lesbian”, without having had to suffer the social disparagement with which Donna, “the real lesbian” at her school, had had to contend. However, the challenge, through the memory-work process, to Evie’s self-inclusion while excluding Donna, is withdrawn on the two occasions that it arises. This is because Evie takes offence at the challenges, and the directors of this action, Sophie and Daria, withdraw. How this transpires, and the reasons behind this dynamic can be explained as adherence to solidarity within the group being considered more important at that time than completing the challenge.

The point of departure for Evie’s narrative below is the statement “Evie liked Rosa”. This sentence is followed by evocative descriptions of Rosa. As the orientation
of the narrative, it enables the reader to get a sense of active engagement with the two main characters of the story. Evie is the active narrating participant who inscribes her sensuality into the text and also describes the enjoyment of her sensuality. There is not the sense of the “hidden desire” described by Sophie above but Evie’s narrative also cannot claim to represent either heterosexual or homosexual “natural” desire. Evie’s self-construction as a “lemon” exists as its own development of reality.

**Narrative 4.2 ‘Wandering-Handed Lemon’**

Evie liked Rosa. She was plump, brown-skinned, and had long black hair. She was from the Pacific Islands. Evie used to like touching Rosa—could have been on the waist walking in the hall, on the leg sitting in class was a good one, got a good reaction and entertained herself during boring classes—any other part of the body she could get away with in public. Evie was called ‘Wandering Hands’ by Rosa and her friends and they began calling her a ‘lemon’. Evie thought this was funny really, cause she didn’t think she was a lemon, wasn’t even entirely sure what it was, and really and truly, because Evie didn’t take it seriously, neither did anyone else. It was pretty light-hearted, and the most excellent thing about that light-heartedness was that Evie could keep touching Rosa. Other girls told her about Donna—who was known to be a lesbian at school, the only (other) one known of. Evie looked at her a lot after that, to try and understand about lesbians, but she never went near her, and never ever talked to her—she was too foreign and too different. She was the dark side, scary, off limits, out of bounds. But it was kinda interesting to know she was there. As long as Evie wasn’t one of her, or like her (in appearance etc), or talked to her, she remained the wandering-handed lemon, who was not a lesbian, completely accepted by her friends.

The text is sensualised from the orientation (Labov & Waletsky 1967) by Evie’s use of the verb “liked”, which is contextualised by descriptions of Rosa’s physical appearance, all of which thematically places the narrative within the romance genre.
The term “liked”, while preparing the theme, also understates the desire that becomes explicit in the course of events. The descriptive devices used to locate Rosa as Evie’s object of desire are focused on body parts. For example, Rosa is described as being “plump, brown-skinned” with “long black hair”. The cultural value of this imagery is only enhanced by their concurrence with the fourth sentence, which states that “Evie used to like touching Rosa”. The use of the verbal group “used to like touching” elevates the original verb “liked” in the first sentence, and the text in between, to a discourse of sensuality. (Evie’s writing contains an interspersing of past and present tenses, but this does not impede the flow of the narrative.)

The statement that “Evie used to like touching Rosa” has many levels of significance within this narrative structure. Evie goes on to describe how she used to like to touch Rosa as a means of entertaining herself, “during boring classes” and for getting “a good reaction” from Rosa. Evie would touch Rosa, for example, “on the waist”, “on the leg” and “any other part of the body she could get away with”. Evie’s action of touching Rosa further sensualises the text. This comment operates as a textual shift because the tone of the narrative changes at that juncture. The narrative develops cultural value at this point because the story has become sensualised with same-sex sensateness, and would be culturally comprehended by members of the same habitus. The text is definitively lesbian-specific in that its context is inherently inclusive in its production of same-sex desire.

The primary theme of the text is romance but it changes after the statement that “it was pretty light-hearted really”, when a secondary thematic is introduced. The declaration that “Other girls told her about Donna” who was the “only (other) known of” lesbian at school shifts the theme of the narrative. The implication from this point
on is that there are two different constructions of female same-sex desire within the text, and one of them is called “a lemon” who succeeds within the heteronormative habitus, and the other is called “a lesbian” who, according to this story, does not succeed in heteronormative society. Evie, “the lemon”, is depicted as socially acceptable, and Donna, “the lesbian”, is depicted as socially abject. Donna is described pejoratively, for example, as “too foreign and too different” and “she was the dark side, scary, off limits, out of bounds”, although these kinds of descriptors can also designate the genre of the ‘forbidden fruit’ aspect of desire. Because while Evie “never went near her, and never ever talked to her” there is an element of suspense that is only resolved when Evie states that it was “kinda interesting” that Donna was there. Evie, as “the lemon”, negotiates her way around the realms of heterosexuality and homosexuality by including herself in both realms because she can continue to touch Rosa, and she can also keep an eye on Donna.

To this point Evie’s narrative has opened the textual arena into multiple and diverse fields of sensuality and marginalised politics, realised as visibility politics. Because the idea of the public–private binary is experientially significant, it marks the beginning of another level of understanding within the narrative. Evie’s text is structurally similar to the previous two narratives presented in chapter 3 (Not an Ordinary Girl and The Buxom Nun) in that it contains a narrative within a narrative. Evie, as the author of this narrative, transforms the field from that of sensuousness, or same-sex desire, into that of politics. In the remainder of the narrative her desire for Rosa is only referred to in the context of the new political theme. She has interrupted her same-sex desire with visibility politics. The textual effect is that of a narrative within a narrative, a romance with political undertones, with dual beginnings, complications, and subsequently dual endings.
This narrative, with its dual representations in the areas of genre (romance and politics) and narrative structure (two stories within one text), and its introduction of the public–private binary (lemon/lesbian), also introduces the reader to a variety of interpellations with both negative and positive connotations. The name-calling that was directed at Evie by “the other girls”, including Rosa, also realises a departure into visibility politics. Evie states that Rosa and other friends called her “Wandering Hands” and that “they began calling her a lemon”. The reader/listener is discursively relocated into a political field through these lexical devices. The multiply sited duality inherent in the text directs the reader’s attention into visibility politics on many levels, so that non-recognition of that specific field-context is impossible.

The concept of a public gaze, which includes the reader of Evie’s narrative and also the reader of this research, is established through the convergence of the term “public” and the naming or hailing of Evie in her aspect of same-sex desire. She is interpellated twice, in the first instance as a lemon and then through self-interpellation by producing the narrative in the context of the public, represented by the memory-work group. There are also dual concepts about consequences in terms of this dissertation. Performatively, the interpellation of Evie through the use of these names could be examples of Butler’s ‘injurious address’, where such injury ‘may appear to fix or paralyse the one it hails’ (Butler 1997a:2). These interpretations are an example of abjectification, although Evie didn’t take the name calling seriously. Her remembrance from the past event is that she “didn’t think she was a lemon” and also that she “wasn’t entirely sure what it was” (Evie was 12 at the time of this incident).

However, Evie’s choice to make public the memory of this incident demonstrates a different attitude to that of ‘injurious address’. She presents the metaphorical “lemon”
as the story’s hero (Miller 1994), who is not only positioned as socially acceptable but who also makes certain that her subjectivity is normalised. Evie didn’t “take it seriously” and “neither did anyone else” which kept the entire event “pretty light-hearted” and ensured Evie a firm position within the realm of social or peer acceptability. The consequence of adopting the light-hearted hero’s role keeps the incident within the boundaries of conscious acceptability and this is evidenced by the actuality that Evie did not experience the interpellations negatively in her memory of the event. Her statement that “Evie thought this was funny really” negates the abjection inherent in performing same-sex identity in a public location.

Butler also contends that the injurious address ‘may also produce an unexpected and enabling response’ (Butler 1997a:2) which would, at first, appear to be the case here. Evie’s response to the interpellation ‘lemon’ would imply that ‘the offensive call runs the risk of inaugurating a subject in speech’ (ibid). This unexpected aspect is provided by Evie’s memory of her own interpellative experiences. As well as being amused by the name-calling she contends that she was not aware of the ramifications of same-sex identity and sensuality. In this manner Evie has successfully negotiated her way through the potential abjection. Instead, Evie manages ‘to use language to counter the offensive call’ (ibid) through the discursive and linguistic choices deployed in her narrative.

In its broader socio-cultural context, Evie was publicly interpellated through the recollection of the remembered incident from the past, and evokes this experience within the memory-work group. This implicates the concept of performativity in that Evie wanted to objectify her desire and in order to achieve that she became that which she was interpellated. Evie performed her desire, incorporated the interpellations into
her contextual repertoire, and basically got what she wanted. Which was to “keep touching Rosa”, described as “the most excellent thing” (from the narrative), justifying the effect of ‘an unexpected and enabling response’ (ibid). The context of interpellation is the more remarkable from the perspective of the present context of Evie’s participation in a memory-work group. This is an entirely different kind of public to gaze upon her remembered desire for Rosa and with a dissimilar perspective.

The introduction of Donna as the secondary hero further complicates the narrative on two counts. First of all, it institutes a new complication into the narrative of lesbian desire or romance, designated through the lemon’s confusion around her identity caused by Donna’s presence as an out lesbian. Secondly, it confounds the participants in the memory-work group who are the narrative’s immediate public. Donna, “the lesbian”, interrupts Evie’s “light-hearted” and public acceptability and Evie, as a “lemon”, confounds some of the participants of the memory-work group. The detail in the narrative about the “other girls” telling Evie about Donna the lesbian demonstrates a reversal of reality as well. They are only known as “other” girls, representative of heterosexuality because “they” interpellate both Evie and Donna. Evie’s lexical choice in describing this group as “other” is significant because that discourse is usually reserved for the alternative component of the heterosexual–homosexual binary. “They” remain anonymous as outsiders while the three main characters—Evie, Rosa, and Donna—all of whom express same-sex desire or identity in the narrative, are named and public and are the insiders in this context. The heteronormative characters remain un-named, and virtually invisible in a reversal of the reality-insider polarity.
Donna is interpellated within the exotic genre as “a lesbian” by the outsider “other girls”, by Evie, and by the shared experience of presenting this narrative in its comprehensible aspect, within the memory-work group. While the presence of Donna the lesbian is negated as “too foreign and too different” she is also represented as an element of excitement and exoticism. Evie had found a social position where she felt “completely accepted by her friends” (final sentence) while at the same time she “looked at [Donna] a lot” and found it “kinda interesting to know that she was there”.

*The Wandering-Handed Lemon* narrative was chosen to demonstrate the different means through which its narrator, Evie, was able to manoeuvre her way through the dichotomous social habituses of her memory. The polarised locations of the reality–fantasy binary were represented on the one hand by heterosexuality as the naturalised and unremarked domain of normalcy, denoting and informing the social construction of reality. The opposite polarity was represented by Donna as the only out lesbian, apart from Evie, the lemon, both different in relationship to the representation of reality. As will be seen from the excerpt below, Donna is represented as “the real thing”. This is an example of where the reality-fantasy dichotomy is reversed. Evie is represented as a “funny” (alternative) girl who is called a “lemon” by her normative peers. However, Evie considers herself to be “normal” when compared to the out lesbian Donna. Evie projects the element of fantasy onto Donna because she secretly watches her, fascinated, but will not publicly align with the out lesbian. The out lesbian Donna, therefore, remains a fantasy, a state to be desired but not attained. The anomalies written into the text have left gaps in the socialisation process through which Evie was able to negotiate her own self-construction. This action demonstrates Evie’s position of power in a supposedly marginal social location.
In the following excerpt taken from the discussion following the reading of Evie’s narrative, it becomes apparent that some of the participants were not impressed by her means of self-construction in the production of her own inclusion in the dual realms of the heteronormative and alternative dichotomy. Sophie and Daria challenge Evie over constituting herself as a lesbian while failing to align herself with Donna, the out lesbian. However, it will be seen that the current reality of the memory-work group process prevailed, with solidarity being the principal social objective, and the production of inclusion being further realised through the increasing interpersonal closeness that developed as a consequence of the disagreement.

**Discussion 4.8 ‘The Real Thing’**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Evie</td>
<td>Well (…) the only reason that this was okay (…) at school was (…) because it wasn’t (…) real, it wasn’t ( ). The real thing was (…) not okay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Daria</td>
<td>Mmm. That other young girl was the real thing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Evie</td>
<td>Mmmm, mmmm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Daria</td>
<td>Because she had the real label.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Evie</td>
<td>Mmm. She was not okay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Beth</td>
<td>At what point were you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Evie</td>
<td>→ Twelve-ish.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Daria</td>
<td>She was twelve-ish.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Beth</td>
<td>And at that point did you have awareness? That you were like this girl? Or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Evie</td>
<td>Well, I was just at, um (…) looking and wondering and thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Beth</td>
<td>→ Yeah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Evie</td>
<td>→ But really, I didn’t (…) think, I thought, ‘it’s not really me’. But I could see how it was kind of connected to (…) touching girls. But it kind of wasn’t me. I didn’t care. I just knew what I enjoyed. Touching.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13. Beth  (laughter) Yeah. Hmm.
14. Sophie  You didn’t want (…) all the negativity with it then.
15. Evie  No (…) no. Didn’t want all that heavy stuff.
16. Daria  Did you (…) did you […] perceive it as being negative?
17. Evie  I knew Donna the other girl was.
18. Beth  Oh, okay.
19. Evie  ( ) the dark side of the ‘off limits’ experience. Never talked to her (…) just (…) just looked and wondered. But to be (…) kind of step over to her would have been (…) being it and being her and that would have been a very (…) different (…) story.
20. Daria  Mmm. But there was an awareness (…) that, that didn’t, that’s not what (…) you weren’t gonna go there
21. Evie  → Mmm
22. Daria  → that way. But it was okay to be a lemon. There’s like a humour
24. Clare  It’s actually very funny (laughs).
25. Beth  Hmm.
26. Evie  I mean, it was a really (…) something really positive about that experience. I enjoyed it a lot, man. That I got away with it was (…) amazing …
27. Anon  … Hmm …
28. Evie  … and fantastic for me at the time ( ).
29. Anon  Hmm.
30. Daria  I’m pretty sure ( )

[Session 1a, pp2–4]

Move 1 signifies the theme for this excerpt. Evie acknowledges that “the only reason” that same-sex desire was “okay at school” was because “it wasn’t real” and that the
“real thing was not okay”. Evie is talking about the incident from the narrative *The Wandering-Handed Lemon*, where she was out at school as a lemon, but not as “the real thing”, as a lesbian. After the first move an interchange takes place between Daria and Evie (between moves 2 to 5) where Daria recapitulates that Donna “was the real thing” and further that “she had the real label”. These comments are met with noncommittal paralinguistic responses from Evie, and a reiteration from her that Donna, as a representation of “the real thing” “was not okay”.

The following exchange between moves 6 and 12 sees Beth’s comments attempt to elucidate whether Evie was aware “that [she was] like this girl” and at “what point” had this awareness occurred. Both Evie and Daria have already stated Evie’s age (12 years) which is significant in that it locates Evie at an age where exploration into sexuality is potential in any direction, rather than an established construction (Cass 1996:232; Downey & Friedman 1996:476; Baker 2002:40). The fact that Daria repeats Evie’s age and even uses her language (“she was twelve-ish”: move 8) indicates to the group that age needs to be considered in this situation. Evie confirms the explorative nature of the event (moves 10 to 12) when she contends that “I was just looking and wondering and thinking” followed by comments that show her confusion or ambiguity about her sexuality. Evie agrees that there was a degree of awareness but that “it kind of wasn’t [her]” and that all she knew was “what [she] enjoyed” which was “touching”.

Sophie’s declarative in move 14 is disguised as a question but contends that Evie “didn’t want all the negativity with it then”. This comment seems to relate back to the narrative where references to Donna, the lesbian, were contextualised abjectly, that is, as a person to be avoided, yet watched. Sophie’s statement could be distinguished as a
challenge, which Evie clearly negates in move 13 when she says “no” and justifies her attitude by declaring that she “didn’t want all that heavy stuff”. In her next move (16) Daria reconstitutes Sophie’s statement into a question, asking whether Evie had perceived Donna, the lesbian, “as being negative?” This is met with an affirmative response from Evie.

Evie’s attitude is further justified (move 19) when she describes her reasons for avoiding Donna, the lesbian, with the assertion that “to step over to her … would have been a very different story”. Research demonstrates that children are aware of attitudes toward ‘difference’ within their habituses without necessarily being able to identify it as such and are certainly unaware of the meaning of sexuality and identity in abstract thought processes (Baker 2002:38–40). Sophie’s challenge would be located in the current context of the memory-work group, that the avoidance of Donna was homophobic. However, Evie was still located in the contextual past in the production of the narrative and also within the discussion referring to her story. Evie’s only response to Sophie’s challenge was to negate it. Daria’s reiteration of Evie’s age (move 8) and her reframed question in move 16 were both discursive conduits that would bring the context into the present, from the past. These were not taken up by Evie, who maintained the construction of pleasure and enjoyment, rather than abjection and homophobia, of the childhood event.

The discourse shifts in move 20 when Daria declares that “it was okay to be a lemon”, effectively releasing Evie from pursuing the theme of Donna’s pejoration, and Evie responds (move 23) with an affirmative “yeah”. From this point the theme of the conversation becomes “light-hearted” again as Beth, Clare, and Evie pursue the positivity of Evie’s lemon-ness. The speech exchange above closes on Evie’s
declarative in move 28 that it was “fantastic for me at the time”, followed by Daria’s response of “I’m pretty sure” (move 30).

**From Disagreement to Solidarity**

In the following session Evie returned to this topic and restated her feelings on her subjective location at the time of the incident, that she had found a way to safely explore her sexuality during her early school years as a “wandering-handed lemon”, achieving the objective of same-sex desire and sensuality without entering the domain inhabited by “the real thing”, which would include attitudes of real-world homophobia.

**Discussion 4.9 ‘My Friends Didn’t Hate Me’**

| Evie | I didn’t expect to get away with it. I thought at the first (…) I don’t remember the first time I tried or whatever, but I expected that (…) to be not okay. And so the fact that it was okay was just brilliant but I didn’t expect it (…) you know, beyond that, that I would I would get (…) a response like that. I don’t even know if I would’ve really wanted it or was ready for it. I wasn’t conscious enough for (…) I wasn’t aware (…) at 12, I was not aware. (…) I wouldn’t have said that I was kind of behind a (…) or doing something (…) behind a veil or something ’cause that, that’s all I did know about. My friends knew about me but didn’t hate me. |

Evie’s speech above does convey the thematic content of her narrative and discussions from the previous week into the present moment. She introduces the contention (made also by Daria in the previous session) that she was too young at twelve to be certain about her sexuality (“I wasn’t aware at 12”), but that she was able to explore the beginnings of it in a way that was socially acceptable within the
normative confines of the habitus of her past. Evie contextualises her subjectivity within the themes she presented in the previous week’s narrative and discussion by allowing that while there was a degree of awareness (“I didn’t expect to get away with it”) about her sexuality, there was certainly a level of knowledge that informed her that it could potentially be a problem (“I expected that to be not okay”).

What is significant in this excerpt is the final statement that “My friends knew about me but didn’t hate me”. This sentence relocates the focus into the past again, and it correlates with the final statement of Evie’s narrative: “she remained the wandering-handed lemon, who was not a lesbian, completely accepted by her friends.” Evie’s assertion that she was “completely accepted” is belied by her stated fear of homophobic repercussions (“didn’t want all that heavy stuff”, discussion 4.8, move 15) and other thematically similar comments. This kind of dichotomous emotionally themed social construction demonstrates the ‘divisions of subjectivity’ (Kulick & Schieffelin 2004: 351) that a young female with same-sex desire had to contend with, even within the domain of her pleasure. The ultimate ‘affect’ of ‘desire and fear’ (ibid) personified by the two thematically homophobic codas (Evie’s narrative, and discussion 4.9) represent both the past and the present.

The memory-work group appears divided into those supporting the “fantastic for me at the time” (Evie, discussion 4.8, move 23) theme, and those contending the importance of the negatively constructed lesbian subject, Donna. The patterns of commonality in this segment point to this minor but definite division in the group regarding political vs. personal subjectivities. The two older members of the group, Sophie and Daria, were inclined toward the political realm and Evie, an approximate decade younger, stood her ground on personal priorities succeeding over polemics.
The other younger participants, Clare and Beth, expressed few opinions other than acquiescence with the affirmative “yeah” or a paralinguistic “hmm” until the last few moves, when they were all released from the political theme by Daria’s statement (move 22) “But it was okay to be a lemon”. They subsequently collaborated with Evie about the enjoyment factor of her very public same-sex sensuality.

The consequences of Evie’s ambiguity were that she was able to negotiate her way between a few different states of reality—the heteronormative positioning of reality meant that she could be accepted and feel a sense of belonging with other mainstream girls as well as, and especially, the object of her desire, Rosa. ‘Like most stigmatized groups, gays and lesbians were always tempted to believe that the way to overcome stigma was to win acceptance by the dominant culture, rather than to change the self-understanding of that culture’ (Warner 1999:50). Evie had won acceptance, with the condition that she remain within the boundaries of what was considered “okay” and not cross over the boundary into the “not okay” side, which was where the unacceptable lesbian Donna was located.

One of the patterns of commonality demonstrated in the excerpt *The Real Thing* (discussion 4.8) was that the oppositional social positions of the memory-work participants were contingent upon the participants’ age differences. Political feminism would have been a major social factor in the lives of the older women Sophie, Daria and Georgie, and more internalised yet not overtly politically proclaimed by the younger members Evie, Clare and Beth, which division is endemic in modern social semiotics (Luzzato & Gvion 2007).

However, the greater significance resulting from the memory-work process regarding *The Wandering-Handed Lemon* narrative and its adjunctive discussions is that the
older group members, Sophie and Daria, ceased their challenges after only one or two comments. They did not, either, join in the group of moves toward the end of discussion 4.8 which expressed delight with Evie’s “fantastic” lemon-ness at school. The actuality of not pursuing their challenge or making further comment demonstrates a greater desire for commonality than that which was merely spoken. Daria’s and Sophie’s position of agreement through withdrawal of their challenges allocates a stronger power position to Evie and the other younger group members. Their silence in lieu of a challenge could perceivably demonstrate a greater desire for commonality elevated beyond the differences of personal opinion, thus producing a component of inclusion. Daria and Sophie’s withdrawal of their challenges is an indication that solidarity had taken precedence, demonstrated in this instance as diplomacy, in the face of opposition or difference. What has gone unremarked by any of the group members is that the younger participants had demonstrated the production of a different kind of politics, a queering of subjectivities that goes hand in hand with doing it in ‘public spaces’ (Dilley 1999:467) where the experiential ‘it’ denotes the quality of being out and open about same-sex desire.

In summary of the section above depicting the domain of reality as a social construction, it has been demonstrated that the memory-work participants perceived their concepts of reality both within, and outside of, mainstream heteronormative social practices. The participants’ understanding of the concept of reality was explicated in the presentation the narratives She’ll Be into Boys Soon and The Wandering-Handed Lemon, as well as through the group discussions that followed both readings. A cultural habitus has formed within the current group and this was evidenced through the action of the group participants preferring social cohesion over the opposing construct of prevailing in their differences. Commonality was
demonstrated through solidarity taking precedence over politics, indicating the practice of inclusion through cultural mores and the inherent discourses realised as shared experiences. In the following section the concept of fantasy as the dichotomous opposite of reality is explored.

**Fantasy as a Deconstructive Device in the Production of Inclusion**

The objective in this section is to demonstrate the existence of lesbian cultural humour as an indicator of the occurrence of lesbian-specific language, and that the social construction of inclusion can be realised through its usage. Discursive inclusion is demonstrated in the textual samples generated by the memory-work group process. The textual examples present frequent incursions into fantasy that produces individual and group laughter in the spoken segments, and evidenced a form of shared knowledge in both written and spoken texts. Group cohesion appears to revolve around the experience of transforming traumatic or painful themes into fantasy and humour. One of the aims of this chapter is to determine if and how the memory-work participants use fantasy and humour to deconstruct the prescribed concepts of reality, and also why they perform this discursive action. These linguistic devices are considered ‘an active, narrative means of self-construction … that help lesbians negotiate their positions both inside and outside mainstream culture’ (Bing & Heller 2003:157). It seems conclusive that fantasy and humour would produce social inclusion, and the objective is to discover the lesbian specificity of this linguistic phenomenon.

The narratives selected for presentation in this section are those that generate the greatest degree of humour in the discussions that followed their reading, although there are many examples of humorous and fantasy-driven speech episodes that
develop tangentially to the readings. I have used a variety of these excerpts to demonstrate different aspects of fantasy, as well as humour and laughter, as markers of inclusion. In the first collection of textual examples I utilise a narrative called *Sit with Me*, written by Daria. The context is another schoolroom scene. The narrative itself is not humorous, but it incites a barrage of fantasy that is constructed as satirical humour, and that generates a significant degree of laughter throughout, including from Daria herself, who joins in the deconstructive exercise. Two discussion excerpts have been selected to demonstrate the social construction of fantasy. The deconstruction and ultimate reconstruction of the discourses constitute ‘a piece of new reality’ (Wright 1998:85) which occurs as the fantasies generate ‘new’ patterns of language use. Discussion of Daria’s narrative is preceded by a cluster of brief examples to explicate the impact of fantasy, humour, and laughter on the social construction of inclusion within the memory-work process.

Before commencing the analysis of the narratives and dialogues, an overview of humour will be provided. This is to familiarise the reader with the contextual use of the cultural and discursive determinants to the texts’ assessments. For example, Berger contends that there are forty-five classifiable ‘elements’ of humour that are further organised under four ‘categories’ that ‘generate mirthful laughter’ (Berger 2006:127). He further suggests that these techniques are historically based and universal and that everyone is affected ‘in the hooked up global village’ (ibid:126) known as the world. The two methods identified by Berger that are applicable to this thesis are ‘identity humor’ and ‘logic humor’. Identity humour is ‘existential and deals with problems … with our identities’ and logic humour involves ‘ideas and the problems [faced] in making sense of the world’ (ibid:127). Berger’s taxonomy of
humour-classifying elements will be utilised in this chapter to explain different types and systems of humour presented by the memory-work group’s texts.

One of the effects of cultural humour is its impact on group cohesion. In the episodes of discursive fantasy presented below it can be seen by the interactive linguistic behaviour of the participants that the degree of social closeness increases, realised by the pattern of interruptions, elision (a form of speaking in shorthand) and talking over one another. There is also a recognisable pattern, generated by the outcome of these linguistic devices, of a process of building on one another’s comments and topics, constructing a cohesive group utterance as one virtual voice, further consolidating the aspect of social closeness. These processes are ‘culturally and linguistically complex and sophisticated’ (Bell 2007a:27), displaying as they do discourses based on similarities as well as differences.

**Culturally Specific Humour**

The memory-work participants produce humour that is culturally specific, demonstrated in the cluster of dialogic examples presented below as well as the excerpts produced from the reading of *Go, Granny*, written by Evie. Mainstream culture may not necessarily understand the jokes and puns that are mostly satirical in nature, even though much of the humour is directed against heteronormativity, positioning it as *other* in an act of inverting established social constructs. The lesbian-specific brand of humour did not need the targets of this satire to be present because it was sufficient to have a lesbian audience who would comprehend it as a missive, and who would comprehend existence designated discursive target. There is often a *gap* between the way humour is presented and how it is perceived or received (Bell 2007b:367). The gap between the projection and reception of humour did not apply to
the current memory-work participants because they understood the nuances and subtleties of their own and one another’s production, and the target group would be unlikely to wittingly receive the satire.

An example of culturally specific humour is in the following excerpt. Daria is recalling an incident from her past where she had been told that babies/children who “didn’t get enough breast milk” would become lesbians. This was a brief interlude in session 4, unrelated to any narrative, by which stage interrelatedness was very close, the conversations were relaxed, and humour was rife. This spoken narrative was not told in relation to a cue but was an episode of the kind of comedic spontaneity that had become a common occurrence by this stage of the memory-work process.

Discussion 4.10 ‘Freud and Breast Milk’ (a)

1. Daria
   She was a- heading to be a psy- a clinical psychologist and (...) everybody knew that if you were a dyke you didn’t get enough breast milk
   → (group laughter)

2. Daria
   → when you were a child, baby, and Freud said that, I mean this was (...) quoted to me in- in my [work].
   (group laughter)

3. Evie
   Maybe it wasn’t the milk  ↙ maybe it was the sucking!

4. Georgie
   ↓ But how did Freud know that?
   ↓ (group laughter)

5. Sophie
   ↙ Maybe it was the what?
   ↓ (group laughter)

6. Sophie
   ↙ The sucking?
   ↓ (group laughter)

[Session 4a, p5]
The segment above is culturally specific because it names the culture in move 1 with Daria’s use of the term “dyke”. The theme and trigger for this collaborative episode of humour is based on a Freudian myth about a lack of breast milk causing lesbianism. This could have cross-cultural overtones, as an archaic myth attributed to Freud, although there would be gaps if there were even the slightest chance that this absurd notion were going to be believed. The group found it to be very funny, evidenced by the group laughter that occurred between moves 1 and 2, and again after move 2. The greatest hilarity occurs when Evie sexualises the text by using the word “sucking” in a context which not only satirises the alleged Freudian myth, suggesting that “maybe it wasn’t the milk, maybe it was the sucking”, but also sexualises the text with that blatant term. There is a pause between this comment and the next bout of group laughter that is filled with Georgie’s question (move 4), still acting as a challenge to the Freudian myth, but in a more sober tone. Then it seems as if Sophie has just realised what Evie has said, and echoes her statement but with greater emphasis. Group laughter continues from move 3 until after move 6. The convention ‘[ ]’ denotes that group laughter occurred concurrent to the reiterations of the statements about “sucking”.

This type of humour could be cross-culturally enjoyed, perhaps even understood in its hilarious and/or sexualised context, but the focus is still lesbian specific. A discourse with or without humour on the causes of heterosexuality would probably not be a common occurrence in either camp, although the idea is raised in Daria’s final statement on that theme, recorded below. In this move, Daria continues the Freudian theme but introduces a new discourse, that of the potential for heterosexuality to be socially constructed.
**Discussion 4.11 ‘Freud and Breast Milk’ (b)**

| Daria | Yeah, yeah, I’ve been - I think I was hanging off my mother’s tits until I was 18 months, like, I should be so heterosexual! |

Therefore the idea of cross-cultural humour between heterosexuality and homosexuality (Bell 2007a; Croteau & Hoynes 2003) applies to the use of heterocentrism as a basis for satire and irony. This humour principle is well understood by the memory-work participants, as they appear unified in their collaboration and reconstruction of the texts in discussions 4.10 and 4.11 above, verified by their continuous group laughter, and also by the continuation of the theme through several moves.

Another example of culturally specific humour deals with the specifics of being out in public settings and the locations where this would be possible.

**Discussion 4.12 ‘Holding Hands in San Francisco’**

| 1. Georgie | Because you wouldn’t be able to walk down the street with your girlfriend and hold hands, you know, sort of thing. |
| 2. Sophie | But you might go to San Francisco. (laughs) |

The excerpt above is culturally specific because not being able to walk down the street holding hands as a same-sex couple might not be a well-known component of heterocentric knowledge, although the knowledge of San Francisco being the Gay Capital of the world may well be known across both cultures. The joke about going to San Francisco is that Georgie would need to go there if she wanted to hold hands with her girlfriend. All the participants in the group would automatically understand this same-sex-desire-specific discourse because of the inherent knowledge that same-sex
hand-holding is not always a safe activity, or that it is a social action that one would have to consider before doing it. Heterocentric culture may not be aware of the amount of consideration that needs to go into this simple act on most occasions. The humour lies in the fact of the knowledge rather than the action.

_Sit with Me_

The production of cross-cultural humour is further exemplified in Daria’s narrative below, _Sit with Me_, particularly when viewed in the context of the dialogues that follow the reading of her story. Bell’s (2007a) theory of complexity in humour is particularly applicable in instances where humour appears incongruent given the thematic choices provided. For instance, the remembrance of painful experiences was frequently taken up and converted into a humorous topic. This has elements of a distancing device syndrome, but it also exemplifies a politicising of the text, involving systems of deconstruction and reconstruction. Daria’s narrative presents a scene of remembered rejection and public humiliation. The incident in question is attributed to an incident of rejection from the past, and the experience of public humiliation which has continued into the present through the memory-work process. The group participants take the experience and convert these themes into success and the reclamation of power, particularly the latter. This action is performed through turning the tables on heteronormativity, represented by Rita, one of the characters in the narrative.

_Narrative 4.3 ‘Sit with Me’_

| It was [year 10]. Daria walked into the classroom and headed for her usual desk where she and Jenny always sat together in the front row. But Jenny was sitting in the seat behind with Rita. Rita was the number one femme fatale in the class because she had a boyfriend and [did] her hair during every recess and every lunchtime. Daria was devastated and had to sit alone in the front row all by herself. Everyone would know |
that Jenny liked Rita more than her. She tried to join in with the two behind her so they wouldn’t know how she felt. Jenny said something like: “It’s just this once.” Daria cried about it after she got home.

Daria’s story is of the typical traditional ‘love triangle’ genre, or tragi-drama because of its unhappy ending. Her best friend Jenny sits with Rita at school in an episode that occurred during mid-adolescence. Jenny is Daria’s girlfriend, and they had been practising kissing for many years, from childhood to adolescence. It was revealed in another memory-work discussion that Jenny and Daria had grown apart in late adolescence (at 17) and that while Daria had grown into her lesbian identity, Jenny had grown into her heterosexual identity. Daria’s narrative demonstrates the duality that was required to exist as a lesbian subject in a normative habitus. Daria performed her corner of the friendship triangle in public, but cried “after she got home”.

Daria confirms the painful aspect of this experience with her comments that “she tried to fit in” so that the public “wouldn’t know how she felt”, the public being the classroom where the incident was located. This follows her previous declaration that “everyone would know”. The sense of shame and embarrassment is also embedded in the unstructured dichotomy of private and public expression, which is confirmed by the coda, where Daria goes “home” to cry, a private location. It had been important to put on a public face, associated with the heavily western cultural ‘notion that it is better to be cheerful and put on a happy face than to tell everyone about your troubles’ (Berger 2006:126). Daria faced her shame, performing one aspect in a public setting (fitting in) and another aspect in a private setting (crying), one of the side effects of the socially constructed habitus in which she was residing. Daria negotiated her inclusion through performing the two individuated roles, as outsider to the former,
and insider to the latter. These performances disguised Daria’s true emotions in both domains, and also disguised the object of her desire, that of sitting together with Jenny, her girlfriend.

The group’s responses, covered in discussions 4.13 (*Voodoo Doll*) and 4.14 (*My Girl*), tended to immediately ignore the painful aspect of the narrative, which was in effect a representation of ‘gelotophobia’, which has been defined as ‘the pathological fear of appearing to social partners as a ridiculous object’ (Ruch & Proyer 2008:47). Daria confirmed in the statement “everyone would know that Jenny liked Rita better than her” the public shaming she experienced. Daria effectively experienced gelotophobia twice. The first time was through the abject experience at school, and the second time would be in the disclosure of the abjection in public, to the memory-work group, reliving the experience of shame twice. This point is significant, given the group proceedings from this stage.

The memory-work group overturned the social order of the day and fought back on Daria’s behalf. This action included Daria herself, as a member of the group, so that she was also pivotal in reconstruction her past into a powerful experience, in lieu of a shame-filled experience. The participants reclaimed the territory from heteronormativity to same-sex desire, represented by the seating locations of the students of the story. Their actions provide Daria’s narrative with a different resolution, and a significantly different coda. This discursive gesture operates productively on many levels, not least being the reparative aspect. Reparation occurs through the renewal and replacement of the major components of the story. How this occurs is that the ending, that is, textual reparation, becomes a happy one, and yet the contextual ending, although humorous, is ‘grotesque’, to borrow Baudelaire’s term.
(1955:24). The demonstration of the way humour operates as reparation in this instance is supported by the intermittent laughter that acts as a propellant into joyous absurdity.

In the following brief excerpt, Daria talks about her narrative and Sophie and Georgie respond with unusual ‘condolences’. This dialogic sample, Voodoo Doll, is the precursor to the following sample My Girl, depicting humour and laughter. It is used here to show / plot the trajectory from tragedy (as represented by Daria’s abjection) to hilarity, instigated by the group and then taken up by Daria.

**Discussion 4.13 ‘Voodoo Doll’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Move</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Daria</td>
<td>That was the most horrible thing that (...) in my (...) in terms of my love life, you know (...) the most horrible thing that happened.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Anon</td>
<td>Hmmmm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Sophie</td>
<td>(laughs) That bitch!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Georgie</td>
<td>Yay! A little voodoo doll with big teeth here!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Daria describes the incident as “the most horrible thing” or experience that had happened “in terms of [her] love life” (move 1). Jenny had dropped her in favour of Rita, the “femme-fatale” of the narrative. In move 3 Sophie laughs and then utters an expletive—‘That bitch!’—and Georgie follows Sophie’s lead with a derogatory comment about a “voodoo doll with big teeth” (move 3) that seems incomprehensible but can be contextualised as discursive support for Daria. The use of the term “voodoo doll” provides the context of a psychic attack, and the imagery of “big teeth” continues that sense of jocular aggression.
The humorous context of this segment is clear, particularly as it is preceded by Georgie making the expressive “Yay!” paralinguistic act as an amplification of Sophie’s pejoration realised in her statement “That bitch!” The participants appear to be ignoring the negative content in Daria’s story and did not in this excerpt respond to her abject statements. This occurrence does become contextualised by the next discussion excerpt, *My Girl*.

According to Berger’s taxonomy of humour mentioned previously, what has occurred in the above examples is that the ‘identity’ classification was employed because the social constructions available to Daria at that time were not applicable. This is evidenced by her comments within the narrative, depicting public shame and private grief. Sophie’s use of an expletive to describe and attack Rita, the heterosexual subject, unmasks the perceived reality of Daria’s situation. The social construction of heteronormativity could not provide an outlet for the expression of Daria’s feelings. Sophie was not present as part of the memory but by expressing that negative statement, expressing her emotions at the reception of the story, she includes herself, speaking in the form of either ‘impersonation’ or ‘mimicry’ (Berger 2006:128). She was lending Daria a reaction that had not been available to Daria at the time of the incident now being remembered. In this manner, Sophie operates as speaker-in-the-present in lieu of Daria, as speaker-of-the-past, creating a negotiation between past and present and reconstructing a social location from which they could both speak and express their feelings.

Sophie’s and Georgie’s comments could be seen as an attempt to deflect a difficult topic, or as a desire to deflect the injury caused to Daria, by constructing an injurious interpellative at Rita in her absence, directed at her representation of hetero–
normativity in the story. The deflection and redirection of ‘injurious address’ (Butler 1997a) is characterised by the use of strong terminology and the intonation behind that use, expressed here by an explanation mark. Due to its contextualisation within the surrounding comments, it can be construed as humorous, with serious intent, which is confirmed by the next discussion.

The following conversation, *My Girl*, shows shifting genres with reparation at work. This segment of the discussion is a continuation of the previous one, although there is a substantial segment of dialogue in between the two segments that has been omitted because it went on an irrelevant tangent. In this excerpt, the participants demonstrate a collective speech, one of the many that occurred during the discussion segments of the memory-work group. This is known as a ‘collaborative floor’ where speakers engage in a ‘jointly constructed … verbal interaction’ (Holmes & Marra 2002:379). The collaboration takes the form of spontaneous speech moves that build on each other until a collective theme evolves as a single and stable content. This kind of discursive action denotes a high degree of social closeness. The following discussion, coupled with the contextual attack on the social constraints of normativity that caused Daria’s public abjection, operates as a significant marker of discursive and cultural inclusion.

*Discussion 4.14 ‘My Girl’*

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sophie</td>
<td>It’d be interesting to see what’s happened to Rita (...) now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Daria</td>
<td>I already know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sophie</td>
<td>(laughs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Evie</td>
<td>She’s dead!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Daria</td>
<td>I still don’t like her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Evie</td>
<td>She was mysteriously murdered by a stake through the heart (group laughter)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move</td>
<td>Speaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Georgie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Daria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Georgie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Evie</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sophie instigates the sequence above in move 1 with a question about Rita’s current whereabouts. This receives a seemingly ordinary response from Daria, who says that she “already know[s]” (move 2). It is difficult to guess Daria’s intent in using the word “already” until the participants respond to it as a cue for laughter, which is provided by Sophie in move 3. Irony can be presumed, then, in Daria’s comment. In the moment of usage, that modifying (changing the context) word changes the genre from tragedy to comedy. Rita, as the heteronormative subject and the designated cause of “the most horrible” event of Daria’s “love life” (narrative), becomes the target of the satiric exposure (Berger 2006:128).

Evie initiates a social deconstruction when she emphatically (realised as an exclamation mark) states in move 4 that “she’s dead!” which is uttered simultaneously to Daria’s comment, “I still don’t like her” (move 5), moving the past into the present moment. The satire intensifies and is made grotesque by Evie in move 6 when she declares, “she was mysteriously murdered by a stake through the heart”. This statement is uttered concurrently with a lengthy episode of group laughter, indicated...
by two sets of parentheses. The duration of the laughter is a significant cultural marker because the statement is grotesque and yet the group demonstrates a humorous response. The participants continue to laugh spontaneously from this ‘grotesque’ point for which ‘[t]here is but one criterion’ ‘and that is laughter, immediate laughter’ (Baudelaire 1955:25). This is an example of ‘the link between transgression, humor, and anger’ (Lehr 1999:85). The topics of murder and stakes through the heart are exemplars of historically violent imagery, which could be posited as ‘anger’ and contravenes the boundaries of intercultural politeness (Bell 2007a).

The group’s excursion into transgressive behaviour is inherent in the action of the ‘temporality’ of the newly devised talking narrative because the ‘signalled degradation has been … refunctioned’ (Butler 1993:223). The sequentiality of the fictionalised recount has transformed Daria’s textual mortification into a different domain, or a different socially constructed subjectivity. These moves constitute a new reality which has been enabled by the grotesquely humorous deconstruction of Rita or, more specifically, of the representation of heteronormativity. However, because the discursive mode is comedic, the participants, while imparting a darker tone of humour, are offering lesbian desire a discursive range from which to speak.

The grotesqueness of Rita’s demise as the metonymic representation of all that conspired to invisible-ise Daria in her story of love and rejection, and ultimate abjection, increases sequentially with Georgie’s and Daria’s alternating paraphrasing (moves 7 to 9), which suggests inscribing Rita’s epitaph with such statements as: “I hate you” and “you stole my love/my girl”. These comments are followed by the final and encapsulating statement in this excerpt, by Evie, who continues with her theme of destructive parody with the exclamatory “Burn in hell!” which is perhaps intended to
be yet another notation on Rita’s epitaph on “the thing”, as it is called by Georgie in move 7.

The group has become one voice, mimicking and parodying (Berger 2006:128) Daria’s original story, and although the other participants were not present in her memory-experience, they have inserted themselves into her story text by their collaborative effort in the constitution of a newly formed narrative. They have dramatised ‘their performances by imitating and taking on stereotypical voices of the characters’ (Sherzer 1985:217). In doing so, they deconstruct the domain of heteronormativity through the subject of Rita, who must be textually destroyed. Her death signifies the death of Daria’s abjection, or the metonymic cause of her abjection. ‘Interrupting the naturalness of social meaning opens up the possibility of resignification’ (Lehr 1999:86).

To summarise, the humorous episodes above would be considered injurious had the target been present because the idea of ‘[p]oking fun at an outgroup is comfortable and entertaining when the outgroup members are safely out of range’ (Holmes & Marra 2002:395). The participants’ statements can be construed as performative because ‘they produce effects [and] that the saying is itself the doing, and that they are one another simultaneously’ (Butler 1997a:17). For a speech utterance to be a speech act it needs to occur in a public setting and although Rita is not present and the likelihood of this attack being presented to her is virtually non-existent, it remains a discursive attack against heteronormativity, and so it could be seen to ‘initiate a set of consequences’ (ibid). The participants produce a performative construct with which to name and destroy that which was the cause of destruction in the past. The excerpt above represents a reconfiguration of the original narrative that may set in motion a
sequence of consequences and that will in some way impact upon the participants of the memory-work group and the broader social community.

There are four recorded episodes of laughter in the *My Girl* excerpt interspersed within a series of ten moves. From the statement “she’s dead!” (move 4) until the final comment “burn in hell!” (move 10), the group laughs continuously as well as concurrently with the speech utterances. Laughter as the result of ‘verbal forms’ of interaction ‘that occur in conversational contexts’ can be perceived as an accompaniment to the ‘social-interactional’ accomplishment of telling jokes (Sherzer 1985:218). The mode of a jointly constructed collaborative floor (Holmes & Marra 2002:379) helped fuel the group to further ‘paroxysms and swoons’ (Baudelaire 1955:24). Humour can be perceived, therefore, as a ‘positive politeness device’ (Holmes & Marra 2002:377), although it is evident that this current memory-work group took it beyond the borders of politeness and into the realms of subversion of ‘the social order by attacking this order’ (Sherzer 1985:217). The social order was deconstructed through unanimous group effort and to this end inclusiveness was demonstrated as an inherent component of the memory-work process, realised through the discursive choices made by the participants.

*Go, Granny*

The following narrative and discussion excerpts demonstrate the way fantasy operates to inform social inclusion through the discursive and linguistic choices made by the participants. This narrative was written by Evie in session 3 in response to the cue ‘coming out to family’, requiring the remembered experience of one episode of coming out. Evie narrates an episode of coming out to her grandmother after having deliberated for some time about whether to do so. The incident required the self-construction of building up to an event that had the potential for an abject outcome.
However, the ‘happy ending’ of this narrative supports an established pattern of responsibility for coming out, within this research project and further explored in chapter 5, that most family members already knew, as did Evie’s grandmother.

**Narrative 4.4 ‘Go, Granny’**

One day, it was time for Evie to come out to her grandmother. By then, she had come out to everyone else in her family, but her grandmother, who was of course elderly, she feared would have a stronger reaction than others due to her more conservative background. Evie did not want her frail and beloved little nanna to be physically or emotionally devastated. So, after a couple of years of being out and living with a partner and visiting her GM with her partner, and having her GM over to Evie and her partner’s house for visits, she finally plucked up the courage and decided it was time. She sat her N down and began talking about the weather, and for about two hours, she talked about all manner of things. It was a bit strange, not a normal set up or convo. Then she said it: “Nanna, Maddie and me are partners,” and then came the reply: “Yes dear, I know.” Oh my God! How did she know? When? What a brilliant Nanna, who adored and loved and accepted me still, and loved and accepted my partner! I was pretty flabbergasted, and the convo was over a minute later (my Nanna was released!), and I just then loved and adored and respected my Nanna more than ever.

Evie’s narrative was the instigation for the dialogic texts used below to explicate the production of fantasy and the way in which it operates to inform inclusion. The textual generation of fantasy was focused on altering reality, or creating the “guessy-world” that Evie had proposed earlier in this session. The first sequence, *Why This?*, demonstrates examples of textual fantasy through Evie’s parodying of her father’s stereotypical responses to her coming out. The second discussion sequence, *Lesbian Banner at the RSL*, is a continuation of the first. The deleted interlude between these two segments of conversation was irrelevant to the purpose of looking at fantasies and humour and their impact. The focus of the dialogic segments is their reconstructive

[Session 3]
fantasy themes as markers of social inclusion, as opposed to humour as markers of inclusion, which has been dealt with above.

The example *Why This?* succeeded a discussion about Evie’s coming out to her family, in this instance, to her grandmother (above). She had already come out to her mother prior to this event. This was the second experience of coming out for Evie, whose mother and grandmother conspired with her stepmother about the problem of telling her father. Evie and her girlfriend Maddie had decided to drive 2,000 kilometres to [city] in order to come out to him face-to-face. They were persuaded by the older women in the family to allow them to tell him over the phone before they undertook this journey, which could have negative consequences. Evie subsequently spoke with her father over the telephone and came out to him, although he had been forewarned at this stage. The following dialogue details the unfolding of that conversation.

*Discussion 4.15 ‘Why This?’*

1. Evie  
My father asked a lot of questions and I could see that he wasn’t quite (…) ‘Why do you all have to congregate together?’ You know, ‘why do you all have short hair?’ ‘Why this?’ [indicates herself] So I’m not … (laughs)

(group laughter)

2. Evie  
I guess I didn’t really want to (…) go there. I think he would prefer that I wasn’t. Yeah. So I don’t- I don’t really feel like (…) being part of other people’s problems (…) about it. So I- I just tread in territory where it is fine. (…) That’s okay with me.

3. Daria  
To avoid questions where it was sort of negatively shadowed or something.

4. Evie  
Yeah, like you do a bit more. ‘Why do you have to be the way you are?’
In this segment Evie speaks in her own voice recounting the incident, that when she came out to her father he “asked a lot of questions”. What Evie does next is interesting because she responds to her own statement and provides her audience with her father’s comments by parodying his responses. For example, she says, mimicking her father’s voice: “why do you all have to congregate together?” and “why do you all have short hair?” These two questions automatically derogate and challenge Evie’s cultural and physical location in the social world by negatively positioning her habitus, her ‘ways of being in the world’ (Kulick & Schieffelin 2004:349). Evie’s father is speaking from his own habitus of heterocentrism, performing a metaphysical adaptation of the ‘eugenics’ paradigm where the desirable qualities he would want for his daughter would be those ‘expressive of a dominant discourse of family’ particularly ‘in which heterosexuality is assumed and (re)inscribed’ (Steinberg 1997:66).

The father’s comments are gestures signifying the abjection of Evie’s cultural construction, a verbal assault on the corporeality of her being. Once Evie proclaimed her father’s attitude with the first two parodied interrogatives or questions, mimicking him, and presented it to the other participants, her father’s attitude, in effect, became public property. His statements now belonged to Evie’s story and the story belonged to the group participants. Evie commenced this speech (move 1) still in the role of a
daughter coming out to her father. However, by the third incongruent question (reads more like a command) when Evie says “Why this!?” a significant shift has been registered in the text. The mode became in that instant comedic, the field was troped into overt homophobia, as opposed to the covert homophobic commands disguised as questions, such as ‘why are you like this?’ which could be interpreted as ‘don’t be like this’; “why have short hair?” as a cover for ‘don’t have short hair’, etc. During this performance and re-interpretive phase, Evie handed her father’s attitude to the memory-work group for closer scrutiny. In doing so, Evie reduced the isolating impact of the incident, and created an inclusive arena for further explicating the events surrounding her coming-out process.

As already discussed in this chapter, mimicry and stereotyping as forms of humour signify identity comedy and Evie uses this mode to effectively convert her father’s taxonomy of her projected cultural subjectivity (“you all”) from ‘negative into positive classifications’ (Talbert 1999:15). By using her ‘[v]oice and visibility’ she created a ‘movement from ignorance into knowledge’ (ibid). The movement taken is centred on that one final question/statement in move 1, “why this!” which was inverted by signifying Evie’s being-ness in a gesture of repudiation.

When Butler asks ‘but what are its risks?’, she is referring to the notion that any subjective position is open to ‘oppression’ and that coming out does not necessarily free the subject from this perpetual process (Butler 1991:15). When Evie constructs reclamation-humour and fantasy within the boundaries of her father’s discourse, the trail of perpetual oppression is deflected somewhat from its ‘risky’ course because the event is played out in the public arena. It has the group’s reinforcement of Evie’s difference from the discursive norm of her father’s projection. Evie laughs at her own
defiant gesture, and the group emulate that defiance and also laugh, in unison. Their laughter combines the fact that the alternative public is the mainstream public of this situation, as the all-lesbian memory-work group, and it becomes a ‘double valence of subordinating and producing’ which, while remaining an unexplored power (Butler 1997a:2) operates a discursive difference that enables the generation of challenges and interruptions.

Evie, in coming out to her father, did generate change in his cultural mien because their interpersonal mode of relating would be increased once her entire family knew of her different sexuality. However, the risk taken that ‘continues to oppress’ and does that ‘most insidiously’ was the outcome once she claimed her ‘outness’ (Butler 1991:15). The voice had been used and visibility had been granted, at the cost of a different kind of oppression. Even though the development ‘from ignorance to knowledge’ (Talbert 1999:527–28) was set in motion, it was possible to unravel ‘society’s outer fabric of acceptance’ to find ‘more than a modicum of naked hatred’ (Groocock 1995:193). This point is exemplified when Evie states that “I think he would prefer that I wasn’t” (move 2). And so ‘the closet may represent the only safe option’ (ibid), acknowledged by Evie when she says “so I just tread in territory where it is fine” (move 2).

The position of power that has been claimed by Evie is not yet fully explored because it becomes part of a dichotomous value system in move 2, after the episodes of individual and group laughter. Move 2 also demonstrates Evie recanting or retreating from the defiance of the previous move because “she didn’t feel like being part of other people’s problems”. Evie is implying that her father had a problem with her performativity as a subject of lesbian or same-sex culture, as well as with the culture
itself implicated in the “you all” comment (move 1) mentioned previously. It would appear then that in move 2 Evie may not be ‘free of [her] subjection’ (Butler 1991:15) in any lasting sense. This ambiguity is confirmed also when she reiterates another paraphrased and mimicked question by her father in “why do you have to be the way you are?” (move 4).

When Kulick and Schieffelin ask, ‘How do individuals come to perceive the subject positions that are available or possible in any given context?’ Evie can be located in this conundrum. The boundaries of her father’s attitude have constrained the subjectivity of her remembered past. The memory-work group causes an infiltration into these territories and so Evie has a different set of options from which to choose ‘the taking up of particular positions’ that had previously been either ‘enabled or blocked by relations of power’ (Kulick & Schieffelin 2004:356).

Move 5 provides an example of Daria directing the topic back to the alternative (and defiance) displayed by Evie’s humour in the first move when she says, in a parody of all of the father’s questions, “gee, why do you want love?”, which paraphrases the father’s intent to silence his daughter’s same-sex desire. It would be preferable to be loveless than to be lesbian is the sentiment that underpins Daria’s satire. This sardonic move continues the pattern of mimicking the father’s questioning behaviour, but with the further addition of irony. ‘Lesbian identity—and our playing out of it—matters’ (original author’s emphasis) (Esterberg 1996:261). Daria plays out of the confines of the father’s homophobic stereotyping based on identity myths by transforming his paraphrased (reinvented) words into a joke. This ‘type of joke’ could be construed as an ‘interethnic or interracial joke, which involves the social boundaries that operate
within a society. These jokes poke fun at stereotypic features of a particular social or ethnic group’ (Sherzer 1985:217), that is, in the present context, heteronomativity.

In the conversation below Sophie recalls the topic of the “party” previously introduced in this chapter by Clare (above) and in this excerpt by Daria (move 5 above) and also resurrects the humorous mode started and interrupted by Evie. Georgie joins in as well, and the participants in this excerpt produce a spontaneous example of a ‘collaborative floor’ (Holmes & Marra 2003:239).

Discussion 4.16 ‘Lesbian Banner at the RSL’

1. Sophie  Okay, so if in future we ever get any kind of negative reaction from families we’ll (…) we’ll suggest that they throw a party for us. (laughs) (…) So definitely to your father. (…) [to Evie]

2. Evie  Yeah, and invite all his friends, and (laughs)

3. Sophie  → Oh no! (laughs)

(group laughter)

4. Sophie  No! All your friends!

(group laughter)

5. Evie  ↓ No! His friends!

6. Georgie  And have it at the RSL, right?

(group laughter)

7. Evie  Around the barbeque in the backyard.

8. Sophie  With the banner up: ‘I am proud of my (…) um lesbian daughter Evie’ (laughs)

9. Georgie  Hooo!

10. Evie  And a big photo!

11. Sophie  (laughs) Yeah! Of father and daughter. (laughs)

12. Daria  And a whole bunch of your short-haired friends congregating!
The discussion segment above resumes its theme when Sophie (move 1) amplifies the reference to Evie’s father’s homophobic comments by including all their families, suggesting that if the participants “ever get this negative reaction from families” they would “throw a party”. The word “party” in this context becomes a euphemism for defiance and action. The connotation is that there would be consequences in the face of further homophobic reactions to their coming-out processes or, in effect, their same-sex identification. Sophie’s laughter inserted in between the two sentences of move 1 suggests a second shift into comedic discourse. The shift in this move is that Sophie has reversed the previous power imbalance that was instigated briefly when her father’s homophobic comments succeeded in deflating Evie’s defiance. ‘Power is part of our everyday relations and as such it cannot be thought of as something that is exercised over us’ (McLaughlin 2003:118). Because the memory-work group represents the current and only playing field in this constructed setting, the power relations are open to being reframed, and each speaker exercises that potential discursively and collectively.

Sophie has queered the text, by making it fluidic and queer-specific during this shift, because queer discourse ‘invert[s] the players, or the scene, [to] see how the normal can become abnormal, based on who is staging the action’ (Dilley 1999:467). The inversion tactic is successful because Evie once again resumes the humorous mode of speech and expands the party idea by suggesting that they “invite all his friends” (move 2). This exchange has reframed the text and the memory-work group has again become the public majority and taken control of the domain of normality by
presenting a challenge to the newly constituted ‘abnormal’ and homophobic realm consisting of Evie’s father’s friends. What has occurred dynamically is an example of the edict that ‘to be out is really to be in—inside the realm of the visible, the speakable, the culturally intelligible’ (Fuss 1991:4). Evie’s suggestion is culturally intelligible, and provokes further laughter from Sophie, which incites an incident of group laughter (between and during moves 4 and 5).

The party theme continues through to move 6, although Georgie at this stage introduces a new element of geographic location when she declares a tagged question: “And have it at the RSL [Returned Servicemen’s League], right?” This iconic and heterocentric suggestion is met with laughter, and is then paired with thematic amplification by Evie’s suggestion that the party become a “barbeque in the backyard”. These traditional Australian icons, for example, the ‘RSL’, ‘barbeque’ and ‘backyard’, are all metonymic locations denoting masculine ideological locations. Immediately following these suggestions, the participants instigate a different sequence, a sequence of public demands celebrating the order of lesbian identity.

Lesbian-specific subjectivity is discursively inscribed into the text in the next cluster of moves, from 7 to 12. The collaborative floor continues to invent public defiance (within the memory-work group and at the RSL) levelled at Evie’s father’s comments, in the following speech exchange, spoken by Sophie, Georgie, Evie, and Daria in interruptive turn-taking sequence: “with the banner up: ‘I am proud of my lesbian daughter Evie”, followed by “and a big photo!” and then “yeah, of father and daughter” “and a whole bunch of your short-haired friends congregating”. This textual fantasy-progression is interspersed with laughter throughout.
The memory-work group wished to interpellate Evie in a celebratory fashion, in public, in large print, in front of her father and his (presumably) heterosexual friends. This was achieved textually during the group process in the following ways. The participants reinvented their subjectivity, removing the father’s interpretation of their habitus, and recreating a subjectivity that suited them. Sophie’s comment, paraphrasing the father, “I am proud of my lesbian daughter”, (move 8) suggests Evie’s previous interpellative “guessy-world” in action. This action also has a corresponding effect in that the father is outed in his heteronormative world.

In this chapter I have explored the parameters of the primary binary of reality–fantasy as it operated in the production of social inclusion. The concept of reality was initially investigated as a means of determining the participants’ perceptions of that domain, and this was considered comparatively against the participants’ production of fantasy through the use of humour and comedy. The concept of reality was frequently negatively located as exclusionary, and through the memory-work process was conclusively deconstructed by the use of fantasy, frequently realised as humour. The participants performed a series of deconstructive measures as they produced their own inclusion into a reconstructed and inclusionary social world. Their new social construction was edified through the process of public presentation (through the memory-work process), allowing for a conversion of the domains of reality and fantasy from exclusion to inclusion.

The following chapter explores the concept of duality in its broader implications of social construction and the impact on inclusion through lesbian language. This is investigated by looking at the accumulation of knowledge and the role it plays in the
social construction of institutionalised conventions. The conventions under investigation are those of relationships, marriage, and coming out.
CHAPTER 5
ACCUMULATED KNOWLEDGE IN THE PRODUCTION OF DISCURSIVE INCLUSION

In the previous chapters I looked at the negotiations conducted by the current memory-work participants in their search for the construction of social inclusion through lesbian language. In this chapter I will be using data obtained through the memory-work process to investigate the impact of normative social conventions on the ability of alternative subjects to obtain their stated objective of long-term committed relationships. While the existence of institutionalised normative conventions (funerals and weddings) and alternative conventions (coming-out process and relationships) do not constitute a dichotomy as such, they are implicated as a social duality, to be negotiated by lesbian subjects through the paradigm of coming out. The concept of coming out underlies the theme of each narrative presented by the memory-work participants (Appendix E) and most of the ensuing discussions (Appendix F). The impact of perpetually coming out, or the concurrent constant deliberations on whether to be out or not, accumulates into a body of knowledge that in itself constitutes a social convention. The constitution of coming out, and its corollaries as bodies of accumulated knowledge subsequently transmuting into institutionalised knowledge will also be considered.

Throughout this chapter narratives and dialogic examples are presented demonstrating the participants’ experiences of same-sex desire, remembered as exciting past incidents but filtered through a current perspective of the coming out paradigm. The first task of this chapter is to present a cluster of dialogues obtained from the data explicating my decision to explore the theme of relationships and other social conventions as bodies of accumulated knowledge and their position in the production
of inclusion. This is followed by textual examples of the participants’ incursions into same-sex desire, commencing with Georgie’s narrative *Raw Naughtiness* and the discussions accompanying her reading. The theme of Georgie’s story is the instigation and exploration of same-sex desire based in a childhood memory but written from an adult perspective. This is followed by the narrative *It’s Not Normal*, written by Daria, which delves into an adolescent exploration of same-sex desire and is again related through the present-day perspective of the coming-out concept, realised as the normal–abnormal binary. These two childhood experiences demonstrate the foundation of the coming-out paradigm that ultimately becomes an established corpus of knowledge in the memories of the participants, exemplified by the recall of experiences into current adulthood.

The next component of this chapter looks at normative mainstream social conventions of funerals, weddings, and marriages, and their impact on the participants in relation to the coming-out process. These experiences are exemplified by Georgie’s narrative *Family Funeral* and the ensuing discussions about weddings as a primary social construction, and also lesbian marriage as a potential social construction. In the final segment of this chapter, the coming-out process is explored as it was generated by the participants through their narratives (Appendix E, session 3) generally throughout the data, and specifically in response to the cue ‘coming out to family’ (session 3). *Coming Out to Dad* is the narrative chosen to exemplify the points raised in this section.

The narratives and dialogues reproduced in this chapter are excerpted from the data base and are summarised in Table 5.1.
Table 5.1 Narrative and Discussion Excerpts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narratives</th>
<th>Discussions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Raw Naughtiness (Georgie)</td>
<td>5.1 That Extra Weight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 It’s Not Normal (Daria)</td>
<td>5.2 The Big Issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Family Funeral (Georgie)</td>
<td>5.3 Why We Break Up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 Coming Out To Dad (Beth)</td>
<td>5.4 Sensuality, That Word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.5 A Sense of It</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.6 Tingling and Touching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.7 Shut Door</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.8 Just a Little Thing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.9 No Position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.10 Who’s the Other One?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.11 A Sister, Not a Partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.12 The Mardi Gras Brides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.13 Heart on a Slab</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MEMORY WORK AND THE PRODUCTION OF ACCUMULATED KNOWLEDGE

Accumulated knowledge is realised as a basic aspect of language and culture. Interaction within any grouping of people, in that precise moment, sets in motion the phenomenon that construes the accumulation of knowledge through an externalised socialisation process that is described as the nature of ‘ongoing human production’ (Berger & Luckmann 1966:69–70). At the point of departure in any verbal interaction, usually comprising a collection of statements or clauses (holding a verbal group), the collectivity of information production commences. ‘Epistemes’, or bodies of knowledge, ‘speak themselves’ through the production of discursive formations (Foucault 1972:31–41; Danaher, Schirato & Webb 2001:21). A study of language on this level demonstrates the manner in which the accumulation of knowledge operates through communication that collects upon itself through reiteration and repetition. The combination of information (knowledge) and its reiteration (accumulation) is the
most fundamental precept toward the establishment of inclusion through language use. Discourse, at the level of its most basic linguistic component, is formed on the ‘statement’ which, when reiterated, becomes an accumulation of both ‘functions and roles’ as well as meanings and nuances (Foucault 1972:99).

The author of a text is therefore a critical factor in the production of discourses (Danaher, Schirato & Webb 2001:22) as producers of reiterated accumulations. The production of shared knowledge through the *collective biography* or *collective memory* produced by the memory-work process suggests that communal writing can result in a sense of ownership (self-power) of the biographical experiences of the participants even when the events leading to their early social construction were not of their own volition (Gannon 2000:1). Subsequently, the narratives and dialogues of the memory-work process, as a collection of discursive commonalities and differences, are viable constructs in their ability to produce information and evaluation—as ‘commentary’ (Danaher, Schirato & Webb 2001:22) from within the circle of experiences and memories that were written and spoken, read and heard.

The body of accumulated knowledge displayed by the current memory-work group contributed to the high degree of commonality and close interpersonal relatedness within this process. From a memory-work perspective on accrued and collective knowledge, once the patterns of commonalities and differences are established, the information provided could be generalised into universal standards of knowledge. The concept of universalised knowledge can be defined as the ‘network that extends beyond’ the ‘field of coexistences’ that surrounds each statement (Foucault 1972:99). The collectivity of knowledge at its most basic level is understood as ‘epistemology’, or perceptions of knowledge organised around a specific point in time/history.
(Foucault 1972:187–88; Danaher, Schirato & Webb 2001:15), and as the ‘habitus’, meaning diverse ways of being in the world in multiple contexts (Schirato & Yell 2000:189; Kulick & Schieffelin 2004:351). These concepts and definitions are replete with initiatives about the accumulation of language and its contexts. One does not accumulate language without also accumulating the discourses (contexts) of the cultural atmosphere, or society, in which the language exists.

The taxonomy utilised by the participants in their past and present explorations into social institutions was realised through normative discourse operating as bodies of alternative accumulated knowledge. The participants used language that was multiply sited, and yet was comprehensively understood by their audience, within the habitus concept, and as the current memory-work group. For example, the terms ‘coming out’ and ‘silence’ were implicit paradigms, extending beyond their individual lexical definitions that required no further explication within the group. The edification of repetitive and reiterative language and the generation of discursive accumulations resulted in the production of social inclusion. The participants of the group displayed a collective knowledge of these concepts to the degree that they constituted a form of institutionalisation that functioned alongside, or in contrast to, other institutionalised bodies of knowledge, recognised by mainstream community as normal. The impact of this duality is the underlying theme for this chapter, as it informs the production of social inclusion in lesbian language.

**RELATIONSHIPS AND COMING OUT**

The three excerpts focusing on the topic of relationships were the consequence of trying to reach agreement, in session 3, for the following session’s cue. The participants were in agreement that the topic would be about relationships and were
discussing the various possibilities for a focal point within that broad topic. In the first discussion excerpt below the group is discussing some of the emotional and psychic impacts on lesbian relationships of the paradigm of coming out, as they had been experienced individually. The influence of external factors on their relationships was a primary concern, and the fulcrum between relationships succeeding or not succeeding was the degree of “energy” necessitated in the process of coming out.

Discussion 5.1 ‘That Extra Weight’

1. Beth  We have to be so much more aware.
2. Sophie  A- (…) I think that that’s got to affect our relationships. If we can’t be spontaneous in our relationships
3. Anon  → Hmm.
4. Sophie  → you know, that
5. Anon  → Hmm.
6. Sophie  → That- that has to affect them, you know, like that or (…) disconnection between us (…) the fact that we, you know, are not accepted in society. (…) I mean there are pockets of society where we are accepted but not generally in society are we fully accepted.

(pause)

7. Evie  So that weight that we were talking about or whatever (…) I guess must land in our relationships or something.
8. Sophie  Yes.
9. Daria  Because remember last- wasn’t it last week or the week before we were talking about the extra amount of energy we have to put into (…) constantly (…) something, coming out, you know ] like, coming out
10. Evie  ↓ ( ) monitoring ( )
11. Daria  Yeah (…) something like that, so that (…) in terms of energy (…) all the time, so that’s that much energy not going into a main relationship.

[Session 3b, pp20–21]
The Extra Weight (above) excerpt is taken from a longer speech exchange about needing to “be hidden” (Sophie, session 3b, p20), and the impact of this externally enforced social construction. Beth confirms the concept by stating in move 1 that “we have to be so much more aware”. This theme is consolidated in move 2 when Sophie declares that this social aspect would act as an impediment to “our relationships” because the constant monitoring, about whether to come out or not, meant that as lesbians “we can’t be spontaneous in our relationships”. The topic of acceptance vs. non-acceptance added extra information to the perceived dilemma (Sophie, move 6). The concept of external pressures on same-sex relationships is named by Evie in move 7 as “that weight”, and this metaphoric definition is redefined by Daria in move 9 as the idea of coming out. In summary, the excerpt above demonstrates the discursive trajectory instigated by the topic of relationships and culminates in a topic on coming out. This theme is encapsulated by Daria, who combines the two topics in one utterance by contending that “constantly … coming out” (move 9) means “that much energy not going into a main relationship” (move 11).

The experiences expressed above demonstrate an aspect of social construction, implicating the proposal that because of the necessity to constantly consider whether to come out or not, a lesbian subject is potentially heterosexualised from birth (and even pre-birth) through the collapsing of the paradigms defining gender and sexuality (Garber 2005:55) and therefore must constantly collide with these metaphysical and linguistic constructions (Halliday 2002) from multiple sites that include the construction or essentialism of abnormalcy. For example, the epistemological ‘idea’ that that there are ‘only two sexes’ is verified in what could therefore be construed as the ‘the limitations of language’ (Garber 2005:55). Heterosexuality is the primary paradigm, and all else diverges from that construct (emphasis is mine) (Warner 1999).
The following excerpt is a continuation of the first, in its attempt to clarify a specific topic within the theme of relationships, and it is presented here to explicate the seriousness of the issue of relationships as far as the participants are concerned. Evie is the main speaker and makes several attempts to clarify her objective in choosing an aspect of relationships as the next topic to discuss.

Discussion 5.2 ‘The Big Issue’

1. Evie I think that relationships (...) I mean, it’s so big, but
2. Georgie ➔ Well, going on from what you’re just saying then.
3. Sophie Hmm! You know, that’s really, you know, well (...) eerie
4. Beth There is that thing
5. Evie ➔ And just the fact that there is so much (...) notoriously (...) our relationships are shorter (...) and whatever else.
6. Daria Can we
7. Evie ➔ And (...) there are so many (...) possible (...) kind of explanations or influences or factors. I don’t know (...) but anyway (...) just to me that’s the big issue.

[Session 3b, pp22–23]

Evie commences this excerpt by stating in move 1 that the topic of “relationships” is “so big” but clarifies her concern by move 5 that “notoriously” lesbian relationships “are shorter”. She expands her apprehension in move 7, suggesting that there are many “possible explanations” for this self-observed phenomenon but that this is “the big issue” that she wants to discuss. The other participants show commonality, by degrees, in the comments: Georgie (move 2) suggests “going on”, corroborating familiarity with Evie’s initiated topic; Sophie is almost at a loss for words and settles for “eerie” to describe the impact of coming out on relationships; Beth uses lexical
shorthand in move 4, saying “that thing” in an attempt to describe that which is “so big”.

The third discussion segment occurred shortly after the previous one and is being presented here to demonstrate a number of discursive collectivity markers denoting inclusiveness within the parameters of an uncertain topic. The group is still deciding on a specific topic for session 4, and in this segment humour again (as per chapter 4) operates as a unifying and cohesive mechanism.

Discussion 5.3 ‘Why We Break Up’

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Daria</td>
<td>So an- an incident of (…)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Evie</td>
<td>→ Breaking up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(laughter)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Georgie</td>
<td>Oh noooo!!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(group laughter)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sophie</td>
<td>Do you want us to be all depressed ‖ (laughs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Daria</td>
<td>‖ I think that could be really depressing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(group laughter)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sophie</td>
<td>And then … and then …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(group laughter)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Evie</td>
<td>Well (…) I guess my interest lay in why (…) why we break up and if it’s got something to do with (…) not just (…) ( ) interpersonal things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Georgie</td>
<td>The pressures of- of (…) outside pressures.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Daria is attempting, in move 1 to name an incident specific to the relationships theme, and is interrupted by Evie who suggests the topic of “breaking up” (move 2). This
suggestion is met with laughter and an ironic negative response of an emphatic “no” from Georgie (move 3), amplified by Daria in move 5 who thinks “that could be really depressing”. This idea is met with more group laughter, confirming a unified approach to the entire topic of relationships. Evie reiterates her interest about “why we break up” and suggests the probability that it is “something to do with not just interpersonal things”. Georgie responds to Evie’s comment as if it were a question, declaring that “outside pressures” is the culpable factor.

The collective knowledge demonstrated in the three excerpts above is evident through a unified sense of knowledge of the topic of lesbian relationships, that there is some “thing” that impacts on lesbian relationships negatively, that goes beyond the “interpersonal” problems (generalising) expected with adult partner-relationships. The participants were in short lexical supply to describe exactly what it was they were desirous of expressing, but by a series of explorative suggestions and the relegation of broad-use terminology into specific discourse to describe a lack, they managed to locate a problem that remained un-named, beyond simple metaphoric descriptors, such as the “big issue”, and “that weight”. The group’s collaborative effort demonstrates accumulated knowledge, not embedded in lesbian-specific discourse, but the linguistic gap itself constitutes a form of lesbian language in this instance because it is recognised collectively.

When knowledge accumulates over time it evolves into a more solid edifice and acquires the qualities of an institution (Berger & Luckmann 1966:70–71). This is a process of social construction that provides a habitus into which social beings are enculturated. Because language and culture operate as inseparable domains, an extrapolation can denote that the lesbian habitus has a language or discourse that is in
direct proportion to the accumulation of social knowledge. As the excerpts above demonstrate, social constructions were developed through the process of collective discursive behaviour. This process enables the potential for a trajectory of future behaviours and direction. In other words, having been performed individually through past experiences and collectively within the group, the discursive ‘action may be performed again in the future’ without a high degree of personal (energy) expenditure. Habitualised social actions and knowledges that are shared between members of specific social groups and are subsequently available to those members (ibid:72), in this case the memory-work participants and subsequently the broader social lesbian community.

**DESIRE IN THE PRODUCTION OF ACCUMULATED DIFFERENCE**

Bodies and corporeal sensuousness were significant topics within the memory-work narratives and discussions. The themes of sensuousness and body awareness were particularly prolific in the sessions concerned with childhood and adolescence. These themes were exemplified by the two following narratives and the discussions that ensued. The following synopsis demonstrates patterns of sensuousness evident in all of the narratives in response to the cue for ‘first lesbian experience’. The childhood experiences were focused on physical explorations and form the basis for duality as knowledge of the need for silence and invisibility accumulated within the narratives’ sensuous themes:

Daria and her girlfriend Jenny “were practising kissing and lying on top of one another” when they were 14 (this chapter); Evie “used to like touching Rosa” and would do this on any “part of the body she could get away with” when she was 12 (chapter 4); Georgie and her friend were rubbing their arms until “paralysed” and sensing “prickliness in other places” when she was 11 (this chapter); when she was “about eight” Sophie would “gaze” at her best friend’s
mother “tingling” at her touch and “absorbing her smells” (chapter 4); Clare, aged eight, and her girlfriend Carla were exploring one another’s bodies during a sleepover (session 1); and Beth was enjoying the “smells” from her female teacher’s pelvis when she was three (chapter 3).

The following sequence consisting of Georgie’s narrative Raw Naughtiness and accompanying discussion excerpts demonstrates the beginning explorations of same-sex desire, realised as sensuousness, and the dual outcome, feeling “good” and feeling “bad”, and the emotional and political implications of these two states.

**Raw Naughtiness**

Georgie’s narrative depicts a childhood exploration (she was 11) into same-sex sensuousness. This story typifies the extent of knowledge acquired through physicality and the language used to describe desire. This narrative was generated for session 1 and shows Georgie attempting to write in the third-person context, but lapsing into first-person context within the first sentence and subsequently maintaining that mode throughout. The cue for this session was ‘first lesbian experience’ although Georgie has chosen to describe this experience as ‘first experience of lesbian exclusion’ which was not a cue requirement, although this perspective could be a consequence of the introductory talk about the thesis topic and the basis for the memory-work project.

*Narrative 5.1 ‘Raw Naughtiness’*

Georgie’s first experience of lesbian exclusion was when I was about 11 years old. Sitting in a class at school, we were all crowded in together watching a film. A sense of close physical presence, a lack of seats, and a stuffed film projector set the scene. While the teacher fumbled with the equipment, a friend thought up a game to fill in the boredom—stroking each other’s arm until a sense of paralysis into the hand was felt. Other senses were not paralysed and a sense of prickliness in other places was a surprise. We sat there stroking arms until we noticed the teacher looking at us
repeatedly and uncomfortably. “Would you two stop that. You will not touch each other like that, thank you!” Embarrassment! What was wrong? I felt alienated from the rest of the class. My friend and I never discussed it, we never touched each other again, but I had a sense of being a bit different and it was ‘bad’ but felt good.

The orientation of the story provides a background of information that informs the primary event describing both Georgie’s age, and the field-context, which is a classroom at school. The students are preparing to watch a film and the teacher is busy. Georgie’s descriptive language informs the reader that there is a “close physical presence” due to the overcrowded situation. Georgie’s narrative provides a glimpse into a past event, but frequently lapses into the current context indicative of the event being brought from the past-memory context into the present-issue context. The focal point, however, is the sensuality which is referenced by the physicality that Georgie describes occurring between herself and a friend. Georgie and her friend are “stroking each other’s arm until a sense of paralysis was felt” which produced a “prickliness in other places”. Emphatically, “other senses were not paralysed” and this was “a surprise”. These same-sex explorations are interrupted and exposed by the teacher who publicly forbids them to touch one another “like that, thank you!”

Georgie’s narrative, as with most of the narratives in this memory-work project, contains two story lines, producing dual complications and subsequently dual resolutions. The first thematic is one of sensuality and is produced through the primary complication denoted by Georgie’s comment that “a friend thought up a game”. The reader is engaged at this juncture, with a sense of ‘what happens next?’ and the physical sensuousness that ensues between the two girls forms the body of the story. Although there is a resolution-conclusion, in that the object of desire was
achieved, there is no coda (no “happy ever after”) to this story line because it is interrupted by the secondary complication, denoted by the teacher’s command that “you two stop that” and “you will not touch each other”. The secondary narrative also has a conclusion, which is public humiliation and feelings of shame, but there is a coda. Unfortunately, it is an unhappy ending for Georgie, who converts the narrative into the present context looking back to the past, with the comments: “Embarrassment! What was wrong? I felt alienated from the rest of the class.”

The two juxtaposed thematic strands in this narrative perform a consistent pattern of duality with sensuousness forming one aspect of same-sex desire, and politicisation forming another aspect. The culmination of Georgie’s remembered pleasurable and ‘first lesbian experience’ is inextricably bound by another experience of being silenced and oppressed, creating a political genre to replace the sensate genre. In a gesture of self-constructed inclusion, however, the ultimate coda of Georgie’s narrative was that she had “a sense of being … different and it … felt good”. Even though the “good” feeling was “bad”, the narrative finishes on a reclamatory note.

The discussions that followed Georgie’s reading pursued the theme of duality, with emphasis given to both the approbation and the sensuousness. In the first discussion excerpt below, the participants are querying Georgie’s level of knowingness around the event.

*Discussion 5.4 ‘Sensuality, that Word’*

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Georgie</td>
<td>The teacher noticed something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Beth</td>
<td>⇒ Yeah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Georgie</td>
<td>⇒ was way beyond (…) just raw naughtiness (…) ( )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(pause)
You knew (...) you knew something was naughty, though that wasn’t, like, you didn’t really know (...) exactly what

Nooo. I just thought

That rubbing a girl’s arm was naughty, or what?

Yeah, I guess you just, ah, an experience of sen-sensu-sensual-sensualable-sensuality – that word – which, which felt good but (...) it was obvious to the teacher that that’s what it was (...) as opposed to sitting there rubbing someone’s armpit.

(laughter)

Georgie confirms in one sentence (interrupted by Beth in move 2) that the physical experience she was enjoying with a friend was “beyond just raw naughtiness” and drew the teacher’s attention to them (moves 1 and 3). Daria questions Georgie’s self-knowledge of same-sex desire in move 4 and Georgie denies that she was aware of what was occurring between her friend and herself beyond feeling sensuous. In move 7 Georgie tries to describe the sensations she felt, but has difficulty finding lexical clarity and reverts to the simplicity described in the previous (relationship) excerpts, that the experience was something “which felt good”.

The following excerpt is an example of the memory-work process providing the potential for collective sharing. Georgie is attempting to reframe the context of her narrative by re-evaluating the concept of public–private territory and the other participants enable this process by offering paralinguistic assistance.
Discussion 5.5 ‘A Sense of It’

1. Georgie ( ) it was in a fairly public setting there’s a sense of not really feeling there was anything wrong with it, but
2. Beth → Right, yeah
3. Georgie → but it was labelled as being wrong.

[...]
4. Georgie It was the way that, that, that (…) ] you
5. Evie \[ Yeah
6. Anon \[ Ohhh
7. Georgie (…) get a sense of it.

[Session 1a, pp4–5]

The discussion segment below consolidates the positive physicality of the experience for Georgie as an individual, and for the memory-work group as the public constituents in this setting. This aspect of collectivity provides the component of reparation that the group process makes available. This occurs because Georgie is enabled to process her past through the various perspectives of the present, which presents to her a different set of choices from those available in the past.

Discussion 5.6 ‘Tingling & Touching’

1. Evie Oh, so maybe it was enjoyable (…) something positive that when you were actually (…)
2. Daria → Tingling.
3. Georgie Yes, yes
4. Evie → You’re touching each other.

[Session 2a, p19]

Evie and Daria propose positive imagery in the process of questioning Georgie about the sensuous component of the event. They use terminology such as “enjoyable” and
“something positive” (Evie, move 1), and “tingling” (Daria, move 2). These descriptors elicit a positive response from Georgie in move 3, of “yes, yes”. The pattern of confirming the positive aspects of Georgie’s experience and narrative denoting duality on both counts reframes the context of her same-sex objective, maximising the sensuous component and minimising the political component.

Accumulated knowledge grows through clear communication and boundaries, structures which inspire a sense of safety, so that information can be exchanged (Widén-Wulff 2007:171). When a body of knowledge reaches the stage of definability—in this instance the duality of Georgie’s remembered experience—it forms a framework for the constitution of all other knowledges or clusters of information that can either be fitted or not fitted into that particular corpus (Berger & Luckmann 1966:132). Over time, the different corpuses that inform society are deemed to be natural and/or normal, and are thus maintained by the conventions of tradition. ‘The “moment” in ritual is a condensed historicity: it exceeds itself in past and future directions, an effect of prior and future invocations that constitute and escape the instance of utterance’ (Butler 1997a:3). The accumulated knowledge produced through the collective sharing of Georgie’s experiences provided a different route from which to form subsequent events embedded in the duality of similar social experiences.

The following narrative, It’s Not Normal, was written by Daria in session 1 as a response to the cue ‘first lesbian experience’. Daria and her girlfriend are already adolescents (14 years old) in this story, unlike the other participants who all presented narratives depicting pre-adolescent experiences to this particular cue.
**It’s Not Normal**

Most of the narratives of the memory-work group had elements of the closet and either being in or out, or of being in the process of this transformation, or containing facets of negotiations between the states of insiderness or outsiderness. I have chosen Daria’s narrative of her first lesbian experience to explicate the argument for coming out as a production of difference leading to the trajectory of accumulated knowledge as an institution. Discursive inclusion has occurred on a number of levels exemplified by this story and its telling, but interest at this stage is based on the accruement of a body of information that eventually constituted a language of inclusion. The following narrative conveys the story of Daria and Jenny “practising” for marriage.

**Narrative 5.2 ‘It’s Not Normal’**

Daria and Jenny were in the bedroom and the door was shut. They were practising kissing and lying on top of one another, for when they got married. They were 14 and had been best friends for seven years, practising kissing and massaging a lot. Auntie Joan was yelling out from outside the door: “It’s not normal” and “what are you doing in there, it’s not normal.”

[Session 1]

This story of Daria and Jenny has the most obvious symbols of lesbian desire in that the closet metaphor is heavily remarked, as is the surrounding discourse. The action by the subjects, Daria and Jenny, is located in “the bedroom” and the “door was shut”, expressing a most obvious representation of hidden desire and the closet dividing this desire from the normative setting on the other side of the bedroom door. The duality of realms of desire continues with the second sentence when the actors “were practising kissing and lying on top of one another”, representing same-sex desire, followed by “for when they got married”, representing normative practices, where the term “married” would represent heteronormative coupling practices. The remarking of
duality and difference continues with the introduction of a third character, “Auntie Joan”, who is represented as the outsider to hidden desire but who is also presented as attempting to interrupt the practice of lesbian desire. The aunt is located “outside the door” and is depicted as “yelling” her declarations of suspected abnormalcy on the other side of the door, which also locates her metaphysically as being aware of, but outside of the knowledge of, the practices of same-sex desire.

The aunt, signifying heteronormative subjectivity in this story, has been positioned as a knower of the situation behind the bedroom door. It can be concluded that in her representation as the outsider to the event, being “outside the door”, she was aware of the practice of same-sex desire because of her initial statement: “it’s not normal”. This is followed by a question / response pair, where the aunt asks “what are you doing in there?”, to which she responds with another “it’s not normal” statement. Daria has recreated in this story very clear lines of segregation between her world and the aunt’s world. Her lesbian-desire has been given historical, or naturalised, value because she declares that she and Jenny had in fact been “practising” for at least seven of their 14 years together. The aunt’s interruption to that desire is safely located outside the event but there is an acknowledgment of the abnormalcy of this hidden desire because of the use of the negatively positioned term, “not normal”.

Ingleton states that it is more the insight about the memory than the actual event precipitating the memory that has the experiential value. That is, ‘the search for intelligibility in the construction of one’s life narrative’ (Ingleton 1995:3) is what is important in terms of personal empowerment. It is significant that the aunt is represented as not entering the room, the territory of hidden and alternative desire, and therefore was kept outside, or kept as the representation of heteronormativity.
outside the realm of accumulated knowledge of lesbian and same-sex desire. But the aunt was maintained in her location as a progenitor of the practice of setting up a closeted society, ready to absorb (Danaher, Schirato & Webb 2001:xi) the existence of the difference behind the bedroom door as abnormal. Not entering, she maintained the state of othering silence.

The historicity inherent in Daria’s narrative signals a sense of knowledge that has already been absorbed or accumulated into a contextualised framework of lesbian or female same-sex difference and hidden desire. This framework is juxtaposed with the mainstream habitus that is represented by the parent figure in the narrative who does not stop the practices of same-sex desire but who does interrupt and demand an explanation for an obviously alternative habitus, while taking care to maintain its closeted construction by remaining outside that realm. The way Daria has written this narrative presumes a base of knowledge that the group now has access to and which can only add to the accumulation of the patterns of habitualisation.

The habitualisation of the normalising practices of female same-sex desire in the narrative above is exemplified in one of the comments in the dialogue that followed Daria’s reading. It was a humorous aside and is included with the move of group laughter to demonstrate that aspect of the speech act, although it is not in itself the focus of this chapter’s argument. It is significant in that insider normalcy was taken for granted. This means that Daria both in the remembered experience and in her representations within that memory writes her normalcy into the text by satirising the heteronormative intervention in her hidden desire. The interruption as well as the event itself is given a location in the habitus and contributes to the institutionalisation of coming out as it already exists.
Discussion 5.7 ‘Shut Door’

Daria I just, I think I translated it as: it’s not normal to shut the door.

(group laughter)

Daria’s statement above, that she translated the aunt’s interruptive comments into something entirely different, shifting the abnormalcy onto the door itself rather than the desire hidden behind it, satirises the text by over-emphasising the naivety of her response from the past. We have already looked at the role humour plays in the production of inclusion and in this instance the satirisation of the paradigmatic shift is acknowledged by the other participants. They are included in the knowledge of this remark and they include themselves as well through a demonstration of understanding the context. The joke is on heteronormativity and its construction of the closet, that the othered subjects are able to express their desire behind the door, as well as choose whether to keep it open or shut, whether to include or exclude the outsider, represented by the aunt who remains both aware and ignorant of the practices of same-sex desire.

Daria’s narrative demonstrates that the closet ‘already exists for us to be silenced into’ (Danaher, Schirato & Webb 2001:xi), as a form of pre-empted consciousness that ‘absorbed us readily’ into the euphemistic closet. Because the condition pre-exists the subject’s knowledge, it could be surmised that the lesbian/gay/queer subject was ‘closeted by society’ (ibid). In the narrative and dialogues presented above, Daria describes, in session 1, her ‘first lesbian experience’ as a sensual and natural occurrence. There is evidence of accumulated knowledge embedded in the text in her recognition, as narrator of her own experience, of the binaried aspect of normalcy. Daria states this patently although the perception of normalcy and abnormalcy may
not have been inherent at the time of the event. Her perceptions are retrospective, which benefits the group process. This means that the binaried states denoting the coming-out process were lived in the past and recognised and spoken in the present, creating a collectively constructed bridge of knowledge (Haug [1987] 1999; Johnston 2000; McCormack 2000).

**SOCIAL CONVENTIONS AND QUEER LOCATIONS**

The following segment investigates the socially constructed duality that impacts lesbian and indeed the entire queer culture through the institutionalised social conventions that validate heteronormative social constructions. The social conventions in question are those areas which are not generally natural or normative domains for alternative relationships.

Institutionalised normative domains such as funerals and weddings form the theme for the following narrative, *Family Funeral*, written by Georgie. Using the social conventions of weddings and legal marriage as examples of heterosexual institutions based on historical and accumulated knowledge, the memory-work participants demonstrate knowledge of exclusion, and attempt to reconstruct inclusion from within these parameters. Because legal marriage for lesbian/queer culture is not currently possible, the data operate from the perspective of transformation within the boundaries of that which is available. They do this by co-opting the Sydney Mardi Gras Festival as a symbol of a different social convention, signifying a different body of accumulated and historical knowledge. In this manner, the participants included themselves by producing ‘new information into the collective memory of the group’ (Widén-Wulff 2007:169). This section deals with examples of lesbian / queer exclusion from standard social conventions such as weddings and funerals. These
social constructions function as metaphors for reality (Halliday 2002) and as such are generalisable and, in some instances, considered negatively communicable. ‘Metaphors are “contagious”: they form chains of association’ (Hollway 1989:19). Weddings and funerals have chains of association with some of the stronger cultural institutions, embedded in the constructs of families and legal systems. The memory-work participants produce, in the discussion excerpts below, the effects of a ‘social construction of prejudice’ (Kitzinger 1987:153–59) enforced by the parameters of marginalisation (Wolfe & Penelope 1993:5; Ross 2004:238), with written and spoken narratives about the degrees of exclusion from weddings and funerals.

**Family Funeral**

Georgie introduced the topic of funerals through her narrative in response to the cue for session 4, ‘external impact on relationships’. The narrative’s theme is Georgie’s father’s death and funeral.

*Narrative 5.3 ‘Family Funeral’*

When Georgie’s father was dying, she was summoned to the hospital where she was with him, along with her mother, when he died. This was Georgie’s first experience of real grief and she felt numbed and in a surreal state with her emotions. Georgie’s partner Sandi was around during this time, and Georgie was needing her support but had nothing to give at that time, in return. With her brother and mother the funeral was arranged and Georgie stayed with her mum during these few days. Sandi continued on with her normal routine, phone calls being the only form of communication. The day of the funeral Georgie went home. She discussed the format of the service with Sandi and the question arose, “Where will I sit?” Georgie was unsure what to do because she and Sandi were not ‘out’ to her family and Sandi and Georgie’s mother did not get on at all. The feeling was mutual. So Sandi decided to sit down the back, with her best buddy. After the funeral, back at home, Georgie wanted to spend time with Sandi. She felt very cut off from her and needed to reconnect. When they got home Sandi went to her room and started packing a bag. “What are
you doing? Where are you going?” Georgie asked. “I can’t handle this,” said Sandi. “Where are you going? When will you be back?” Georgie asked. “I don’t know,” was the reply. Georgie begged, literally begged Sandi to stay. She felt so vulnerable there on her own with her grief but Sandi walked out, got on her bike and left. She returned three days after no word to Georgie. How could the damage done be mended?

[Session 4]

The complication within this narrative about an overtly normative social convention was the lack of a social position afforded Georgie’s partner of eighteen years, Sandi. Georgie was to sit with her family of origin including their partners, by herself, while Sandi was to sit with a friend “down the back” of the service hall. Georgie felt this experience ultimately led to their relationship break-up. According to the themes of both the narrative and the ensuing discussions, Georgie initially held herself responsible for the disintegration of the relationship. As the memory-work process progresses, a degree of transformation occurs and Georgie is able to delegate some of the responsibility.

In the excerpt below, Georgie expands on the primary theme of her narrative, quite convinced that the responsibility for coming out to her family was entirely hers, and that not coming out had been an act of “subterfuge” for which there was a price to pay.

Discussion 5.8 ‘Just a Little Thing’

1. Georgie Exactly. That’s what I say, you pay, you pay for your (…) you pay for your um (…) subterfuges (…) at some stage I think. That was what the lesson ( )

2. Evie ‘Cause you had stuff brewing (…) yeah

3. Sophie → But there’s no guarantee that Sandi would have been accepted any more even if you had come out.
In this extract, Georgie takes most of the turns, implicating an active listening audience. The main focus of this discussion is a theme of regrets and recriminations that she had not come out, and that her lack of action in this area had been at a cost: “you pay for your subterfuges” (move 1). Evie commiserates in move 2, “stuff brewing” being a euphemism for the grief Georgie was experiencing at the death of her father. Sophie also commiserates but in a more political context because she speaks realistically about the high degree of probability that Sandi would potentially have faced rejection regardless of whether Georgie had come out to her family or not (move 3). In the four moves between 4 and 7 inclusive, Georgie amplifies her experience and appears to be arguing with herself, in a response / counter-response sequence, about the “protocol [being] fairly defined” as to who gets to attend funerals, and then a comment about “even people that don’t get on [with the family] were included”, conveying an amplified significance of her partner not being included. Georgie concludes by stating that it must be “one of life’s quintessential experiences” that are intended to be painful and, evidenced by the change of voice tone, to a
whisper, and cursing (out of character during the memory-work process), is apparently re-living some of the emotions. A pattern of taking full responsibility for the existence of historical social constructions is in evidence, engendering the expression of resentment and, further, conveying a sense of abjection in the final move.

Georgie’s sense of responsibility, first of all for the abject situation within a pre-existent and derogatory social convention, her family-of-origin’s organisation of her father’s funeral, suggests a reinscription of the ‘chains that bind’ (Hollway 1989:19). Georgie was also reinscribed by the chains of convention, fastened by the institutionally inherent normativity represented by a socially constructed lack or gap, where her partner was required to be by Georgie’s side (“Georgie was needing her support”—from the narrative). Sophie’s comment in move 3 above implies the production of something larger than Georgie’s own decision-making processes, an edifice metaphorically represented by the “family pew”.

Within the same session and discussion segment, Daria also recalled a family funeral where the thought of her partner attending was not a proposition.

Discussion 5.9 ‘No Position’

| Daria | […] But um (…) it wasn’t even- it wasn’t even an option (…) that my partner should be with me. Th- there was no position. And I was out to my family. But in the funeral (…) there was no position for a lesbian’s partner. |

[Session 4b, p3]

Georgie and Daria on the one hand, and their families of origin on the other, were actively collaborating in a social structure that is ‘more solid than prison walls’ (Haug [1987] 1999:59) and in so doing were complicit in maintaining the continued
production of a social stronghold bordered by and supporting the institutionalisation of these social conventions. The experiences of both participants were subject to the constraints of heterocentrism which ‘prevail[ed] in no uncertain terms’ (Rogers 2003:95) in institutionalised locations such as funerals. Through external structures comprising the domain of social conventions, ‘we are bound to a particular social location’ (Haug [1987] 1999:59). Daria and Georgie were both bound by, and binding to, the social conventions of the heteronormative habitus.

Individual practices contain a number of different patterns of thought, different means of interpreting the self in the world. As long as those different models remain atomized and divided from each other, society will be capable of infinitely reproducing itself in its present form. (ibid:58)

The topic of weddings was an accidental one, introduced by Evie during session 4 when she unwittingly contextualised the funeral episodes within broader social fields, specifically in the context of institutional domains. These are social locations to be negotiated without a guarantee of inclusiveness beyond that which was created within the memory-work group. In the examples presented below, Georgie’s abjection is explored in a dialogic segment called *Who’s The Other One?*, which describes a situation where Georgie and Sandi, not out in this incident either, are still paying the price of being in the closet. The second excerpt, *Mardi Gras Brides*, is an example of the public deconstruction of the lesbian-partner gap explicated in the three preceding texts.

The first wedding discussion occurred spontaneously, subsequent to the conversation about funerals, which was initiated by Georgie’s narrative about her father’s funeral. In the segment below, Evie confirms the significance of the funeral stories by proliferating the topic into “the other big public place” (move 1), which is then
qualified by “where they don’t want you”. This sentence is an acknowledgment as well as recognition, of the two social conventions that are “big” areas constituting exclusivity. Evie does not name “the other big public place” but receives an immediate one-word response from Georgie: “weddings” (move 2). Collective knowledge about the other “big” social convention is evidenced in this exchange through the elision of a specific topic in Evie’s move 1, and because Georgie’s response is uttered as a declarative and not a question, it suggests the possession of knowledge rather than the need to acquire knowledge.

Discussion 5.10 ‘Who’s the Other One?’

1. Evie And just think the other (…) big public place where they don’t want you.

2. Georgie Weddings.

3. Evie Well, just even big family gatherings like Christmas, or (…)

4. Georgie ⇒ Well, that’s it. I’m really into family things because we’re totally (…) different, uh, situation with the same person ‘cause at her sister’s wedding (…) I was totally accepted by her family and um

5. Anon ⇒ Hmm.

6. Georgie ⇒ At her sister’s wedding (…) the (…) sisters all got a (…) and I got a corsage. And I remember being in the ladies’ loo (…) and there was this woman at the sink saying (…) ‘And I know there’s two sisters, but there’s three with corsages. Who’s the other one? Where does she fit in?’ And I wasn’t gonna come out of that loo until they left. (laughs)

(group laughter)

[Session 4b, p4]

Evie expands her knowledge (move 3) of public places where ”they don’t want you” by contending that exclusion can also occur at “family gatherings like Christmas”. This suggestion instigates another story from Georgie, who declares she is “really into
family things” (move 4) and mentions her partner Sandi’s sister’s wedding. Georgie is included in the wedding party as a bridesmaid (move 5), but not as Sandi’s partner. They are both individual bridesmaids, in the closet, or in “the loo” in Georgie’s case (move 6). The circumstance of hiding in the toilet rather than being outed as a non-sister does have an element of humour, as Georgie laughs at her depiction of this memory and is joined by group laughter after this move. The irony lies in the duality of being out in public but in a silent performance of identity. Hiding in a toilet was preferable to facing the public over the ambiguity of her social position. Georgie’s social position at the wedding is amplified and also clarified by Daria in the discussion excerpt below, when she qualifies the ambiguity of the situation.

Discussion 5.11 ‘A Sister, Not a Partner’

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Daria</td>
<td>Oh, so you had a position (...) but it wasn’t exactly like a lesbian position. It wasn’t like a partner, you were a sister.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Georgie</td>
<td>I think they’d sort of- I don’t know, they were just totally blinkered to the reality of the situation. We lived together for 18 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Evie</td>
<td>Oh God!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Georgie</td>
<td>Almost, no yeah, roughly that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Daria</td>
<td>I guess it felt good to be included (...) on some level (...)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Georgie</td>
<td>→ Yeah, I mean I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Daria</td>
<td>→ It felt better than not being included.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Georgie</td>
<td>It- it sort of gave me a- um, a false sense of inclusion. I felt very comfortable. It was, as you say, it was almost like I was included as a sister, in fact I was referred to as (...) the ‘other daughter’, you know.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Daria declares in move 1 that Georgie “had a position” at the wedding, but that it was not a “lesbian position”. Daria elaborates these qualities by finally declaring “it
wasn’t like a partner, it was like a sister”. This situation is justified in move 2 by Georgie who accords responsibility to the broader social group, namely, Sandi’s family, stating that they “were just totally blinkered” for not realising or perhaps acknowledging the lesbian relationship because “we lived together for 18 years”.

Daria proposes that being included “on some level” (move 5) was better “than not being included” (move 7) at all. Georgie realistically contends that it was a “false sense of inclusion”, being included as “the other daughter” (move 8) by her partner’s family.

Georgie commenced the narrative Family Funeral and discussion segments by taking full responsibility for the break-up of her relationship with Sandi because she had not come out to her family for the entire 18 years of their relationship. This was evidenced particularly in discussion 5.8 (Just a Little Thing), where Georgie felt she had had to pay for the “subterfuge”. By move 7 of that discussion, Georgie was starting to reframe the situation and make comparisons between other people who had been invited to the funeral and her partner who was not invited to sit with the family.

‘Heterosexuality is often [an] entire package (including superiority, identity, opposite-sex desire and an unchangeability about it all) even though attachment to the other sex is only one element. ‘If you deviate at any point from this program, you do so at your own cost’ (Warner 1999:38). Georgie’s social progression continues in discussion 5.11 when she publicly acknowledges that Sandi had also not come out to her family, with the result that Georgie was treated like the “other daughter” rather than the lesbian partner. The memory-work process enabled the reclamation of Georgie’s sense of power through the contrasting and supporting comments of the group. Because the data produced by the participants indicate that the families usually knew that their daughter-sibling was lesbian, and that silence was operative in many cases
on both sides of the social continuum, Georgie was able to delegate responsibility to her broader social-familial group for the social construction of her silent position, and presumably for the break-up of her relationship.

The segment below is representative of the reclamation of social power in an institutionalised setting through the alternative co-optation of “the other big place” (Evie, discussion 5.10). In this final segment to the sequence on weddings and funerals, the group has an animated discussion about a lesbian marriage that has taken place at the annual Sydney Mardi Gras Festival, the LGBT (lesbian-gay-bi-transgender)/queer public and iconic domain. Sophie instigates the topic by asking whether the other participants had seen the marriage of the “two dykes” (move 1) at the festival.

**Discussion 5.12 ‘The Mardi Gras Brides’**

1. Sophie  Did you see (…) in uh it was one of the Mardi Gras (…) and these two dykes got married and their parents and they were in this carriage or something

   (group laughter)

2. Sophie  ➔ in the parade

3. Georgie  ➔ I didn’t see it

4. Sophie  ➔ and (…) they wore (…) they wore a combination of a (…) top hat and a wedding dress (…) and it looked great, you know, both of them were in the same

5. Georgie  ➔ Yeah?

6. Sophie  ➔ you know, they had the wedding dress and the top hat and tails. Looked great. (laughs)

   (group laughter)

7. Sophie  ‘You wanted me in a white dress, mum (…) here I am!’
(group laughter)

8. Georgie ‘Here it is!’
9. Daria On the big float? Look out, world!
10. Evie Hmm. (laughs)

[Session 3b, pp10–11]

The excerpt commences descriptively, “did you see?” (move 1), and continues in this vein through to move 6, when Sophie claims that they “looked great” in a “wedding dress and … top hat and tails”, engendering group laughter. The conversation then converts to an interpersonal exchange, with Sophie, again, speaking in the second-person context and addressing her comment to the imaginary audience of her mother: “You wanted me in a white dress, mum … here I am!”, moving the text from storytelling mode to fantasy mode, typical of much of the current group’s discursive and linguistic patterning. The topic and direction is continued by Georgie in move 8, with “Here it is!” and Daria (move 9) with “On the big float? Look out, world!” , all of which suggest a disruption to the duality that was operative within the previous discussions (5.8, 5.10 and 5.11). The public witnessing, on many levels, of the symbolic and celebratory lesbian marriage float is the act of reparation that becomes replicated in the memory-work process because it is articulated. This public performance, on both counts, at the Mardi Gras Festival and in the memory-work group, exemplifies Haug’s statement, that ‘[w]e become familiar with social standards and make them our own through a process of rearticulation’ (Haug [1987] 1999:127). As a corollary to such public actions, the ‘Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby has recently acknowledged how important marriage is to gay rights’ (Reynolds 2007:195), signifying the potential for reparation and inclusion at multiple sites, including the dominantly normative domains described by this sequence of texts.
The topic of coming out was not a designated topic although it was remarked frequently by the memory-work group participants. The metaphoric denotations of invisibility and silence were used interchangeably, evidenced previously in this chapter’s relationship sequence, for example. Coming out was the underlying theme for the entire memory-work process. The concepts of terminology such as public, out, silence, visibility, etc, form a taxonomy with known markers of identification which ‘determines how we make sense of things’ even when those ‘principles were more or less unconscious’ (Danaher, Schirato & Webb 2001:17). The classification systems described ‘are the grounds on which we base everything’ and they form the habitualisation which enables us to ‘take them for granted’ (ibid). As a corollary to the coming-out process, the perpetual decision-making process that accompanied almost every public action the participants described demonstrated a level of awareness of the construct of silence. There ‘is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses’; this implicates the secrecy surrounding the discourses of same-sex desire as a dynamic ‘speech act’ that in turn ‘differentially constitutes’ the performance of ‘closetedness’ (Sedgwick 1990:3).

Coming out of the closet to family members produced diverse results, both positive and negative, for each of the participants although most of the reactions were ‘perfectly unsurprising’ (Miller 2006:254). Perpetual consideration about whether or not to come out was a constant theme within a broader topic of responsibility for the consequences. There were frequent references to acceptance, underpinned by homophobic confusion or misinformation. The coming-out schemata in many of the narratives and dialogues was frequently balanced ‘between the need for identity and
the recognition of cultural diversity’ being weighed against the desire for ‘social
difference’ (Elliott 2001:121).

A familiar reaction to participants coming out to family members was initial
acceptance, and then a complete and absolute silence about their sexuality on even the
most mundane levels. This is exemplified by Georgie’s story of coming out to her
brother and his wife (see narrative, Appendix E, week 3). They were accepting and
pleasant and it was a build up to, and support for, Georgie’s plan of coming out to her
mother, which was expected to produce problems. However, after the initial coming-
out episode, Georgie’s sexuality was not brought up again in any context, not asked
about and not referred to again. Georgie wasn’t sure how to bring these issues up in
conversation with her family members, how to create a topic in which her same-sex
desire could be enveloped into an expansive and pervading normalcy. Georgie
commented that “it’s like this code of silence. And-but what’s interesting is (...) the
code of silence is continued to some extent” (3b, p12). Both Georgie and her brother
are complicit in the ‘strategy of accommodating to the cultural status quo’ (Cabiria
2008:2). The act of coming out was viewed variously, but it was without a doubt an
ever-present consideration in the lives of all of the participants. Evie expressed this
point in discussion 5.1 above when she stated that the “weight … or whatever [which]
must land in our relationships or something” (3b, p21). Concern was also expressed
about the extra effort required in maintaining the performance of perpetually coming
out (Butler 1991:15) and the impact this has on adult partnership-relationships.

Some of the rejoinders to the coming-out aspect of the narratives and dialogues,
particularly in session 3, were at times cynical and at times abject, depending on the
reactions of family members, a form of verbal effect to the ‘peddling of homophobic
responses to the question of what counts as legitimate public culture’ (Miller 2006:254). The maintenance of duality was in operation on both sides of the closet door. For example, when Sophie and Daria came out to their mothers, individually and half a decade apart, both of them received similar responses: the suggestion that “it” (lesbianism) didn’t run in their sides of the family (“like it was some ailment” said one of the participants, session 3b). These comments demonstrate the subtle ‘heterosexist notions of nature, and the heritability of normality and abnormality’ (Steinberg 1997:67). Sophie’s father wanted to send her to a co-ed school because he hoped that this brand of ‘institution of compulsory heterosexuality’ (Kitzinger 1987:vii) might “normalise” (Sophie’s term) her. Clare’s father hoped he would be allowed to see the children if she had any, because he thought “all lesbians hated men” (session 3b). These responses were seen as gross betrayals embedded in distortion (Shah 2003:121). While familial acceptance was experienced by most of the participants, the act of coming out was a disruption to the socially constructed normative parameters presided over by their families. This is not surprising given the contention that ‘[s]exual and social practices by which individuals sought intimacy outside the reproductive marriage were identified as disruptive to the family and were perceived as a perversion’ (ibid).

**Coming Out to Dad**

The coming-out process is explicated in the following narrative, *Coming Out To Dad*, written by Beth, and depicts both pejoration and abjection of a past experience. This story is accompanied by an example of spoken text, *Heart On A Slab*, which most exemplifies Beth’s current feelings about the memory that inspired the narrative. The group participants’ reaction was supportive and inclusive in a different mode from
previous systems of support that had used humour and fantasy. In this instance a
different sensitivity prevailed, unremarked, but organised in collective unison.

*Narrative 5.4 ‘Coming Out to Dad’*

About a year and a half ago, Beth decided to verbalise some recent thoughts to her
father about her sexuality. She said to her dad, one afternoon: “Dad, I think I’m a
lesbian” and he laughed at her. When Beth, finally, worked up the courage to ask him
about this he said he had laughed at her because calling herself by such a label is too
confining. But Beth has not forgotten this incident and was not satisfied with the
explanation he gave for it.

Beth was not completely rejected by her father when she came out to him, but he
laughed at her and said she was too young to be labelling herself. Beth had finally
come out to him, and although he did not reject Beth in the physical sense, his
laughter and comments were pejorative, and she perceived them as a rejection of her
essential self. Beth was 16 years old at the time of the incident.

*Discussion 5.13 ‘Heart on a Slab’*

Beth (sighs) (...) I felt like (...) I had just come to my dad and put my heart
out on a slab and, you know, it was just (...) thrown right back at me,
and (...) and (...) it drove me (...) mad and (...) like, I’d just worked
up the courage to say this to him (...) and then he, he does something
like this (...) and he just threw me right back.

The examples above are indicative of the differences that were and can be
experienced when coming out to family. Beth’s was the most surprising as she was
the youngest and gay and queer domains had become more public during her
adolescence than in the adolescences of the older group members. There was a
significant amount of discussion around Beth’s narrative of coming out to her father
because Beth had been 16 at the time and was still experiencing the incident as abjection. As she had remarked in an earlier session, while most of us were recording our experiences from the past, she was still “in her adolescent experience” (Beth’s description). The other memory-work participants unanimously operated as a support group around this narrative reading and ensuing discussions. This decision was unremarked and occurred spontaneously. The group did not turn Beth’s story into a fantasy or make humorous remarks. Their mode of discourse was changed to suit the situation, that of Beth’s youth, and her obvious distress at the memory of the event. They chose to support and express compassion at this stage. In this instance the ‘discourse of “coming out” has clearly served its purposes’ (Butler 1991:15) and in response to Beth’s narrative one of the purposes was, once more, to value solidarity above all the other discursive avenues available to the memory-work group. Writing and talking about the coming-out processes in session 3 served as a bonding process for the memory-work participants.

The attitudes and responses from the participants’ parents and families are significant to the future development of lesbian desire (Downey & Friedman 1996:472; Baker 2002:39) because ‘in the earliest years of life gender is powerfully lodged within the psyche’ (Elliott 2001:104). ‘The child’s developing sense of self reflects a meshing of emotional, private and interpersonal worlds. These worlds are closely tied to gender relations in the family’ (ibid). These worlds also contain positive coming-out experiences as well; Daria’s mother, for example, reacted with, “as long as you’re happy”, and Clare’s mother “sits down with the ironing and watches Mardi Gras” (both from session 3b).
Coming out has become such a culturally entrenched aspect of (Western) gay and lesbian life that it has taken on the significance of institutionalised markers of belonging in much the same manner as a wedding has in heteronormative society. Coming out exists in a deeply internalised aspect in our lives. My objective in this chapter has been to explore that aspect in discussions when coming-out stories instigated humorous fantasies and how fantasies about coming out incited a high degree of laughter caused by parodying, joking, and other comedic responses. Linked to fantasy, coming out is a significant component in the process of deconstructing the paradigms of normative social construction. The participants performed an inverted version of their subjectivity, and as Esterberg stated: ‘When lesbians … present themselves to each other and to the world, they are, in effect, performing. Through this performance, they are constructing and reconstructing lesbian … selves’ (1996:265).

This chapter has presented an investigation into the social duality experienced by the memory-work participants in their attempts to evaluate the perceived deficiencies in their committed relationship-partnerships. The normative constructs of institutionalised social conventions were also explored in juxtaposition with lesbian relationships, and contingent upon the coming-out paradigm, constituted in this instance as an example of accumulated knowledge operating as a form of institutionalism, with implications for the lesbian relationship.
CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

I am not on our family tree. When you identify as lesbian, or woman of same-sex desire, or even as queer, ‘you automatically get written out of someone’s history’ because ‘[t]here is no branch there … on the precious family tree’ (Huffer 1996:96) that can contain your lesbian reality. The extent of exclusion that can be experienced by the lesbian subject in contemporary Western society is encapsulated by the contention of the absence of honesty in recorded family historicity. From the perspective of cultural norms, a gay self is not recognised as valid (or existing at all); hence it is not worth justifying (identifying) (Liang 1997:290). As a reaction to the degree of marginalisation which is encapsulated by Huffer’s contention, different cultural paradigms were constructed, initially as ‘other’ to normative social constructs. Nevertheless, through a series of discursive manoeuvres the memory-work participants were able to deconstruct the normative and reconstruct their social domains to include one another within the group setting to include themselves as a group and ultimately to provide inclusive text that has the potential to include the broader social parameters, within both the alternative and mainstream community.

This inquiry into language and inclusion began with the question of how it would be possible to determine the social construction of inclusion in lesbian language and which theoretical tools would be most beneficial to first of all assemble the data and secondly to exemplify the consequences of research.

Using the texts produced by the memory-work group process and the work of theorists whose research also investigated lesbian language as an entity (Queen 1997; Morrish & Sauntson 2007), this thesis demonstrates that lesbian language exists as codified and indexable discourse, with multiple discursive and linguistic devices
operating to perform the social construction of inclusion. Utilising a broad range of theoretical research as a background to the objective of the social construction of inclusion in lesbian language, the data was assessed through the multiple research fields of language and discourse inquiry, queer theory, and ethnographic sociolinguistics. Operating from the heuristic that culture and language are inseparable domains, that specific language and discourse cannot not-exist without a definable community, the concept of inclusion as a social construct embedded within the written and spoken texts provided by the memory-work process has been investigated and sustained. Inclusiveness was demonstrated to operate as a set of linguistic and discursive practices within the parameters of the heterosexual/mainstream–homosexual (lesbian) / alternative dichotomy. This mode of inclusiveness is discursively embedded in our language and is constituted both within and outside heteronormative discursive and cultural constructions. ‘Language enables us to talk with each other … about something … not just a mode of interaction, but also with a capacity for representation’ (original author’s emphases) (Montgomery 1995:224).

THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE METHODOLOGY TO THE HYPOTHESIS

From a social constructionist perspective, memory work as a research method was chosen as the best option for obtaining equitably produced data. This principle implies dissatisfaction with research techniques that incorporates a gap between the researcher and the researched. The developments that ensued within the current memory-work group in the production of the required data confirmed the application of this theoretical approach. Memory-work in its theoretical aspect provided for the probability of producing data that was generalisable based on the commonalities produced by the group narratives and discussions. The ‘rules’ of memory work are variously defined by different theorists and were designed first and foremost to
collapse the oppositional locations of the researcher and researched, which was achieved to the degree of feasibility for a research dissertation, while a number of other rules were challenged and rearranged for the very striking reason of visibility, all of which is registered in chapter 2 of this thesis. Additional benefits of memory work as a research process were the potential for reparation that occurred. This was achieved through the process of making public the remembered experiences from the past. The collective sharing of these memories provided a discursive location, reducing isolation and the sense of separation that is produced from that state, and through many transformative developments, registered in the data chapters 3, 4 and 5, the participants were able to reframe their memories into narratives of unity and strength.

The transformation of narrative into historical data implicates the self-construction of the past as well as reconstruction in the present. Multiple aspects of memories, converted into narratives, enable the reconstructive process. The past was reframed and new perspectives provided, different and new perspectives on prior remembered experiences. This process enabled the conversion of socially constructed positions previously denied, evidenced through the narratives of past memories, and reconfiguring the marginalised polarity. Outsiders became insiders, the private became public, the normative became alternative. Choices were available within these reconstructions including the generation of the solidarity paradigm that conspired to produce cultural and discursive inclusiveness as these domains were identified through language use. The discursive collectivity engendered by this process also provided the foundation for a universalised basis for writing lesbians into history, extrapolating on the general memory-work goal of the informed writing of women into history (Haug [1987] 1999). These assumptions generated a sense of the
reclamation of power previously lost through invisibility and marginalisation, to the
degree that the participants could reverse the dichotomous imbalance of the
heteronormative–alternative binary.

**The Production of Lesbian-Specific Linguistic and Discursive Inclusion**

Evidence of lesbian-specific discursive inclusion was produced by analysing a series
of written and spoken texts, looking for linguistic and discursive patterns that
demonstrated the production of inclusion. The three primary patterns elucidated by
the memory-work process were, firstly, through the existence of socially constructed
binarisms, specifically realised through the insider–outsider, public–private, and
normative–abnormative domains, which were negotiated by the participants to
produce self-inclusion, initially from the silence of past memories, and ultimately
through the collective sharing of these experiences in the group process. Secondly,
data were obtained from the analysis of the primary dichotomy to surface through the
participants’ texts, specifically, the binary of reality–fantasy. The concept of reality
was identifiable from both the narratives and the ensuing discussions, and the concept
of fantasy was determined mainly through the spoken components of the data. The
result of the binary negotiations was a textual reinvention of a different self-
constructed kind of reality constituted through the accumulation of clusters of lesbian-
specific knowledge, which in turn culminated in bodies of accumulated knowledge;
the gaps of difference and the production of inclusion caused a language base
identifiable as lesbian-specific. Thirdly, the duality inherent in the heterosexual–
homosexual binary as it is realised in aspects of daily living was investigated through
the institutionalised normative social conventions of weddings and funerals. In
addition to the memory work explorations through these constructs, the group also
realised inclusion through the queer-specific institutionalised construct of the coming-out paradigm, formed historically through the processes inherent in the accumulation of knowledge.

The eventual consequence of accumulations of knowledge is an inevitable institutionalisation (Berger & Luckmann 1966). This implies that the clusters of information under the rubrics of silence, coming out, same-sex desire, and social conventions were either components of previously acquired and therefore accumulated knowledge, or they were performed and created as such during the group process. Institutionalised knowledges are cultural and discursive locations of belonging. In the action of the proliferation of these bodies of knowledge, through reiteration (silence, coming out) and reclamation (social conventions, desire) the participants included themselves and one another through the process of textually performing their lesbian identities in a queerly fluidic public setting. The current memory-work group demonstrated lesbian-specific institutionalised constructions verified in their discourses, requiring comprehension and bodies of knowledge to inform inclusion.

**Potential and Limitations**

In terms of limitations, the constraints I experienced in this process fall into two categories. First of all, the deployment of a systemic functional grammatical investigation, originally proposed within the hypothesis of inclusive lesbian language, was not achieved. The alteration of this proposed direction came about during the transcription phase of the project when it was apparent that any outcomes obtained through a completely linguistic course of analysis would be able to provide results specific to inclusion but in all probability not specific to lesbian language and
inclusion. Elaborating on this theme, there is evidence of definitive lesbian-specific terminology, realised mainly through nominal groups, and the reiterative deployment of some narrative structures, but the removal of these factors would not, in all probability, leave the reader with a lesbian-specific text, a factor validated by current research (Morrish & Sauntson 2007).

From this perspective a decision was made to import ethnographic socio-linguistics into the theoretical corpus while maintaining elements of linguistic research, as well as utilising the more flexible parameters of critical discourse analysis. The overall result of this variegated research project has been to substantiate my hypothesis, in not only the validation of the existence of lesbian language, but also as it conclusively operated to perform the social construction of inclusion, notably in a collective setting, and based on both written and spoken modes of communication.

An unexpected and unsought consequence of this research project was the production of reclamation and reparation that occurred through the memory-work process, and also through the use of lesbian-specific discourses, salience being determined through the observation of the group’s process, and from feedback from the group participants. The process had proved beneficial on many levels beyond the production of this dissertation. In contrast to this consequence is a limitation of memory work as a research tool due to the potential constraint of topic choice. General limitations to the memory-work process in relation to this project are registered in chapter 2, but consideration must be deployed if engaging in research projects that do not implicate the researcher, denying the object–subject conflation. This implicates the research–researched model, which, while proving beneficial to the current project, would prove
constraining if the researcher were not an appropriate research subject in different contexts. This is a consideration for future projects.

In terms of future applications to the current research project, each data chapter, while comprehensive within the constraints of dissertation length, would benefit from the application of further research in its entirety. Each section on the data produced could provide a full-length dissertation, a factor not realised at the onset of the project, and something that will be explored in due course. Another consideration is that the full amount of data produced could not be utilised within the scope of the current topic of inclusion and lesbian language. Data pertaining to the high incidence of youthful eating disorders, adolescent and adult depression and at-risk behaviours, and suicide ideation, were not included in this project. For instance, half of the sample of participants disclosed that they had suffered adolescent and early-adult eating disorders. This topic was discussed at length and proved comprehensive to the degree that it was beyond the capacity of this dissertation to be fully developed, but offers a strong foundation for future research.

Most importantly, in terms of research and the public field of visibility politics, lesbian- (and queer-) specific research is critical if we are to impact positively on the high rate of lesbian / gay / queer adolescent suicide (Baker 2002:78–79), as well as suicide ideation (the desire to be not-alive) or other at-risk behaviour (ibid:110–11). Lesbian-gay-queer adolescence comprises one of the highest suicide categories in the western world (Pfeffer 1991:55; Garland & Zigler 1993; Hammelman 1993: 77; PFLAG 1997/2008) and recent research suggests that the incident of queer youth suicide is is increasing (Ferguson et al 1999). The incidence of this within the taxonomy of ‘at-risk’ behaviours was remarked or alluded to with some regularity by
the memory-work participants, and again would be beyond the scope of this thesis to pursue.

I hope to have contributed to the concept of the existence of a lesbian-specific language that produces inclusion, constructed within normative pragmatics, discursively existing both within and outside both alternative and normative realms. Using remembered experiences, the memory-work group verified the points above through the generation of narratives, from speaking of these experiences in the present, to deconstructing the exclusionary devices of normativity, and on to reconstructing lesbian-specific inclusionary constructions involving language and discourse. Through the memory-work process the participants conducted reclamation, and found reparation.

Finally, in respect of the group decision-making process inherent in a memory-work project, the participants of the current project requested a “happy ending”, and to this end the final discussion segment for this project is reproduced below.

Discussion 6.1 ‘Happy Ending’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evie</th>
<th>I would st-strongly (…) say strongly, that (…) there’s an incredible amount of joy inherent in being lesbian.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sophie</td>
<td>Yeah, and that’s why we’re all here (laughs). I mean not in this group but as lesbians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beth</td>
<td>(laughs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evie</td>
<td>It has – it’s been one of the (…) most joyful and (…) wonderful things. Life giving.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Session 4b, p26]
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Epstein, Debbie (1997) What’s in a ban? The popular media, Romeo and Juliet and compulsory heterosexuality, in *Border Patrols: Policing the Boundaries of...*


Gannon, Susanne (2000) And then you know the bitches are going to ask you questions …: A collective biography project. Paper presented at the Memory Work Research Conference held at the University of Technology, Sydney, 18 February 2000.


APPENDICES

The following list shows the attachments relevant to this document in the order in which they appear in the text:

APPENDIX A: Advertisement in *Lesbians on the Loose* magazine

APPENDIX B: Memory-work group application form

APPENDIX C: Information package

APPENDIX D: Consent form

APPENDIX E: Memory-work narratives

APPENDIX F: Discussion excerpts used in thesis, from chapter 1 through 6

APPENDIX G: Research assistant’s transcription samples, 10% of total used in thesis

APPENDIX H: Transcription key
APPENDIX A:
COPY OF ADVERTISEMENT PLACED IN LESBIANS ON THE LOOSE MAGAZINE

Lesbian Language

Veronica Kleinert is conducting a PhD research project through the University of Western Sydney that will be looking at the way lesbians talk and how this can produce our sense of inclusion. She will be using a feminist research tool called: memory-work: 6 to 8 lesbians meet for 2 hours a week for 6 weeks to discuss some of our memories in a safe and structured environment … with refreshments!

A language analysis will be conducted on the audiotaped sessions. Participants will not be identified in the final texts, so confidentiality is assured. Interested parties can contact The School of Humanities (attention: Veronica Kleinert), University of Western Sydney, Locked Bag 1797, Penrith South 1797, or email: ‘veronica@xxxxxxxx.com.au’ for an information package.
APPENDIX B
MEMORY-WORK GROUP APPLICATION FORM

Lesbian Language Project

*Memory-work group application form*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(days &amp; times)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A little bit about</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>why you might</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be interested in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participating in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>this project…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dear ________________

Thank you for your participation as co-researchers in my PhD Lesbian Language research project.

The agenda for *Session 1* is as follows:

1. Welcome and introductions, refreshments
2. Informal discussion about the project and what is entailed in the memory work process
3. Consent form signing
4. Discussion of, and decision about, the first memory-work ‘cue’ or topic.

In your *Folder*, please find:

1. Consent form
2. List of lesbian (or lesbian-friendly) counsellors
3. PhD proposal (for overview of entire research project)
4. Writing pad / pencil

You will have already received the Memory-Work Information package (or please let me know if you need a copy).

I look forward to working with you and hope that you have an exciting and productive memory-work experience.

regards,

Veronica Kleinert
Lesbian Language (working title), Doctor of Philosophy, thesis proposal.


Aim:

My research goal will be to determine what constitutes inclusion into a culture or community through the role that language plays. The community or culture in question is the lesbian community and the language to be analysed is ostensibly ‘lesbian language’. By analysing lesbian ‘spoken’ or ‘conversational’ text, I want to establish whether or not there is a language that produces my sense of inclusion. If there is, I would like to determine how it operates to include me, that is, how it operates to include the lesbian within a lesbian social context. If inclusion or exclusion from a language is practice based, it will be realised in the generic, discursive and ideological realms as well as on the lexico-grammatical level.

Objectives:

I will obtain my conversational text by conducting a qualitative enquiry group, using the psycho-sociological practice known as ‘memory-work’ (Haug 1987, Crawford et al 1992). The group will be selected from within the Sydney lesbian community. It will run for two hours per week for six weeks, and the process will be audio taped and transcribed. The transcriptions will form the basis for a critical discourse analysis, systemic functional analysis, and queer theory analysis, of spoken text.

Framework:

The notion of textual exclusion is not new. Recent feminist literature of sex-gender theory abounds with evidence of the exclusion of women from mainstream text (Threadgold & Cranny-Francis’ anthology Feminine / Masculine and Representation, 1990). Further study establishes that lesbians are marginalised within the already marginalised domain of women. Research into the theory of the double marginalisation of lesbians is also extensive (Wolfe & Penelope’s anthology Sexual Practice, Textual Theory: Lesbian Cultural Criticism, 1993).

Language and culture / community are posited across many philosophical sites as inseparable dimensions (Berger & Luckmann 1966, Halliday 1975, Dunbar 1995, Butler 1997). It is my intention therefore to combine psycho-social theory and
linguistic theory in order to achieve a comprehensive insight into the notion of language as it informs social inclusion, specifically within the lesbian community.

I will conduct the major portion of my language research using the Hallidayan theory of systemic functional linguistics (Poynton 1985 & 1990, Halliday 1994, Bloor & Bloor 1995, Eggins & Slade 1997). Register theory will be the basis for this grammatical analysis, to the extent that it is required in order to determine the patterns of speech choices selected by the speaker/s.

A discursive and grammatical analysis will determine the semiotic nature of a speech/textual event. We can then ascertain the metafunctional components (experiential, textual and interpersonal) of the speaker and in consequence, the listener.

The psycho-sociological aspect of my research is based on Frigga Haug’s (1987) notion that memory work, ‘focuses on uncovering the processes of social construction captured in the memories and reflections of individuals’ (Crawford et al 1992). In this manner the subject and the object are treated as inseparable components of social construction. That is, by using members of the lesbian community (subject) to determine textual inclusion or exclusion (object), I will be able to examine the extent to which the subject and object are interrelated in their social construction.

This method also allows for the active participation and cooperation of the researched in determining the results of the research. The outcome will be, in this manner, determined by the researched as well as the researcher.

The combination of cultural self-determination realised through the memory-work process and linguistic choices realised through critical discourse analysis and systemic functional linguistics will make apparent the extent to which lesbian culture is socially constructed as a discursively inclusive (or exclusive) domain.
References:


Poynton, Cate (1999 forthcoming) *Address and the Semiotics of Social Relations: A systemic-functional account of address forms and practices in Australian English*.


Memory-Work and Lesbian Language

Information Sheet

You are invited to participate in a project about lesbian language. This is a study of the way lesbians talk among ourselves. Lesbian cultural inclusion works within and beyond the many areas of communication, such as body language, eye contact and psychic connection, to name a few. Inclusion could also be manifest in the actual grammar of the way we talk to one another. I will be conducting a language analysis on the ‘talk’ of a group of lesbian women while we are engaged in a process known as memory-work.

What is memory-work?

Memory-work is a feminist research method which is aligned to the social constructionist paradigm. It has also been described as a ‘collective biography’ (Gannon 2000:1). Frigga Haug (1987) developed the methodology to explore the construction of identity through the use of our experiences as they are remembered. ‘Memories are essential tools for the continual construction and reconstruction of meanings in our lives’ (Ingleton 1995:3). That is, our experiences, as we remember them, become the foundation stone for knowledge of ourselves as individuals and also for knowledge of the broader social settings of the world in which we live.

A strong feature of memory work as a research tool is that the focus is on the relations between the individual and the society in which we live. That is, our lives involve more than just ourselves … we are part of an ongoing dynamic that includes all the relationships in our lives with friends, family, colleagues, etc. and all the places and events that we experience, including the minutiae of our daily lives. What can get lost is the bigger picture, the impact that these other people, places and events can have on our experiences. Because our memories are often rich with these kinds of details, memory-work can be a way of discussing events in the context of the bigger picture.

The idea is to try to develop a better understanding of the bigger picture, and how it helps or hinders people in incorporating their experiences into the rest of their lives. Memory-work is a way of looking at experiences without getting into questions about
individual blame and responsibility. ‘Through memories, past experiences are used to evaluate the present, and structure future actions’ (Ingleton 1999:5).

By working collectively, through the process of using our memories as experience and as data, we can recreate our pasts, take charge of the present and create an empowered future. That is, ‘[m]emory-work bridges the gap between theory and practice … by using women’s … memories as a source of knowledge from which to question existing … ‘knowledge’ and by empowering women to use this new knowledge to effect change in their lives’ (McCormack 2000:2).

**Who is involved?**

Veronica Kleinert, from UWS Nepean is conducting this study.

Email: ‘veronica@pnc.com.au’ (without parenthesis).

**What will this memory-work group involve?**

You would need to be available for six (6) sessions, each lasting approximately two (2) hours per week, on the same evening each consecutive week, or on six (6) consecutive Saturday mornings.

Session (1) will be an information session; Sessions (2–5) will form the bulk of the Memory-Work process; Session (6) will be a session dedicated to closure. Debriefing time will be inbuilt into each of the sessions—to recap, to complain, to offload, as required. Refreshments will be provided during the sessions.

The venue will be private rooms in the inner city area.

There are three phases that will take place in our memory-work process:

**Phase 1:** the writing of memories: a ‘cue’ will be decided upon by the group each preceding week, and used a trigger for the memories which are to be written during the week, in between sessions; the memories are to be written in the third-person.

**Phase 2:** the collective analysis of memories: each woman reads her memory which will then be collectively discussed and summarised, looking for themes.

**Phase 3:** from data to research: the researcher makes sense of the themes and summaries using both the written memories and the transcriptions of the collective discussions.
There is a Phase 4 which is not part of the memory-work process but involves the researcher analysing the transcripts, looking for grammatical and discursive themes and patterns which will be tied-in to the overall themes of the group process.

Some considerations:

- The outcome of this project is a written doctoral thesis which will in itself eventually be made available to the public; it is my intention also to seek further publication of some of the issues that may be realised from this research project. This means that your memories will be made public, albeit anonymously. If this is likely to be problematic for you, please consider the matter carefully before consenting to participate in the group.

- Your confidentiality is an issue. So that I can write about this project, the discussions in the memory-work group will be taped, and I will keep copies of the memories. So how will your confidentiality be maintained? The tapes will be destroyed after 12 months. I will keep the tapes in a locked drawer; only people who were present in the group will be able to listen to them. If you decide that you want to delete something you have said in a group (that is, if you change your mind, or if you think that any mention of it would automatically identify you) you can say so: it won't be mentioned in anything that is written about the group.

- No real names will be used in anything that is written about the group. Information which may identify you will be deleted or changed.

- The group will discuss and establish guidelines for how group members can make sure that we ensure each other's confidentiality.

- Hopefully, talking about the memories of experiences of being/growing up as a lesbian will be a useful thing to do. But it may be a sensitive issue or it may touch on things which you, or someone else in the group, find upsetting. In the initial information session (week 1), we'll talk about how you think we should deal with this if it happens to anyone. If you are finding that the group discussions are hard going, you can stop.

- Some of my ideas for strategies that we could put in place in the event of any member experiencing uncomfortable emotions during the memory work process:
1. The group could pause for as long as it is necessary for the participant to feel comfortable again;

2. if necessary, the participant feeling uncomfortable could leave the group until she feels comfortable enough to rejoin the group, or not;

3. debriefing after each session will be an inbuilt feature of the process;

- As well as attending to any immediate emotional discomfort that may arise, a list of qualified counsellors will be provided for participants wishing to seek further professional counselling assistance.

- Most importantly: you are quite free to decide whether or not to participate and to withdraw at any time without explanation. You can just stop.

- Written informed consent will be undertaken which clearly states a participant’s right to cease involvement at any time, including the right to request deletion of, or re-negotiation of, her written or taped segments.

- With all of the above in mind, it should be noted that although memory-work is a community/collective research method, my thesis is not. This means that I will ultimately be responsible for making decisions and choices about what to include and not to include. I will exercise these choices AFTER all participants have made their decisions about what they would like included, or not.

- Welcome aboard, if that is your choice; and thank you for your interest if you choose to not get involved.

This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Ethics Review Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Human Rights Ethics Officer (tel: 02 47 360 169). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone Numbers</th>
<th>Specialties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan Grant</td>
<td>8 Shepherd St Chippendale</td>
<td>9211 4510</td>
<td>individual and couple counselling; TA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkana Therapy Centre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celeste Howden</td>
<td>8 Shepherd St Chippendale</td>
<td>9211 4510</td>
<td>psychotherapy; counselling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkana Therapy Centre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christine Jordan</td>
<td>185 Elizabeth St Sydney</td>
<td>4226 2627 0418 490383</td>
<td>depression; anxiety; trauma; D&amp;A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychologist; Psychotherapist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deborah Thomas</td>
<td>Rozelle</td>
<td>9818 6054</td>
<td>food &amp; weight issues; relationship; depression;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psycotherapist; Reg. Psychologist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>childhood abuse; trauma; life fulfilment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Cohen</td>
<td>St Marys Leichhardt</td>
<td>0401 220478</td>
<td>individuals, couples, parents &amp; survivors of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsellor / Psychotherapist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>abuse; relationship; grief &amp; loss; self esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annette Murphy</td>
<td>Bondi Junction</td>
<td>9387 8199</td>
<td>relationship; grief &amp; loss; anxiety &amp; depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual, Couple &amp; Family Therapy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gai Baker-Luz</td>
<td>Coogee Annandale</td>
<td>9665 1777 0419 237032</td>
<td>relationship; depression; anxiety; grief; [Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reg. Psychologist Individual &amp; Couple</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Care Rebate; fees income assessed]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Therapy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kym Roylance</td>
<td>1st floor, 92 Glebe Pt Road</td>
<td>9660 7308 0418 294293</td>
<td>individual &amp; couples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psycotherapist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jayne L Wells</td>
<td>9569 2627</td>
<td></td>
<td>self worth; anxieties; work issues; relationship;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychologist Psychotherapist Hypnotherapist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>body symptoms / illness; dreamwork; addictions;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>traumas; sexuality; bereavement / loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennie McArthur</td>
<td>Newtown</td>
<td>9516 1776 0412 843629</td>
<td>psychotherapy; counselling; hypnotherapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie Rea &amp; Christine Wilkinson</td>
<td>9810 1818</td>
<td></td>
<td>addiction; abuse; relationship; parenting;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical Psychologist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>sexuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaye Matthews</td>
<td>Leichhardt</td>
<td>9518 0188</td>
<td>individual; relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Address</td>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karel Vine</td>
<td>Suite 2 2–4 Booth St Balmain; or 3 Azalea Court Penrith</td>
<td>0414 718027 4733 4187</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Sawyer</td>
<td>98a Willoughby Rd, Crows Nest</td>
<td>9437 1938 0418 114665</td>
<td>anxiety; depression; grief &amp; loss; relationship; health issues [Health Fund Rebates]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deborah Gould</td>
<td>242a Oxford St Paddington</td>
<td>0400 581112</td>
<td>individual; depression; anxiety; other life concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronwyn Cintio</td>
<td>Balmain</td>
<td>9818 4405</td>
<td>individuals; couples; parents &amp; survivors of abuse &amp; trauma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan Adams</td>
<td>Chatswood</td>
<td>9413 2496</td>
<td>individuals; couples; family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosara Squirchuk</td>
<td>Annandale Surry Hills</td>
<td>0407 286738</td>
<td>couples &amp; individuals; relationship; D&amp;A; gambling; career problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLYSSN</td>
<td>Sydney’s Southern Suburbs</td>
<td>9382 8346 (Sally)</td>
<td>for under 25s <a href="http://www.glyssn.com">www.glyssn.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney Counselling Centre</td>
<td>Level 1 1 Erskineville Rd, Newtown</td>
<td>9415 2223</td>
<td>depression; anxiety; D&amp;A; anger; eating problems; self-esteem; relationships</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D
CONSENT FORM

Lesbian Language Project

Consent Form

I consent to participate in this project. This will mean taking part in group meetings. The Memory-Work group process is one aspect of the research. The group will meet 5–6 times. The sessions will last around two hours each, one evening per week.

The group will comprise between 6 and 10 people, including the researcher. Meetings will involve discussing experiences of being/growing up lesbian and the notion of inclusion-exclusion.

The group will decide on a “cue” which everyone is going to write about in the third person. We will write about experiences relating to the cure, and bring them to the group. In the group session, we will read one another’s memories and discuss them. These discussions will be taped.

Your signature is required prior to the commencement of the project.

| I have read and understood, and have a copy, of the memory-work information sheet describing this project. I understand that I am free to stop participating at any time. I don’t have to explain why, and there will be no repercussions for withdrawing from the project. |
|---|---|
| Participant’s signature | Researcher’s signature |

Date:
APPENDIX E  
MEMORY-WORK NARRATIVES

SESSION 1: FIRST LESBIAN MEMORY

Beth  In preschool, Beth had one teacher which she really liked. The name and even the face of this teacher didn't matter. It was just the height of this teacher that was important. When Beth used to hug this female teacher (which she did quite often), Beth’s nose lined up perfectly with her teacher’s pelvis area and the smells that Beth got were just fascinating. Beth was always very secretive about these incidents for it was not the sort [of thing] an ordinary girl did. She felt very weird and almost dirty, when she would hug this teacher.

Clare  [attended, retracted written narrative]

Daria  Daria and Jenny were in the bedroom and the door was shut. They were practising kissing and lying on top of one another, for when they got married. They were 14 and had been best friends for seven years, practising kissing and massaging a lot. Auntie Joan was yelling out from outside the door: ‘It’s not normal’ and ‘what are you doing in there, it’s not normal.’

Evie  Evie liked Rosa. She was plump, brown-skinned, and had long black hair. She was from [Country]. Evie used to like touching Rosa – could have been on the waist walking in the hall, on the leg sitting in class was a good one, got a good reaction and entertained herself during boring classes – any other part of the body she could get away with in public. Evie was called ‘Wandering Hands’ by Rosa and her friends and they began calling her a ‘lemon’. Evie thought this was funny really, cause she didn’t think she was a lemon, wasn’t even entirely sure what it was, and really and truly, because Evie didn’t take it seriously, neither did anyone else. It was pretty light-hearted, and the most excellent thing about that light-heartedness was that Evie could keep touching Rosa. Other girls told her about Donna – who was known to be a lesbian at school, the only (other) one known of. Evie looked at her a lot after that, to try and understand about lesbians, but she never went near her, and never ever talked to her – she was too foreign and too
different. She was the dark side, scary, off limits, out of bounds. But it was kinda interesting to know she was there. As long as Evie wasn’t one of her, or like her (in appearance etc), or talked to her, she remained the wandering-handed lemon, who was not a lesbian, completely accepted by her friends.

Georgie Georgie’s first experience of lesbian exclusion was when I was about 11 years old. Sitting in a class at school, we were all crowded in together watching a film. A sense of close physical presence, a lack of seats, and a stuffed film projector set the scene. While the teacher fumbled with the equipment, a friend thought up a game to fill in the boredom – stroking each other’s arm until a sense of paralysis into the hand was felt. Other senses were not paralyzed and a sense of prickliness in other places was a surprise. We sat there stroking arms until we noticed the teacher looking at us repeatedly and uncomfortably. ‘Would you two stop that. You will not touch each other like that, thank you!’ Embarrassment! What was wrong? I felt alienated from the rest of the class. My friend and I never discussed it, we never touched each other again, but I had a sense of being a bit different and it was ‘bad’ but felt good.

Sophie Sophie had a little friend. She can’t remember her name, but she can remember how she felt about her friend’s mother. Sophie was about eight at the time and she and her friend would go to her friend’s place. Sophie would sit and gaze at her friend’s mother, listening to every word, watching every movement, absorbing her smell, tingling at her occasional touch. Everyone in the neighbourhood knew about it but they just laughed, thought it was cute the way Sophie adored Barbara so much. ‘Sophie wants to be like Barbara,’ they said to each other. ‘She’ll get over it soon, she’ll be into boys soon.’ Sophie wonders if they’re still waiting for it to happen.

SESSION 2: ADOLESCENT EXPERIENCE

Beth [did not attend this session]

Clare [did not attend this session]

Daria It was [year 10]. Daria walked into the classroom and headed for her usual desk where she and Jenny always sat together in the front row. But Jenny was sitting in the seat behind with Rita. Rita was the number one femme
fatale in the class because she had a boyfriend and [did] her hair during every recess and every lunchtime. Daria was devastated and had to sit alone in the front row all by herself. Everyone would know that Jenny liked Rita more than her. She tried to join in with the two behind her so they wouldn’t know how she felt. Jenny said something like: ‘It’s just this once.’ Daria cried about it after she got home.

**Evie**

Evie was 19, on her way to meet two old girlfriends from school in San Francisco. Evie told her boyfriend that she was going to find a girlfriend in San Francisco, given it was the gay capital of the world. Her boyfriend did not have a strong reaction, didn’t really take it too seriously. Evie told one of her old friends from Aus about her attraction to women. The friend had a positive (more or less) reply: She had been attracted to women also, and she and her boyfriend had slept with a few (i.e. threesomes). (Wow! Another positive response!) Evie did not find a girlfriend or go anywhere near any lesbians except once – at an outdoor Joan Armatrading concert. There were dykes everywhere, but though Evie’s friend saw some of them kissing, I didn’t. I really wanted to though, see them kissing in public like that.

**Georgie**

Georgie was the joker of her group of friends, always the one to laugh at herself and point out how silly, distracted, naïve she was, basically how she felt different but wanted it to be ‘OK’. One way of being different was her love of sport over boys. Her sports of choice was cricket and hockey. One thing that cricket and hockey had in mind was Janet – a fit, confident, boyish girl. Janet and Georgie started up the school cricket team, organised the equipment to be bought, touted for fellow players. Georgie thought Janet was ‘the best’ and had often had daydreams about collapsing on the grass together after a hard game on the field. What they did on the ground was always censored, as the feelings these thoughts stirred, physically and emotionally, were recognised by the good Christian girl that Georgie was, as outside the boundary of friendship.

Georgie and Janet were both selected to represent Sydney schoolgirls’ top team, and along with two sisters who played in an opposing team, they would make a carload of giggling, rough, joke-telling trips to wherever we were to play. One trip, Janet was whispering a lot to one of the others and I
sensed a three-to-one secret, and Georgie was ‘the secret’ being joked about. Georgie knew they were laughing at my idolising of Janet, and at the same time, she was flirting with them, which evoked great feelings of jealousy that Georgie had to rationalise away. Nothing like any of the daydreams happened between Janet and Georgie and they went their separate ways, only to run into each other 25 years later in a ‘Dykes on Bikes’ Mardi Gras parade. Janet said: ‘Well, if it isn’t Georgie … must have been all that cricket we played!’ Georgie had the pattern of lust and longing, never really acted out. Lots of effort was spent throughout her first 20 years of life trying not to be different, or feel different, and rationalising away her feelings to other girls.

Sophie
Sophie wanted people to like her, she would do what she could to please them. her father said she was the diplomat in the family. She was at a girls’ school, in [year 8]. […] Sophie wanted to be in academic strand, not commercial or home economics. Sister Mary was one of the head nuns – she was buxom and brilliant and it was rumoured she had decided to become a nun after having led a very colourful life. Sophie looked on Sister Mary with wonderment and awe. One day when Sophie was sitting in the front row, she overheard Sister Mary in the corridor mentioning her name to one of the girls in her class. The girl said, ‘No.’ Sophie thought she was saying that Sophie wasn’t capable of being in academic strand and was devastated. Later that day Sister Mary came into the [room] and announced that 10 girls in the class had disgraced themselves, been reprimanded and their parents informed as they had been found touching each other in [sport] storeroom. Sophie had a best friend – Anne. Sophie had been to Anne’s place and Anne’s parents seemed to like Sophie. A few months after that, just before the end of the year, Anne’s parent[s] refused for Anne to associate with Sophie and Anne wouldn’t talk to Sophie. Sophie didn’t understand why. Sophie did get into academic strand and was very happy. Thru her studies she felt she could be true to herself and please people at the same time.
SESSION 3: TELLING FAMILY (COMING OUT TO A FAMILY MEMBER)

Beth  About a year and a half ago, Beth decided to verbalise some recent thoughts to her father about her sexuality. She said to her dad, one afternoon: ‘Dad, I think I’m a lesbian’ and he laughed at her. When Beth, finally, worked up the courage to ask him about this he said he had laughed at her because calling herself by such a label is too confining. But Beth has not forgotten this incident and was not satisfied with the explanation he gave for it.

Clare  Clare lay in bed not wanting to move, not feeling anything but numb. Her parents came into her room, crying, asking that Clare do something about her health, or they’d have to do something. They didn’t want to lose her. They asked if it had anything to do with Vicky. Clare answered that they’d broken up. She’d never told her parents about her relationship with Vicky. They said that all they wanted was for her to get better. They loved her and wanted her to get better. They were sorry she’d broken up with her girlfriend.

Daria  She had been to a university party and had met two lesbians and one of them had propositioned her playfully. Daria was stunned out of her boots. She was about 17 and this was her first meeting with lesbians. So the next weekend she went home to her parents’ place as usual and walked into the kitchen. Her mother was sitting at the table and her father was by the stove and her sister who was married and also visiting was also sitting at the table in the very large kitchen. They always gathered in the kitchen around the table.

‘Guess what?’ Daria said. Did they look up? She doesn’t remember. ‘I’m a lesbian,’ she said, feeling so happy to know what it was that she was at last. Not a weirdo, but a lesbian. Her mother said, ‘That’s nice, as long as you’re happy,’ and then ‘It doesn’t run in my side of the family.’ Her father said, ‘Don’t be so fucking stupid,’ and walked out the back door. He was really angry. Daria felt puzzled by his anger when she felt so good. So she decided to not talk to him about it, he was usually angry about something. She expected everyone to be as happy for her as she was for herself.

Evie  One day, it was time for Evie to come out to her grandmother. By then, she had come out to everyone else in her family, but her grandmother, who was
of course elderly, she feared would have a stronger reaction than others due to her more conservative background. Evie did not want her frail and beloved little nanna to be physically or emotionally devastated. So, after a couple of years of being out and living with a partner and visiting her GM with her partner, and having her GM over to Evie and her partner’s house for visits, she finally plucked up the courage and decided it was time. She sat her N down and began talking about the weather, and for about two hours, she talked about all manner of things. It was a bit strange, not a normal set up or convo. Then she said it: ‘Nanna, Maddie and me are partners,’ and then came the reply: ‘Yes dear, I know.’ Oh my God! How did she know? When? What a brilliant Nanna, who adored and loved and accepted me still, and loved and accepted my partner! I was pretty flabbergasted, and the convo was over a minute later (my Nanna was released!), and I just then loved and adored and respected my Nanna more than ever.

**Georgie** Georgie had often imagined what would be the effect on her brother when she told him that she was a ‘lesbian’. The odds were in her favour, she thought. He seemed unencumbered by a strong religious ‘fire and brimstone’ overlay, having given away the church and active Christian belief years earlier. She had not wanted to tell him on the phone, but due to his work and family commitments it didn’t seem to work out when plans were made to visit in the country. Georgie had been feeling stressed and depressed about her life and had talked to John about things in general that were contributing. But she felt she couldn’t really communicate honestly with him until she told him about her real self. His reaction was one of relief and disappointment. ‘We’ve known for ages. We wanted to ask but wanted you to feel you could tell us.’ He went on to tell Georgie about their gay friends.

**Sophie** Sophie was 18 when she realised without any doubt she was a lesbian. She was at university in her first year. She had joined the university feminist group with her friend Isabel and can still remember the feeling of exhilaration and sense of ‘coming home’ when she walked into the women’s room to be surrounded by 15 gorgeous dykes. Sophie had always been close to her mum and on realising, wanted to tell her the exciting news. When Sophie said, ‘Mum, I think I’m a lesbian,’ her mum said, ‘I’ve known for
years Sophie.’ Later that night Sophie couldn’t sleep and got up to get a glass of water. She heard her parents arguing. Her father said, ‘It’s your fault, if you weren’t so strong-willed with all those feminist ideas thrown down her throat she’d be normal.’ Her mother replied in anger, ‘My fault … it’s in your side of the family, not mine.’ Sophie felt betrayed by her mum’s statement and felt saddened. That night she remembered about her cousin Joy – her father’s niece. That must be who mum was referring to. Whispers and innuendos had always followed a mention of her name. ‘I must go and see Joy,’ thought Sophie to herself.

SESSION 4: RELATIONSHIPS—EXTERNAL IMPACT

Beth

Beth had a friend thru school who was 2 years ahead of her. Beth always looked up to this girl because she was attractive, popular and confident in herself. A couple of years after Beth had left school and when this girl had finished school, the girl had moved to Sydney and contact between the two was sparse. One time, when Beth went to Syd to visit this friend, they ended up quite drunk, which meant that this girl dropped her very heterosexual image, and Beth and her had an intimate encounter. The next morning, nothing was said between the two women and the girl from Syd actually seemed quite uncomfortable with what had happened the previous night. Almost a year ago, purely by chance, Beth met up with this woman in the street. They went to the park to talk to one another ‘cause they hadn’t seen each other for a while. (This woman had recently been diagnosed with Bipolar or manic depression and was in quite a fragile emotional state.) After talking for quite some time, discussing a range of topics including what had happened a few years ago between them (which Beth had brought up), they parted ways. As they did they hugged then quite impassively. This woman kissed Beth, then they stared at each other for some 10 sec, and in that stare they realised the possibilities of a relationship but, more importantly, Beth understood why this woman was so terrified of the prospect.

Clare

[did not attend this week]
**Daria** They were shopping at [town], a lovely married couple with one trolley. Up and down the aisles enjoying the secret pleasure of the mundane that comes from years of shopping together, discussing and choosing each item as if it were of national importance. Then Nina spotted one of her students with a parent approaching them in their aisle. ‘Quick, get another trolley and pretend you don’t know me!’ said Nina. It was all so sudden that Daria did this unquestioningly. Nina and the mother talked for a long time and Daria aimlessly pushed her empty trolley up and down the other aisles. They had argued about this a lot.

**Evie** Lisa was from a heavily Catholic [...] country. At home, she was well used to being completely hidden from public view—Nobody outside of her family or close circle of friends knew she was a lesbian, and really, to be safe in that country (physically, keeping jobs, her Catholic religion, etc) she needed to be that way. Her mother went to church twice a day, absolutely hated Lisa’s partner of 5 years. Lisa’s world was actually very straight. Evie, however, was well used to being out. She always lived in gay or lesbian areas/suburbs, always sought to live in gay-lesbian households, had mostly queer friends, went to queer venues and events, etc, was out and accepted by her family. Her world was very queer. Lisa and Evie met in [city]. To Evie, life was not really any different – this was a liberal city. However, for Lisa, this was a very different experience. She was not too interested in being suddenly out everywhere. She respected and valued the privacy of not being out. So it took a while for them to agree on where to live – ‘out’ in a queer house, or ‘hidden’ as two single, travelling, non-sexual girls sharing a room (this was not uncommon in [city]). Evie really didn’t like hiding, it felt like her soul was lying, and Lisa was absolutely uncomfortable having her private life open to the world. They both respected each other’s position, and they found a compromise in that instance, but the tension inherent in this dynamic built and was wearing for both of them. In time they realised these differences.

**Georgie** When Georgie’s father was dying, she was summoned to the hospital where she was with him, along with her mother, when he died. This was Georgie’s first experience of real grief and she felt numbed and in a surreal state with
her emotions. Georgie’s partner Sandi was around during this time, and Georgie was needing her support but had nothing to give at that time, in return. With her brother and mother the funeral was arranged and Georgie stayed with her mum during these few days. Sandi continued on with her normal routine, phone calls being the only form of communication. The day of the funeral Georgie went home. She discussed the format of the service with Sandi and the question arose, ‘Where will I sit?’ Georgie was unsure what to do because she and Sandi were not ‘out’ to her family and Sandi and Georgie’s mother did not get on at all. The feeling was mutual. So Sandi decided to sit down the back, with her best buddy. After the funeral, back at home, Georgie wanted to spend time with Sandi. She felt very cut off from her and needed to reconnect. When they got home Sandi went to her room and started packing a bag. ‘What are you doing? Where are you going?’ Georgie asked. ‘I can’t handle this,’ said Sandi. ‘Where are you going? When will you be back?’ Georgie asked. ‘I don’t know,’ was the reply. Georgie begged, literally begged Sandi to stay. She felt so vulnerable there on her own with her grief but Sandi walked out, got on her bike and left. She returned three days after no word to Georgie. How could the damage done be mended?

Sophie

Sophie shut off emotionally at eight. She started to open up at 18 but after three years of intense emotional upheaval Sophie shut down again. This time she developed anorexia. The anorexia affected Sophie’s life for the next 10 years – over that time Sophie used [sport and study] to get herself back on an even keel. For years in therapy Sophie has been trying to find a reason for her bout of anorexia. She now feels that anorexia was due to her shutting off her emotions and sexuality from eight years of age. Sophie’s recovery tool from anorexia was study, the same thing she used as age eight to early 20s. Sophie had a few relationships but none of them really connected with her inner being. Sophie met Amanda six years after her Saturn return. Sophie had achieved her [academic] goals. She wanted to have a good long-term relationship. Amanda’s alcoholism and drug addiction meant that the kind of relationship Sophie wanted wasn’t possible. But that relationship was instrumental in getting Sophie to work on herself, on her emotions and
finally come to terms with who she is and what she wanted in life. Amanda was the catalyst for Sophie to grow up emotionally. She will always be special for that reason.

**SESSION 5: POSITIVE LESBIAN EXPERIENCE**

**Beth**  
Beth and Debbie were at a pub in [city]. It was the second night in a row that they had gone out together and sparks were flying between them, but nothing had happened. Beth had just gone to the toilet and upon returning found a guy attempting to chat up Debbie. Beth then proceeded to whisper into Debbie’s ear: ‘Maybe if I kiss you he will go away’ said in a joking manner, of course. Beth then started affectionately stroking Debbie’s leg which was reciprocated by her, then one thing led to another. Note: the guy got the message and left.

**Clare**  
[did not attend]

**Daria**  
They went every Sunday to a coffee shop; they lived in [town], worked full time in [city] and spent every weekend [...] tending to [home duties]. Then at about 3 pm on Sundays, [...] they would scrounge around in their bags and in the house for enough change to buy a latte, a capuccino, and a croissant each or to share, with jam. They would sit at the café for hours, talking, reading the papers, sometimes holding hands, sometimes knees touching. Always some body part touching some body part. And then they would wander home.

**Evie**  
She was very resistant to limiting her ‘moment of positivity as a lesbian’ to just one event. Cause, Evie thinks it’s all brilliant. It’s a life force. She feels excited and wonderful and lucky every day to be a leso. Evie loves women: emotionally, sexually, spiritually (and mindfully?). She loves being woman identified and loves feeling a part of this world-wide lesbian family. [...] ‘Why me?’ she sometimes wonders. ‘How come I got to be this lucky?’

**Georgie**  
[attended but did not submit a written narrative, told a story during discussion]
**Sophie**  The most positive thing for me about being a lesbian is that it is not a choice; and acceptance by myself and those close to me feels like acknowledgment of what is. A sense of community is important in some ways.

**Note:** Session 5 was a ‘farewell’ session and so the narratives were more in coda-mode rather than memory work mode; there were no discussions triggered by the narratives, just free-flowing conversation, eating, and ‘goodbyes’.
APPENDIX F
DISCUSSION EXCERPTS IN ORDER OF USE, PER CHAPTER

CHAPTER 1

Discussion 1.1 ‘When I Was Younger’

Beth Well (…) you see with me um when I was younger, I considered myself bisexual (…) so I would (…) bring uh (…) girls and boys (…) basically and uh (……) So it’s never (…) really been an issue …

[Session 3a, p13]

CHAPTER 2

Discussion 2.1 ‘It’s Not My Fault!’

1. Daria And [mother] looking up slowly: ‘it doesn’t run in my side of the family’.

(group laughter)

2. Daria Ob-obviously it was something that was (…) h- h- w- you know (…) passed on (…) through somebody. So it’s interesting that (…)

3. Evie ➔ Everyone trying to not (…) be blamed for it (…) as parents

4. Daria Mmm, yeah

maybe that’s it, yeah.

5. Evie Really (…) ‘it’s not my fault! I didn’t do it!’

[Session 3a, p6]

Discussion 2.2 ‘I Was … She Was’

Evie And that was okay, and it was, and like, I was (…) just (…) she was surprised about that (laughs).

[Session 2, p4]

Discussion 2.3 ‘Me and I, Not Her’

1. Sophie I think it’s um (…) I mean, writing the story in (…) you know, like, writing a story in third person (…) may be quite a useful thing, but (…) like you, Evie, whenever I’m talking about feelings (…) and
they’re my feelings, I wanna say plenty, I wanna say…

(group laughter)

2. Sophie … ‘me’ and ‘I’.

3. Georgie Yeah! (laughs)

4. Evie Not her!

5. Sophie Not her! (laughs) Yeah! (laughs) It wasn’t her that’s done the work, it’s me!

(group laughter)

Discussion 2.4 ‘Um ... Uh’

Georgie And just like, you know, the daydreaming, you know, I’d never actually allowed myself to really (...) let the daydreams get to a point of (...) confronting myself with the um (...) the reality of what I was (...) I was uh (...) fantasising over (...). The self-censorship had sort of kicked in pretty strongly, I guess, (...) from (...) the earlier (...) stuff.

Discussion 2.5 ‘The Cat Among the Pigeons’

1. Evie Imagine

2. Georgie → … that I was ostracised by the three of them after that.

3. Evie Imagine the difference if she had’ve had a positive response (...) to you.

4. Daria Mmm!

5. Georgie No!

6. Daria It would’ve been

7. Georgie It would’ve put the cat among the pigeons, wouldn’t it?

8. Daria that would’ve been a united force
Discussion 2.6 ‘Sprung!’

Sophie  Apparently she-she, when she first saw me um (...) she thought (...) ‘oh shit! It’s Sophie!’ (laughs) ] you know

Evie  she’ll she’ll find me out!

[Session 3a, p1]

CHAPTER 3

Discussion 3.1 ‘What Are We?!’

1. Daria  But um (...) stories (...) of kissing, but doing other things. You know, like we were (...) it’s (...) or that the children were experimenting or doing something but it wasn’t actually … I didn’t hear that (...) can’t find it (...) […] That it wasn’t acknowledged. We didn’t know what we were, basically. I didn’t, uh, Daria didn’t know that she was attracted to Jenny (...). Clare and Carla were rehearsing …

2. Clare  \( \rightarrow \) the right way to do things

\[ […] \]

3. Anon  Yeah.

4. Daria  \( \rightarrow \) and were play acting.

[Session 1a, p1]

Discussion 3.2 ‘Smug Lesbians’

1. Daria  But I also (...) have that smug and superior feeling (...) about (…) adults.

2. Sophie  Being a lesbian?

3. Daria  Pardon?

4. Sophie  Smug and superior about being a lesbian ] (laughs)

5. Daria  Yes (laughs) I think it’s (...) transferred now to um (...) being a lesbian

6. Georgie  \( \rightarrow \)You must be very secure (laughs).

(group laughter)
7. Sophie    Yes, we are (laughs).

Discussion 3.3 ‘It Was Wrong’
Beth    Well (...) I probably wouldn’t have been able to find the words for it back then but there was something about me that I didn’t want to tell anyone (...) what I had been doing (...) because it was wrong ( ).

Discussion 3.4 ‘Proud of Me’
Beth    Think it was knowing that someone older than me was proud of knowing me, even if what you felt was, ummmmmh.

Discussion 3.5 ‘Ten Girls Touching’
1. Georgie  So, you’re saying in that you were named as one of the ten girls yes?
2. Sophie   That’s what they were talking about and I thought that (...)
3. Georgie   This was talking about academic
4. Sophie   The, the head of the thing was asking this kid in the class whether I should be allowed to go in the academic strand or not.
(group laughter)
5. Sophie   And she was actually asking whether I was one of the girls (...) with (...) in the PE storeroom (laughing while talking)
6. Evie     Aaaah!
7. Sophie   (laughs)
8. Evie     Were you?
9. Sophie   No! I was so um
10. Daria    So there were ten girls at your school touching each other?
11. Evie     (laughs)
12. Georgie  Oooh wow!
13. Daria  Yeah wow!
14. Evie  Shees!
15. Daria  We have envy!
      (group laughter)
16. Evie  We have envy!
17. Anon  \( (\quad) \)
      \( (\text{group laughter}) \)
18. Georgie  \( \text{Maybe there’s something to say for the Catholic system after all.} \)
      (group laughter)
19. Sophie  D- you recognise this feeling? [to Georgie]
      (group laughter)
20. Sophie  But, I- I, but th- then, and that was 12, it was well and truly established in me (…) that there was no room for me emotionally (…) my sexuality or anything like that and I was focused totally on academic … That’s the only way that I felt that I could (…) be myself and please people at the same time (laughs). Or please my parents, you know, be the good little girl.

[Session 2b, p2]

CHAPTER 4

Discussion 4.1 ‘The Guessy-World’

1. Evie  It’s like we’re creating this kind of, you know, guessy-world of coming out parties and getting onto the bus and announcing it.

2. Daria  Well I found it really boring, you know, to (…) I- I think that you’ve known for nearly my whole life (…) I- I hate all those little comments. And they always trigger me. ‘Ooh there’s a nice husband for you.’ I go ‘I’m a lesbian!!’

(group laughter)

[Session 3b, p18]
Discussion 4.2 ‘Let’s Celebrate!’

1. Daria  What- what I find interesting is th-that y-your (...) mother knew (...) but didn’t tell you. Like if (...) if my mother had known (...) or if anyone had known (...) I would’ve loved them to tell me.

2. Beth  Mmm.

3. Daria  So that I’d have an idea that it was okay or something.

4. Beth  Maybe it was kept hush-hush because (...) it wasn’t right. In their eyes.

5. Daria  Yeah, yeah (...) obviously it was something (...) it wasn’t something that you’d celebrate, like.

6. Beth  Yeah.

7. Daria  You know, ‘I think your daughter’s a dyke!’

8. Beth  Ooh wheee!

9. Daria  Oooh! Lavatska!!

(group laughter)

10. Daria  ‘She’s only eight, let’s have a party to celebrate!’

11. Sophie  Wouldn’t that be wonderful!

(group laughter)

[Session 3a, p4]

Discussion 4.3 ‘Coming-Out Party’

1. Sophie  Clare knows somebody who (...) they had a coming-out party

2. Clare  → ] A celebration

3. Sophie  → ] at the age of 12

4. Georgie  Oohh! Isn’t that fantastic!

[Session 3b, p7]
### Discussion 4.4 ‘Dismissed as Cute’

1. Sophie  
   But if it (...) if it’d been (...) if (...) if they hadn’t dismissed it as cute, and something else, there would have been shame. But what you said (...) was basically, they (...) they didn’t see it for what it was, and (...) they, you know, kept us in (...) in their world.

2. Daria  
   → And made it palatable

3. Sophie  
   → Yeah, so (...) so, you know, so (...) that you don’t feel the shame when they do that, but if they knew the truth you would feel shame.

[Session 1a, p7]

### Discussion 4.5 ‘Not Knowing Why’

Beth  
In most of the stories there’s a sense of (...) uh (...) it wasn’t okay. But not knowing that it was (...) not okay. Not knowing why

[Session 3b, p20]

### Discussion 4.6 ‘Having To Be Hidden’

Sophie  
I think (...) um (...) this whole thing of having to be hidden really affects our relationships. You know, like (...) a heterosexual couple can be natural with each other (...) and get acknowledgment for that. (...) No matter how w- well developed we are we’re still (...) looking to see if it’s safe. You know, like, we’re still monitoring the situation. We’re not reacting spontaneously. We’re still (...)

[Session 3b, pp20–21]

### Discussion 4.7 ‘Quite Natural for Us’

Daria  
Seems that what, what (...) we were (...) we were doing was (...) was (...) quite natural for us but (...) we were being confronted with (...) with other people’s disapproval.

[Session 1a, p1]

### Discussion 4.8 ‘The Real Thing’

1. Evie  
   Well (...) the only reason that this was okay (...) at school was (...) because it wasn’t (...) real, it wasn’t (...). The real thing was (...) not okay.
2. Daria  Mmm. That other young girl was the real thing.
3. Evie  Mmmm, mmmm.
4. Daria  Because she had the real label.
5. Evie  Mmm. She was not okay.
6. Beth  At what point were you
7. Evie  → Twelve-ish.
8. Daria  She was twelve-ish.
9. Beth  And at that point did you have awareness? That you were like this girl? Or …
10. Evie  Well, I was just at, um (…) looking and wondering and thinking
11. Beth  → Yeah
12. Evie  → But really, I didn’t (…) think, I thought, ‘it’s not really me’. But I could see how it was kind of connected to (…) touching girls. But it kind of wasn’t me. I didn’t care. I just knew what I enjoyed. Touching.
13. Beth  (laughter) Yeah. Hmm.
14. Soph  You didn’t want (…) all the negativity with it then.
15. Evie  No (…) no. Didn’t want all that heavy stuff.
16. Daria  Did you (…) did you […] perceive it as being negative?
17. Evie  I knew Donna the other girl was.
18. Beth  Oh, okay.
19. Evie  (…) the dark side of the ‘off limits’ experience. Never talked to her (…) just (…) just looked and wondered. But to be (…) kind of step over to her would have been (…) being it and being her and that would have been a very (…) different (…) story.
20. Daria  Mmm. But there was an awareness (…) that, that didn’t, that’s not what (…) you weren’t gonna go there.
21. Evie  → Mmm
22. Daria that way. But it was okay to be a lemon. There’s like a humour


24. Clare It’s actually very funny (laughs).

25. Beth Hmm.

26. Evie I mean, it was a really (…) something really positive about that
experience. I enjoyed it a lot, man. That I got away with it was (…) amazing

27. Anon ⇒ Hmm

28. Evie and fantastic for me at the time ( ).

29. Anon Hmm.

30. Daria I’m pretty sure ( )

Discussion 4.9 ‘My Friends Didn’t Hate Me’

I didn’t expect to get away with it. I thought at the first (…) I don’t remember the first time I tried or whatever, but I expected that (…) to be not okay. And so the fact that it was okay was just brilliant but I didn’t expect it (…) you know, beyond that, that I would I would get (…) a response like that. I don’t even know if I would’ve really wanted it or was ready for it. I wasn’t conscious enough for (…) I wasn’t aware (…) at 12, I was not aware. (…) I wouldn’t have said that I was kind of behind a (…) or doing something (…) behind a veil or something ’cause that, that’s all I did know about. My friends knew about me but didn’t hate me.

Discussion 4.10 ‘Freud and Breast Milk’ (a)

1. Daria She was a- heading to be a psy- a clinical psychologist and (…)
everybody knew that if you were a dyke you didn’t get enough breast milk.

⇒ (group laughter)
2. Daria ➔ when you were a child, baby and Freud said that, I mean this was (...) quoted to me in- in my [work].

(group laughter)

3. Evie Maybe it wasn’t the milk ] maybe it was the sucking!

4. Georgie ↓ But how did Freud know that? ↓ (group laughter)

5. Sophie ] Maybe it was the what?

↓ (group laughter)

6. Sophie ] The sucking?

↓ (group laughter)

Discussion 4.11 ‘Freud and Breast Milk’ (b)

Daria Yeah, yeah, I’ve been - I think I was hanging off my mother’s tits until I was 18 months, like, I should be so heterosexual!

[Session 4a, p5]

Discussion 4.12 ‘Holding Hands in San Francisco

1. Georgie Because you wouldn’t be able to walk down the street with your girlfriend and hold hands, you know, sort of thing.

2. Sophie But you might go to San Francisco. (laughs)

[Session 2b, p16]

Discussion 4.13 ‘Voodoo Doll’

1. Daria That was the most horrible thing that (...) in my (...) in terms of my love life, you know (...) the most horrible thing that happened.

2. Anon Hmmm.

[...]

3. Sophie (laughs) That bitch!

4. Georgie Yay! A little voodoo doll with big teeth here!

[Session 2b, p16]
Discussion 4.14 ‘My Girl’

1. Sophie  It’d be interesting to see what’s happened to Rita (…) now.
2. Daria  I already know.
3. Sophie (laughs)
4. Evie  She’s dead!
5. Daria  I still don’t like her.
6. Evie  She was mysteriously murdered by a stake through the heart (group laughter)

(group laughter)

7. Georgie  And on, written on the thing was ‘I hate you’  ↓ (group laughter)
8. Daria  ‘You stole my love’
9. Georgie  ↓ my girl (group laughter)
10. Evie  ‘Burn in hell!’ (group laughter)

[Session 2b, pp17–18]

Discussion 4.15 ‘Why This?’

1. Evie  My father asked a lot of questions and I could see that he wasn’t quite (…) ‘Why do you all have to congregate together?’ You know, ‘why do you all have short hair?’ ‘Why this?’ [indicates herself] So I’m not (laughs)

(group laughter)

2. Evie  I guess I didn’t really want to (…) go there. I think he would prefer that I wasn’t. Yeah. So I don’t- I don’t really feel like (…) being part of other people’s problems (…) about it. So I- I just tread in territory where it is fine. (…) That’s okay with me.
### Discussion 4.16 'Lesbian Banner at the RSL’

1. Sophie  
   Okay, so if in future we ever get any kind of negative reaction from families we’ll (...) we’ll suggest that they throw a party for us.  
   (laughs) (...) So definitely to your father. (...) [to Evie]

2. Evie  
   Yeah, and invite all his friends, and (laughs)

3. Sophie  
   ⇒ Oh no! (laughs)

   (group laughter)

4. Sophie  
   No! All your friends!

   (group laughter)

5. Evie  
   ⇒ No! His friends!

6. Georgie  
   And have it at the RSL, right?

   (group laughter)

7. Evie  
   Around the barbeque in the backyard.

8. Sophie  
   With the banner up: ‘I am proud of my (...) um lesbian daughter Evie’  
   (laughs)

9. Georgie  
   Hooo!

10. Evie  
   And a big photo!

11. Sophie  
   (laughs) Yeah! Of father and daughter. (laughs)
12. Daria And a whole bunch of your short-haired friends congregating!

(group laughter)

[Session 3b, pp7–8]

CHAPTER 5

Discussion 5.1 ‘That Extra Weight’

1. Beth We have to be so much more aware.

2. Sophie A- (…) I think that that’s got to affect our relationships. If we can’t be spontaneous in our relationships

3. Anon → Hmm.

4. Sophie → you know, that

5. Anon → Hmm.

6. Sophie → That- that has to affect them, you know, like that or (…) disconnection between us (…) the fact that we, you know, are not accepted in society. (…) I mean there are pockets of society where we are accepted but not generally in society are we fully accepted.

(pause)

7. Evie So that weight that we were talking about or whatever (…) I guess must land in our relationships or something.

8. Sophie Yes.

9. Daria Because remember last- wasn’t it last week or the week before we were talking about the extra amount of energy we have to put into (…) constantly (…) something, coming out, you know ] like, coming out

10. Evie ↓ ( ) monitoring ( )

11. Daria Yeah (…) something like that, so that (…) in terms of energy (…) all the time, so that’s that much energy not going into a main relationship.

[Session 3b, pp20–21]
Discussion 5.2 ‘The Big Issue’

1. Evie I think that relationships (...) I mean, it’s so big, but
2. Georgie → Well, going on from what you’re just saying then.
3. Sophie Hmm! You know, that’s really, you know, well (...) eerie
4. Beth There is that thing
5. Evie → And just the fact that there is so much (...) notoriously (...) our relationships are shorter (...) and whatever else.
6. Daria Can we
7. Evie → And (...) there are so many (...) possible (...) kind of explanations or influences or factors. I don’t know (...) but anyway (...) just to me that’s the big issue.

[Session 3b, pp22–23]

Discussion 5.3 ‘Why We Break Up’

1. Daria So an- an incident of (...) 
2. Evie → Breaking up. 
(laughter)
3. Georgie Oh noooo!!!
(group laughter)
4. Sophie Do you want us to be all depressed ] (laughs)
5. Daria I think that could be really depressing.
(group laughter)
6. Sophie And then … and then …
(group laughter)
7. Evie Well (...) I guess my interest lay in why (...) why we break up and if it’s got something to do with (...) not just (...) ( ) interpersonal things.
8. Georgie The pressures of- of (...) outside pressures.  

[Session 3b, p23]

Discussion 5.4 ‘Sensuality, that Word’

1. Georgie The teacher noticed something
2. Beth ⇒ Yeah
3. Georgie ⇒ was way beyond (...) just raw naughtiness (...) ( )
(pause)
4. Daria You knew (...) you knew something was naughty, though that wasn’t, like, you didn’t really know (..) exactly what
5. Georgie ⇒ Nooo. I just thought
6. Daria ⇒ That rubbing a girl’s arm was naughty, or what?
7. Georgie Yeah, I guess you just, ah, an experience of sen-sensu-sensual-sensualable-sensuality – that word – which, which felt good but (...) it was obvious to the teacher that that’s what it was (...) as opposed to sitting there rubbing someone’s armpit.
(laughter)

[Session 1a, pp4–5]

Discussion 5.5 ‘A Sense of It’

1. Georgie (...) it was in a fairly public setting there’s a sense of not really feeling there was anything wrong with it, but
2. Beth ⇒ Right, yeah
3. Georgie ⇒ but it was labelled as being wrong.

[...]
4. Georgie It was the way that, that, that (...) you
5. Evie ⇓ Yeah
6. Anon ⇓ Ohhh
7. Georgie (...) get a sense of it.

[Session 1a, pp4–5]
**Discussion 5.6 ‘Tingling & Touching’**

1. Evie → Oh, so maybe it was enjoyable (…) something positive that when you were actually (…)
2. Daria → Tingling.
3. Georgie Yes, yes
4. Evie → You’re touching each other.

[Session 2a, p19]

**Discussion 5.7 ‘Shut Door’**

Daria I just, I think I translated it as: it’s not normal to shut the door.
(group laughter)

[Session 1a, p10]

**Discussion 5.8 ‘Just a Little Thing’**

1. Georgie Exactly. That’s what I say, you pay, you pay for your (…) you pay for your um (…) subterfuges (…) at some stage I think. That was what the lesson ( )
2. Evie ‘Cause you had stuff brewing (…) yeah
3. Sophie → But there’s no guarantee that Sandi would have been accepted any more even if you had come out.
4. Georgie Hmm. No but it- yes, but I guess it would’ve meant uh (…) some sort of (…) um you know funerals are one of those times when the (pause)
5. Georgie → the protocol is fairly defined as to who’s included and all that sort of stuff.
6. Anon Hmm.
7. Georgie And even people who don’t get on were included within the funeral. So (…) I think that was just one of those, you know (…) quintessential life experiences that (…) that uh (…) are supposed to be (…) f-fucked-up [whispered] (laughs)

[Session 4b, pp1–3]
**Discussion 5.9 ‘No Position’**

Daria  

[...] But um (...) it wasn’t even- it wasn’t even an option (...) that my partner should be with me. Th- there was no position. And I was out to my family. But in the funeral (...) there was no position for a lesbian’s partner.

[Session 4b, p3]

**Discussion 5.10 ‘Who’s the Other One?’**

1. Evie  
   And just think the other (...) big public place where they don’t want you.

2. Georgie  
   Weddings.

3. Evie  
   Well, just even big family gatherings like Christmas, or (...)

4. Georgie  
   ➔ Well, that’s it. I’m really into family things because we’re totally (...), different, uh, situation with the same person 'cause at her sister’s wedding (...) I was totally accepted by her family and um

5. Anon  
   ➔ Hmm.

6. Georgie  
   ➔ At her sister’s wedding (...) the (...) sisters all got a (...) and I got a corsage. And I remember being in the ladies’ loo (...) and there was this woman at the sink saying (...) ‘And I know there’s two sisters, but there’s three with corsages. Who’s the other one? Where does she fit in?’ And I wasn’t gonna come out of that loo until they left. (laughs)

(group laughter)

[Session 4b, p4]

**Discussion 5.11 ‘A Sister, Not a Partner’**

1. Daria  
   Oh, so you had a position (...) but it wasn’t exactly like a lesbian position. It wasn’t like a partner, you were a sister.

2. Georgie  
   I think they’d sort of- I don’t know, they were just totally blinkered to the reality of the situation. We lived together for 18 years.

3. Evie  
   Oh God!

4. Georgie  
   Almost, no yeah, roughly that.
5. Daria  I guess it felt good to be included (...) on some level (...)  
6. Georgie  \(\rightarrow\) Yeah, I mean I  
7. Daria  \(\rightarrow\) It felt better than not being included.  
8. Georgie  It- it sort of gave me a- um, a false sense of inclusion. I felt very comfortable. It was, as you say, it was almost like I was included as a sister, in fact I was referred to as (...) the ‘other daughter’, you know.

Discussion 5.12 ‘The Mardi Gras Brides’

1. Sophie  Did you see (...) in uh it was one of the Mardi Gras (...) and these two dykes got married and their parents and they were in this carriage or something  
(group laughter)  
2. Sophie  \(\rightarrow\) in the parade  
3. Georgie  \(\rightarrow\) I didn’t see it  
4. Sophie  \(\rightarrow\) and (...) they wore (...) they wore a combination of a (...) top hat and a wedding dress (...) and it looked great, you know, both of them were in the same  
5. Georgie  \(\rightarrow\) Yeah?  
6. Sophie  \(\rightarrow\) you know, they had the wedding dress and the top hat and tails. Looked great. (laughs)  
(group laughter)  
7. Sophie  ‘You wanted me in a white dress, mum (...) here I am!’  
(group laughter)  
8. Georgie  ‘Here it is!’  
9. Daria  On the big float? Look out, world!  
10. Evie  Hmm. (laughs)
Discussion 5.13 ‘Heart on a Slab’

Beth (sighs) (...) I felt like (...) I had just come to my dad and put my heart out on a slab and, you know, it was just (...) thrown right back at me, and (...) and (...) it drove me (...) mad and (...) like, I’d just worked up the courage to say this to him (...) and then he, he does something like this (...) and he just threw me right back.

[Session 3a, p13]

CHAPTER 6

Discussion 6.1 ‘Happy Ending’

Evie I would st-strongly (...) say strongly, that (...) there’s an incredible amount of joy inherent in being lesbian.

Sophie Yeah, and that’s why we’re all here (laughs). I mean not in this group but as lesbians.

Beth (laughs)

Evie It has – it’s been one of the (...) most joyful and (...) wonderful things. Life giving.

[Session 4b, p26]
APPENDIX G
RESEARCH ASSISTANT’S VERSION OF TRANSCRIPTIONS

The differences in transcription picked up by the research assistant (group member Evie) are distinguished by square parentheses in bold font [for example]. These excerpts are identifiable by the indicated chapter number and discussion number.

SESSIONS 1A AND 1B

Chapter 3: Discussion 3.3 ‘It Was Wrong’ (Disk: Wk1 Pt. A—Track: 2—Sec: 34)
Beth: Well (...) I probably wouldn’t have been able to find the words for it back then, but (...) there was something about me that didn’t want to tell anyone (...) what (...) I had been doing because (...) it was wrong.

Chapter 4: Discussion 4.7 ‘Quite Natural for Us’ (Disk: Wk1 Pt. A—Track: 2—Sec: 6)
Daria: [Sense of] what (...) what we were (...) we were doing was, was quite natural for us but (...) but then being confronted with (...) with other people’s disapproval.

SESSION 2A

Chapter 3: Discussion 3.2 ‘Smug Lesbians’ (Disk: Wk2 Pt. A—Track: 2—Sec: 33)
Daria: [And] I also (...) have that smug and superior feeling (...) about (...) adults.
Sophie: Being a lesbian?
Daria: Pardon?
Sophie: Smug and superior about being a lesbian (laughs)
Daria: Yes (laughs). I think it’s (...) transferred now to um, being a lesbian.
Sophie: (more laughter).
Sophie: Yes we are (laughs).
Chapter 2: Discussion 2.2 ‘I Was ... She Was’ (Disk: Wk2 Pt. A—Track: 7—Sec: 16)
Evie: And that was okay, and it was, and like, I was, [oh] (...) she was surprised about that (laughs).

Chapter 2: Discussion 2.3 ‘Me and I, Not Her’ (Disk: Wk2 Pt. A—Track: 10—Sec: 35)
Sophie: I think it’s um (...) I mean writing [these stories] in (...) you know like writing a story in third person (...) maybe quite a useful thing but, like you Evie whenever I’m talking about feelings (...) and they’re my feelings, I wanna say [me], I wanna say (group laughter) ['me’ and ‘I’].
Daria: Yeah, not her! (laughs) [different person than identified in original]
Sophie: Not her yeah! (laughs) It wasn’t her that’s done the work it’s me! (laughs).

Chapter 4: Discussion 4.9 ‘My Friends Didn’t Hate Me’ (Disk: Wk2 Pt. A—Track: 12—Sec: 12)
Evie: I didn’t expect to get away with it. I thought at the first, I don’t remember the first time I tried or whatever, but I expected that, to be not okay. And so the fact that it was okay was just [joyous] I didn’t expect it, you know, beyond that, that I would get (...) a response like that. I don’t even know if I would’ve really wanted it or was ready for it. I wasn’t conscious enough [of what it was about, so I don’t, at 14], I wasn’t aware, at 12, I was not aware. I wouldn’t have said that I was, kind of, behind a, or doing something, behind a veil or something ‘cause that, that’s all I did know about. My friends knew about me but didn’t hate me.

Discussion: ‘Planning the Matter’ (Wk2 Pt. B – Track 29 – Sec: 45 & Track 30 Sec:0) [This dialogue was not reproduced in the thesis].
Sophie: Well as you said, planning how you’re going to (...) you know (...) how you’re going to be yourself, by, you know, if you meet someone new (...) you, try to get them to (...) know you and like you first, before you disclose anything.
Daria: But it’s (…) for me it’s a matter of private and public world. In my private life I [usually don’t] care who knows. In public life to do with career and stuff I care, because I, I don’t want to be rejected.

Chapter 5: Discussion 5.6 ‘Tingling & Touching’ (Disk: Wk2 Pt. B—Track: 34—Sec: 15)

Evie: [Okay maybe it wasn’t joy (…) it was] something positive that when you were actually (…)

Daria: Tingling

Georgie: Yes, Yes

Evie: [When you were] touching each other.

Session 2b

Discussion: ‘How To Behave’ (Wk2 Pt.D – Track 5 – Sec: 05 & Track 6 – Sec: 06) [This dialogue was not reproduced in the thesis].

Evie: I wasn’t clear enough [about it just to] go out and find a girlfriend really. But it was a fantasy (…) to do that.

Georgie: I must admit I got a lot of my um (…) ideas about lesbian behavior from reading (…) these very B-grade lesbian novels (…)

Anon: Mmm

Georgie: And of course they were all very (…) written in the 70s, the very stereotyped butch femme stuff (…) so (…) it’s interesting you know, wh- (…) you were probably going to look for (…) what was the way to behave (…) in that situation. Was that (…)?

[You have left out some dialogue here on purpose I presume]

Evie: Oh, I guess (…) I was thinking about

Georgie: This idea about (…) what was (…) you know (…)

Evie: How to behave.
Discussion: ‘Living a Lie’ (Wk2 Pt.B – Track 24 – Sec: 10 & Track 25 secs:0) [This dialogue was not reproduced in the thesis].

Georgie: …in situations and knowing where, trying to work out how far you can show yourself and how far you have to cover (...) [cover] your sexual identity (...)

Sophie: Don’t you think that puts a lot of stress on us. Like (...) I mean, I feel that too, but you know, like, it’s (...) constantly juggling how much of our, ourselves (...) we can actually expose.

Anon: Mmm

Sophie: And (...) I mean, it puts a big strain on us. It puts a big strain on our relationships (...) having to do that all the time.

Evie: To the point of actually lying?

Sophie: Yeah, Yeah, and...

Evie: [To cover]

Sophie: Yeah and (...) basic- yeah, but living a lie, yeah.

Chapter 4: Discussion 4.12 ‘Holding Hands in San Francisco’ (Disk: Wk2 Pt. B—Track: 28—Sec: 1.04 and Track 29 Sec: 0)

Georgie: Because you wouldn’t be able to walk down the street with your girlfriend holding hands, you know, that sort of thing.

Sophie: But you might go to San Francisco (laughs).
APPENDIX H
TRANSCRIPTION KEY

The Data:
(   ) indicates transcription impossible
(…) noticeable pause or break in rhythm (less than one second)
(pause) lengthy pause, usually signifying topic closure
[ ] over-talking, overlap
→ interrupting
(laughs) individual laughter
(group laughter) group laughter
? marks yes-no question rising information
! marks exclamatory information
, marks phrase-final intonation with more to come
[…] deleted segments, for reasons of confidentiality

The Discussion of the Data:
“_ _ _” quotes from participant narratives and dialogues
‘_ _ _’ quotes from references