Chapter Eight

Empowering Resistance

> *God bless me I'm a free man*
> *with no place free to go.*
>
> -- Neko Case, *I wish I was the Moon*

> *Freedom is the precondition for acquiring the maturity for freedom, not a gift to be granted when such maturity is reached.*
>
> -- Immanuel Kant,

> *All of us have to learn how to invent our lives, make them up, imagine them. We need to be taught these skills; we need guides to show us how. If we don't, our lives get made up for us by other people.*
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> -- Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Wave in the Mind*

Throughout this thesis I have demonstrated the interrelation of 'sexual orientation' and the ongoing production of hierarchical social order, and, consequently, the importance of anarchist politics for addressing these intertwined social formations. If this is true, then resistance must necessarily be incredibly difficult. Indeed, the techniques of discipline and the authority of the state-form described earlier illustrate the intensity of control surrounding the nexus of gender, emotions, relationships, 'sexuality' and desire which produce 'sexual orientation'. At the same time, I have also documented a remarkable degree of resistance to orientation. While I suggest that subtle forms of resistance to 'sexual orientation' may be found in most contexts where the concept exists, the nomadic expressions described by the participants in this research project seem to be exceptional. What enables these individuals to evade such powerful disciplinary forces upon which the continued existence of so much of our social reality depends?

Developing the capacity for self-determination in resistance to severe sexual policing depends upon a sense of empowerment. Sustained and effective nomadic autonomy depends

upon both an awareness that there are alternatives to sexual rules (i.e., following the rules and staying in the boxes) and an emotional capacity to explore one's desires in spite of sexual state-forms. For the participants in this research, resistance was empowered through development of alternative ways of thinking and a sense of emotional entitlement.

Subjugated Knowledges & Emotional Entitlement

Sexual orientation is an intersection of several aspects of life (e.g., gender practices, sexual desires, emotions and intimate relationships) that are frequently subjected to representation. As the narratives in Chapter Six showed, representations are often based on accepted truths: everyone has a sexual orientation, committed relationships should be monogamous, men and women are naturally different, etc. Despite the pervasive nature of these 'truths', a degree of sexual nomadism is inevitable because people are different and will never entirely conform to any particular sexual regime. This insight is at the core of the poststructuralist micro-politics of resistance. If, as I have argued above, social reality, including subjectivity, the State and even our very bodies, is made up of the diversity effects of competing and interacting discursive productions of truth. While there may be a dominant ‘regime of truth' (Foucault, 1980:131) in a given social context in which knowledge is 'produced and transmitted under the control, dominant if not exclusive, of a few great political and economic apparatuses (university, army, writing, media)’ (ibid. p132), subjugated forms of knowledge provide possibilities for alternative practices and subjectivities which continuously challenge the stability of claims to unquestionable truth/power. While this micro-politics may link up to form large scale challenges to mainstream truth regimes, such as the US psychological establishment, confronted through Evelyn Hooker's battle over the designation of homosexuality as a form of mental illness or the reclaiming of the label 'queer', those micropolitical effects which go unnoticed at the macro-level of society are just as important (i.e., the personal is political). People involved in mixed relationships live in realities barely conceivable within the dominant terms of sexual orientation as a fixed binary system. For these relationships to survive, the participants must have access to existing subjugated knowledges and also be actively involved producing their own. They are actively involved in producing their own subjectivities, defining their own relationships, acts which must be supported through diverse social networks, relationships and cultural productions which ennable them to negotiate social reality on terms other than those set by truth regimes.

As I mentioned earlier, Deleuze and Guattari argue that philosophy should be 'utopian' with the aim to 'summon forth a new earth, a new people' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994:99). Similarly, Foucault wrote,

> There are times in life when the question of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks, and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all. People will say, perhaps, that these games with oneself would be better left backstage; or, at best, that they might properly form part of those preliminary exercises that are forgotten once they have served their purpose. But then, what is philosophy today - philosophical activity, I mean, if it is not the critical work that thought brings to bear on itself? In what does it consist, if not in the endeavour to think differently, instead of legitimating what is already known? (1985:8–9)

For Deleuze, Guattari and Foucault, philosophy was in itself a form of 'political activism' the project of learning that life can be lived differently. With their commitment to decentralised action and a rejection of representation, this notion of philosophy is not one reserved for 'philosophers' but offers a methodology for revolt, a notion that the art of living is one of continously questioning truth/authority through nomadic creativity. The good life is not an achievement to be savoured after the revolution (or after the PhD or the next promotion, etc.) it is a process without end – a continous (r)evolution.

Knowledge on its own is not sufficient for this process It is entirely possible, and arguably a common experience, to realise intellectually that life can be different (in whatever way) without feeling an emotional capacity to find ways to create change. Mark's and Erica's stories both contained key moments that sparked radical change. For Mark, it was the morning-after discussion following his first disastrous attempt to have sex with the man who went on to become his lover.

> I was able to say just what I said to you there. 'The reason I slept with you last night or tried to sleep with you was because I thought that's what you wanted and that's why I owed you'. And he said 'no, that's completely ridiculous.' And that's, I suppose, *when I started to believe that people could like me for me* and then I began to look at my sexuality as in, well, if I was prepared to do that maybe I could sleep with him as me. [My emphasis]

Erica's moment began with her decision to become involved with a queer anarchist group.

> Erica: It was great. It was just like, yeah, it was nice. I just thought 'oh, I was right all along. I'm OK. I'm normal. I'm fine.' Normal is not about conforming to a norm. Normal as in all *that sort of relaxed feeling that I get when I know that there's nothing wrong with me* -- really nice feelings. Not euphoric feeling, just nice, relaxed, friendly feeling, that it's OK and then I get on with the thing. I can get on with life. [My emphasis]

What characterises these examples, I suggest, is the beginnings of a sense of emotional entitlement. Mark and Erica each had the unusual experience of beginning to feel OK about themselves, to feel that there was nothing wrong with them, to feel worthy of love. Systematic inequalities in the form of social hierarchies are incompatible with any sense of entitlement, as novelist Dorothy Allison explains.

> Why are you so afraid? my lovers and friends have asked me the many times I have suddenly seemed a stranger, someone who would not speak to them, would not do the things they believed I should do, simple things like applying for a job, or a grant, or some awards they were sure I could acquire easily. Entitlement, I have told them, is a matter of feeling like we rather than they. You think you have a right to things, a place in the world, and it is so intrinsically a part of you that you cannot imagine people like me, people who seem to live in your world, who don't have it. I have explained by now over and over, in every way I can, but I've never been able to make clear the degree of my fear, the extent to which I feel myself denied: not only that I am queer in a world that hates queers, but that I was born poor into a world that despises the poor (Allison, 1995: 14).

Clearly, being at the bottom of hierarchies -- queer, poor, female, sex worker, sexually abused, etc -- limits all senses of entitlement. If, as I have argued earlier, pathological shame is an intrinsic part of the continued production of hierarchy at all levels, then a strong and stable sense of emotional, rather than capitalist, entitlement (i.e., feeling a right to possessions) is likely to be rarely found in a hierarchical society. Pathological shame, and the rigid conformity it engenders, involves a sense of fear -- fear of not being good enough or of not deserving love. Shame and fear are incompatible with a strong sense of emotional entitlement and, consequently, love (hooks, 2000).

For the participants in this research project, the necessity of subjugated knowledges and a sense of emotional entitlement were supported by a number of factors. People described the importance of access to alternative discourses, participation in times and spaces with different values, and being both challenged and supported in their relationships.

Alternative Discourse

In order to explore nomadic possibilities, one must realise there is the possibility of life outside the state-form. If accepted truths present borders as fixed, unquestionable and all-encompassing realities, effective resistance is impossible without questioning those truths. In the context of discussing the elements of her S/M-poly-dyke identity, Anita talked about discovering nomadic possibilities.

> Anita: I can compromise on a lot of everything for a while or on not being poly for a while but not being a dyke? I've never been attracted to a guy, ever. I've never even had sex with a guy or any sort of sexual anything with a guy and so that was the most difficult for me to imagine changing because that's been the most central for a lot the longest time, I guess. Whereas SM and poly, I didn't really know they existed until I was maybe 24, 25, I guess. Whereas I did at least know that lesbians existed, well, only just. There weren't out lesbians back in the 80's when I was at High school. [...] I was brought up in [...] a fairly small sort of town. I was very naïve and very young and all I knew was that I wasn't particularly interested in boys and I thought 'OK, not interested in boys. I'm a geek'. I always hung out with the geeks; they didn't have boyfriends or anything so it didn't really become an issue until I heard about lesbianism. Then I realised that there were lesbians and I thought 'Ohhh'.
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> Jamie: That explains a lot.
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> Anita: It's good now though, isn't it? I mean people coming out now, they have … they've out lesbians and out gay men in the media, you know, everywhere you look [...] How old are you?
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> Jamie: 28.
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> Anita: 28 years, yes, about the same age. Back in the 80's, I don't know what it was like when you were growing up, but there was nothing like that in the media. No images or anything. So … if you were a sheltered girl, growing up in your own middle-class white family …
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> Jamie: Yeah, and definitely no poly/SM dykes.
>
> Anita: Exactly. And no models of poly relationships either. I mean did you know anybody that wasn't in a monogamous couple or single wanting to be in a monogamous couple? There's nobody out there that's going 'look, you don't need necessarily have to be in a monogamous couple'. So the thought never really occurred to me.
>
> Jamie: Well if you can't imagine it you can't do it.
>
> Anita: Exactly. You don't know that there's another way of living.

The power of dominant knowledge regimes is clear in Anita's narrative. The only alternative to heteronormativity in her smalltown high school was being a 'geek', which clearly inhibited her capacity to explore and develop her potential desires. Fortunately for Anita, she discovered more options later in life. Kev discovered his alternatives reading science-fiction at an early age. He recalled one memorable story.

> Yeah, well, when I was a kid, I only used to read science fiction. That was a big thing. And I think what I like about science fiction is it questions a lot of stuff that you wouldn't normally question including stuff about sex and sexual identity and one thing I remember is … I don't know how old I was. I must have been about 10 or 11 or something [...] and at one point there's these two people working in a … it's like a medical lab and they had all-over isolation suits on and they were just two lab assistants who were attracted to each other and one of them said … and they couldn't see each other. All they could tell from each other was their voices and their approximate height, but one of them said to the other 'do you fancy going getting some food or something afterwards?' And the other one said 'yeah, and maybe …' and suggested [...] 7 hours of ecstasy I think they called it or something, and the social norm means you want to spend the night together, no questions asked, no relationship required, just we seem to be getting on. And the other one went 'oh, yeah, that sounds really cool. Yeah, we seem compatible' And they're going out and as they get changed one says 'by the way, are you male or female?' [...] 'Does it really matter?' And the guy's went 'oh, no. I was just interested.' And that was the first time I remember thinking, oh, there are other people think sort of like I'm thinking and it was really cool. But I think that sticks out so much. It was obviously a formative moment in my childhood.

This 'formative moment', remembered so clearly, was intellectually and emotionally important. For Sandra, her childhood discovery of women's music let her know that heterosexuality was not the only option.

> Well when I was about 12 … I heard my first women's music. Women loving women and blah, blah, blah, collective groups from [an 'alternative' urban area] making a record and stuff like that and got really much into that and sort of listening to [university] gay radio shows. ... I used to listen to that every week.

Having had, or having been denied, access to an awareness of diverse sexual possibilities while growing up was very important for these participants. The strength of contemporary constructions of childhood in much of the over-developed world make it unlikely that mainstream non-judgmental and realistic information about diverse sexual practices and

relationships will be available to young people. Alternative discourse (e.g. queer, feminist and/or anarchist) is important in enabling (young) people to feel comfortable exploring their desires.

Of course, as Beth pointed out, mainstream media can also have positive impact.

> I think when people talk about sex, it can throw up stuff that they didn't know about and people learn more about each other. The thing that I'm thinking about is *Sex in the City* and they talk a lot about the mechanics of sex and stuff that happens or whatever. I was reading something in the paper 'why are men so upset by *Sex in the City*?' My partner isn't. He just sits and watches it as well. I think that that is almost political because it's kind of … it makes a shared awareness of things that people don't talk about on their own and I think that's quite powerful because if it's something like … I don't know … say like if they were talking about female ejaculation; say someone's sitting in the house and thinking that they're the only person that's ever done that and they think it's weird or whatever, it changes things for them to know that it's among loads of people and it's a reality check as well. You can sort of check your attitudes against other people's.

A shared awareness of female ejaculation and other sexual possibilities explored in *Sex in the City* is valuable, especially if it stimulates discussion. At the same time *Sex in the City* represents a life impossible for most women -- near-complete financial security, a high degree of sexual autonomy, and idealised (mostly white). Clearly, a given example of media may simultaneously challenge certain accepted truths while maintaining others. Transgression, up to a point, sells.

Other participants discussed the importance of learning about alternative ways of thinking about sexuality. Douglas described his pleasure at hearing about alternatives to fitting within identity categories.

> I mean everybody else sticks their hand up and says 'I'm this. I'm that. I'm this one and I've got friends over there and they're all shouting for this.' That would be wonderful. [...] But also … you know, when I heard [an activist-academic] speak that day at that conference, that was the first time that I'd heard somebody in a gay arena actually speak for individuality. It just … I couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe it. It really … I thought, my God! Can this be true?

Douglas was almost at a loss for words in describing how important it was for him to hear

that there can be no correct way to be gay. Eva, like many other participants, talked about the importance of reading alternative material.

> The magazines that I read are feminist magazines from the States mainly, which are not specifically queer but at least they're queer-friendly and inclusive. But I do read a lot of books that are feminist and/or queer.

Finally, Laurence experienced a great deal of anxiety about sex and romantic relationships when he was younger, so much that he chose to avoid them. Here he describes the value of a discourse of alternative sexual possibility, that of feeling comfortable not having sex.

> Anyway the point was that I got a couple of Buddhist[12] books and they sort of didn't make me think 'ah, yes, this is definitely the way'. There were aspects and elements to it as there are aspects and elements to all religions that are interesting, the bit that seemed to make sense was that desire effectively … when … certainly in the case of desire that you can't necessarily have .. in terms of it's great to go 'I'd love to have a cup of tea' and then *have* a cup of tea, because that sort of fulfilment is achieved but to say 'I'd love to be with somebody beautiful and do all these amazing things. Oh, but, wait a minute, I can't. Oh.' Instead, that's going to kind of make you feel down. That seemed to make perfect sense to me and the idea of trying not to dwell too much on something at that particular time I couldn't have.

Each of these examples challenges accepted truths (e.g. that only men can ejaculate, that sexual desire must be based on gender, that people of a certain age should be having sex), potentially providing people intellectual and emotional resources for creating nomadic spaces outside the logic of the state-form. Alternative discourses may also provide a sense of emotional support for those alienated by accepted truths.

Time and Space

Accepted truths, and their implications for emotional entitlement, can also be challenged through alternative ways of experiencing 'reality' in particular locations in time and space. Mobility in time and space allowed for motion in participants' identities[13]. For example, participants recognise a link between the passage of time and changing attitudes toward

12 On the anarchism of Buddhism, see Edwards, 1998.

13 I thank Mary Holmes from the University of Aberdeen for comments that encouraged me to explore this connection.

sexuality. In particular, Alasdair, who was the oldest participant, described the importance of these changes for his own emotional well-being.

> I've been more comfortable with the concept of being bisexual. I think a lot of the guilt has gone. Social attitudes to homosexuality and bisexuality have changed tremendously. There's still a lot of prejudice. People are much more open about it generally. [Where I volunteer,] I don't tell people I'm bisexual but there is a degree of openness when you're talking to people about their sexuality all the time but people don't generally talk about their own sexuality. It's all a very healthy attitude.

Others chose to move in space. None of the participants lived in the area in which they had grown up, and six of the 16 had moved to the UK from other lands. It is difficult to say why such a high proportion of people in the study are non-native. This may be due in part to a common British reticence to speak openly about sex and relationships with strangers. Another explanation may be the value of moving in enabling changes in identity. Indeed, research on lesbian and gay identity suggests that moving to new locations, particularly cities[14], supports this argument (e.g., Weston, 1998). Kev described the benefits of an urban environment.

> You see most of the time I don't think about being with a male partner as being anything out of the ordinary at all. It's only when someone specifically says and then you think 'oh, I suppose that is quite unusual for some people'. I suppose being in a city it is fairly accommodating or tolerant or whatever you want to call it. It's much easier than if you went away to a much more provincial place, I suppose you'd feel it a lot more. But unless people specifically make you feel uncomfortable then you don't tend to think about it that much or I don't anyway.

Nomadism, as conceptual space, may also be linked to movement through socio-physical space.

Some participants also talked about the pleasures of nomadic spaces, whether they be predominately anarchist or simply more fluid than the rigidly policed spaces of everyday life. Sandra described two examples: in the first she talks about why she values women-only space, and in the second contrasts non-heterosexual and queer spaces (a bisexual convention and gay bars) to a wedding.

14 Anarchist commentators have also noted the liberatory potential of urban life (The Curious George Brigade, 2003).

I'm not sure if I could put it into words but it's like they're not here and we're not talking about them generally and they're not going to come in. It's like … it's a hierarchy power thing, you know, that guys get … guys have more power generally. A guy can be a jerk and get away with more than a woman can, being a jerk. A guy can be fat and not called 'fat'. Whereas a woman can be fat and people will go up to her and say 'shouldn't you lose some weight?' See, I used to be a fat kid and had people coming up to me going 'do you really think you should be eating that?' It's like 'you have no idea what I've eaten today. This might be the only thing I've eaten in 3 days. Who are you to comment on it?' I don't think guys get that the way women do. So it's kind of nice not having them around sometimes. […] I'm not a separatist, as we have established. Guys are all right. They've got their different views. Not all of them are jerks. Not all of them are the guy who had the pornography when I was a kid. Teenage boys I do have issues with […] especially loud ones. Why do guys have to yell when they go down the street in a group of 2 or 3? Now I know that not every group of guys who goes down the street in 2's and 3's is yelling. It's obviously those are the ones you're going to notice the most. But yet, the impact is very large for some of us. So it's nice, the idea of not having some guy who's going to be yelling down the street. It's like 'give us a break for a while. Just a little refuge.' You go home to have your quiet time. You want to go into your woman's space to have some quiet time or to have some female time or whatever. And if it's a gay space, then that's even better because you don't even have to deal with so much with people perpetuating stereotypes of what women should be. Of course you do have the peer pressure in the lesbian community and stuff, which is crazy but not to such an extent … and as you get older, as I get older, I feel quite happy in rebellion. Like not going along with folk if I don't want to kind of thing and hopefully pointing out to somebody else who doesn't feel quite so confident about that, that it's OK not to like whatever it is that's the trendy thing just now.

I've got mixed feelings about it because I don't necessarily want to go to a place where all the people are talking about is whether they're bisexual or not. It gets a bit tedious, I think. It's nice to be able to be who you are but people go to these things … a lot of people have their own agendas like they want to sleep with as many people as possible or party or work out all their neuroses or just talk about sexuality all the time or whatever. So I can see it being a bit tedious but at the same time it's kind of nice to be able to be who you are and know that the rules are you're not allowed to get at anybody. [...] [B]eing able to dance with anybody and be who you are is kind of nifty. I've got a photograph of me and my partner at a wedding … it's the old wedding thing, isn't it? And I've got on my skirt and my suit, whatever and it's me dipping[15] him on the dance floor and these other couples kind of looking at us in shock. The photograph is great because you can see the looks from the other people and it's like … and my partner didn't mind to be dipped. He doesn't mind being the girl, so to speak. But all these people were like 'whoa!' So I kind of like being able to

15 North American term for a dance manoeuvre in which, traditionally, a man embraces a woman while lowering her sideways toward the ground. Over her, he often then kisses her.

> get up and have a bop and not have the rules and you can do that in a gay bar and you can do that at the bisexual conference disco fun night whatever.

In both of these spaces, Sandra felt less afraid, less policed in terms of gender performance. While each had their downfall ('lesbian police' or 'tedious bisexuals'), they nonetheless seemed to provide her with a sense of freedom. Sandra felt entitled to evade stereotypes of what women should be, oppressive masculine behaviour, and gendered representations of dancing. This sense of entitlement was then reinforced by experiencing environments in which this sense of entitlement was validated.

Similarly, when I asked Erica when she felt particularly comfortable or happy with her sexuality, she also described a queer space. This was at an anarchist-organised event for 'queers of all sexualities' in a transformed squatted building.

> Yeah, I remember being at the sex party and just being so happy because my lover was there somewhere and I was doing my thing and I knew he was doing his thing and then we got together at some time in the morning and I just thought 'oh, this is so blissful'. We were both so thinking … I felt 'this is OK. This is like just being ourselves and being together' and we hadn't had a dirty look from anybody.

Like Sandra, this nomadic space contrasts sharply with her experiences of policing on the gay scene. Unlike Sandra, Erica never found a gay bar to be a place with fewer rules. Perhaps few, if any, spaces are entirely nomadic, as this would depend upon all of the participants in the space having a capacity for freedom that could not be developed in the world as it is currently produced. Furthermore, different people will find different spaces more liberating than others. Thus, there is no perfect nomadic space.

Indeed, Phyllis described the benefits of spaces that were much more nomadic than institutionalised spaces she had left behind. At the very end of the interview, I asked if there was anything else that she felt was important to include. She responded by describing connection between sexuality and spirituality in her life.

> I think it's something that's relevant to me and where … well, golly, my whole life really, about being … trying to be all these nice things and accepting and therefore I've tried to fit into institutions that have acted in the same way as well. So like the Quaker, voluntary sector, the kind of

> [professional area] that I'm doing is about helping people who've got quite serious problems because of the institutions they're put in. So I suppose that whole thing is about dealing with that and understanding that you can find institutions just completely wrong for you and they just hem you in and just want nothing to do with you. That happened to me with the Church of England. I can't cope with this at all. Get rid of it. And then very many years later, you find something that just about you can cope with in that direction.

While hardly describing a complete sense of freedom, particularly in the last line, Phyllis has been comforted by participating in spiritual and work spaces that allow a great deal more flexibility than most. Phyllis theorised a link between her capacity to feel comfortable with the fluidity of her own sexual desires and finding spiritual and work spaces where she could be (relatively) comfortable. Rather than seeing the nomadic as something only found in alternative ghettos, participants stories suggest that this 'outside' of the State is also found within everyday life.

Relationships

Relationships themselves also served as a source for enabling nomadic change. Those that incorporated elements of consciousness-raising, mutual aid, and a communicative ethic were both challenging and supportive. This combination was crucial for empowerment.

Several participants described important aspects of their relationships that can be understood as consciousness raising. Exposure to different identities, experiences and politics encouraged them to see reality in new ways. Douglas and Pete described increasing empathy and awareness for people with different sexual orientation identities. For Douglas, this developed from living a largely 'heterosexual' life, while Pete credited his 'queer' partner for opening his eyes.

> Douglas: I think the other thing that I've learnt over the years is that so-called heterosexual people have a bloody hard time of it as well. I used to think heterosexual people had such an easy time of it and of course that's just not true. And that's made it a lot easier. I think I'd a lot of envy at the beginning, a lot of envy about something that I'd missed and deprived of and missed out on that was my birthright and should have had and it's been a lot easier … knowing that their lot isn't straightforward either.
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> Pete: I think … because I saw the views from … say, gay people and

> lesbian people, what they have to go through. Also bisexual because actually, bisexual have sometimes the problems … I just learned that nobody really knows about them. They don't get accepted as something real because you have to be either on one side or the other so that there's a real issue and there's real problems. I also saw the inequality in all these things. I just got aware of these things and I really … definitely profited. I got more tolerant and I got … yeah, I profited, definitely.

For Kev, his partner's perspective encouraged him to question identity more generally. This came up when I asked Kev if he felt the differences in identity between himself and his partner had an effect on his attraction toward him. Kev responded:

> I suppose that's one thing that was attractive, was that, when I first met him, he was someone who actually questioned identity and talked about it and thought, whereas other people were just … that's how they were. Although I wouldn't necessarily have thought about it if I hadn't met him, it's … the fact that he's thinking about it and talked about it and has such a strong view on it, is, in itself, quite interesting in fact so I suppose that makes a difference.

The frequent tactic of LGBT identity politics in promoting coming out is based on a principle that we can see working here. People are more likely to question particular 'truths' if they can empathise with others and see things from another perspective. However, as I have argued earlier, this approach assumes that it is 'LGBT people' who have an obligation to explain their reality to the heterosexual majority. In these examples, the realities of 'sexual orientation' are explored from a variety of angles, challenging the binary logic of sexual state-forms.

Supportive relationships

As well as being challenged in relationships, participants also talked about the importance of feeling supported. Supportive relationships included friends, partners and family members. Meg and Sandra described the comforts of spending time with people with whom they felt they shared common ground.

> Meg: I really value a circle of queer activist friends where I feel … I mean generally amongst activists I feel fine about my sexuality but it's especially mighty fine amongst people where you feel like there's a sexuality and a politics overlap.
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> Sandra: I find it valuable, having an alternative, having women talk,

> whether it's moaning about your partner … with the full understanding that you love your partner and that it's just having a moan because sometimes you just want to say '(sigh).' I don't know. I find it valuable to have that and to be able to ask them questions and … I don't know. I think because I value same sex, same gender, whatever you want to call it, relationships and find them closer generally.

As well as groups of people who provided comfort and emotional support, participants also described examples from individual relationships. Douglas emphasised the strength of the emotional bond he shares with his wife in the context of their nonmonogamy.

> I think that's one of the reasons why we're together, is that she really does accept me as an individual […] and she doesn't … really ask me to be anything else. She doesn't want me to leave her and I don't want to leave her but I need to live the rest of my life as well and I've been very straightforward about that and she's very straightforward that that's OK with her
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> It was reassuring for her always to meet the men that I was close to because she liked them. She liked them. She enjoyed them. She realised this wasn't some horrific thing that was … that was OK. If she met someone that she could relax physically with who happened to be a woman, who was totally accepted with me, that would be fine too. Or men. But we do … the thing is that we do have a very strong loyalty to each other, that's very emotional. We would cross bridges to sort things out for each other.

Finally, Sandra and Diane described elements of support for sexual nomadism within their largely conventional families despite certain silences around sexuality.

> Sandra: I asked my aunt, his sister, [about my uncle] and she said 'well, he is [gay] but we don't generally talk about it.' And I think that's basically their attitude. [...] And when I took up with my present partner, my aunt … we went to see … to visit my aunt and uncle, a different uncle, and she took me into the kitchen and she said 'are you sure? Are you all right? Is everything OK? You don't have to do this you know.' Like worried that maybe I was feeling the need to conform to some social pressure and I said 'it's all right.'
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> Diane: Sometimes its more than my Mum and Dad will know about but they're just quite private. I might sort of volunteer relationship information because it's in mind or it's going on or I want to update them on what's going on in my life. But I don't think it's because of the sexuality side of it. I think its just because its more than they would know generally, than about anybody else's sex life or love life or whatever. Well that's the

> impression I get from … 'that's fine. It's your own business. As long as you're happy' kind of thing, but they are quite … they are very respectful and they engage with me for the person that I am.

It would be especially difficult to imagine supportive mixed relationships without a fluid understanding of identity and an effort to recognise the complexities of the other(s). Otherwise it becomes almost a joke -- did you hear about *the lesbian* who was dating a *straight boy*? Even the most rigid familial relationships described above, with their awkward silences, include respect for difference and an openness to change. Sandra's aunt didn't say, I know you're a lesbian so why are you doing this? She asked if Sandra was ok. This is also an example of a communicative ethic, the third element empowering resistance in participants' narratives.

Communicative ethic

Sexual nomadism depends upon a commitment to communication and an openness to difference within relationships, a fluid solidarity. Douglas talked about the necessity and difficulties of fluid communication and the ideal of being completely open.

> Douglas: It's not a very fair way to go into a relationship with anyone saying it's all right as long as I never get ... any real feelings for you, you know. You know, that's just … it's all right out there, thank you. That's great. And for a lot of people, that *is* great but, you know, things happen in relationships and relationships change and you can be constantly surprised. And I'm in a kind of relationship with somebody at the minute and it's … it's a caretaking relationship. I do most of the caring and he does most of the receiving and it was sexual for about 3 weeks and now it is just very companionable and I miss him when he's not there but I'm not tormented and I think he gets what he needs out of it and I get what I need out of it and that's … and we were both free to admire or to be with somebody else, in theory. [LAUGHS] In theory. Oh, God, what a life!
>
> Jamie: It's complicated, isn't it?
>
> Douglas: It's the way we are. Does that help the kind of broad picture?
>
> Jamie: Yeah, yeah. You say you felt dishonest but are you upfront about how you feel?
>
> Douglas: Yeah, oh, yeah.

Jamie: So you're honest about it.

Douglas: Yeah, but you know, even being honest at the beginning of a relationship, you think you're being honest. You know, it's like this. You say 'right, this is the history. This is where I think I'm coming from.' But you know, you change and things … everything's open so that it's never … you can't clear the decks one day and say 'that's it done'. You know, you have to keep on …

Jamie: But does that sound dishonest?

Douglas: Em … maybe it's being dishonest with me in the sense that *I know that you can't legislate in relationships*. You can't … I know that so why do it? Why pretend? I can say that's where I am and it's not a particularly wise place to be but it's where I am at the minute. That's … I suppose why I don't think I'm very proud of it. I don't think I've been very … I think I could explain it a wee better than that actually but I don't know how. I don't know how. [My emphasis]

Jamie: What would be better?

Douglas: What would be better? To say 'my heart is open. I will welcome any relationship that challenges me and that is safe.' I suppose that would be better.

Jamie: But you don't feel that you could say that?

Douglas: No, I think I'm a bit more guarded than that. A bit more guarded than that.

Jamie: And you see that as a personal fault?

Douglas: I feel a bit sad about it. I feel a bit … and then I think 'who else does?' Do other people do that? I don't know.

Douglas is asking some very difficult questions. What does honesty mean when life is in constant flux? Why does he feel drawn simultaneously to the rigid, State-like logic of legislating in relationships at the same time as he wants to feel that his heart is open? The risk of intimacy is that it depends upon vulnerability. In a hierarchical society, where problems are blamed on individuals, defensiveness is necessary for survival; paradoxically, so is intimacy. Thus, Douglas is torn between his desire for control, which surfaced throughout the interview, and his desire for fluidity. Although he is open about this, his nomadic feelings do not live up to his ideal of honest communication.

In other examples, nomadism is not so much a difficult ideal, nor a

frightening difference, but an admirable characteristic. Kev talked about the support for emotional entitlement he gained from communicating about his sexual experience and non-monogamous relationship with his friends and communicating about sexual appreciation of others with his partner.

> Jamie: Can you think of any examples where you have felt especially happy or comfortable about your sexuality?
>
> Kev: Just sometimes, when you're with friends who are open-minded but very sort of much straight and normal and they're asking about stuff and you're almost like an expert. You're expounding on your experiences, which go far beyond theirs and they're kind of 'ooh, that's really weird and that's quite interesting' and that's kind of cool. But it doesn't happen that often. [...]
>
> Jamie: Aside from when people are scandalised that you can look at other people and your partner doesn't mind or your partner does it as well, how does it feel doing that checking people out together?
>
> Kev: It depends on the mood. I mean if you're feeling really insecure, then it probably wouldn't be a good idea but normally, yeah, it's fun. It means you can express something that you'd be feeling anyway but you don't have to pretend you're not looking or pretend you're not thinking that. It's much more fun just being able to say 'wow! Look at that' or 'he's gorgeous' or 'she's got wonderful eyes' or 'look at his package' or something like that. It's fun and it feels more honest [...]. I suppose some people actually are scandalised but I'm sure a lot of people really are jealous. I have had friends say to me that it's so cool that you can do that. [...] there's still an element of having it validated by other people so if other people keep telling you how cool your relationship is, yeah, you take it on board. It's good. [...]

For Kev, communication both within the partnership and with other friends has been important for him to feel happy with his nomadic practices.

While feelings about openly communicating about sexual desires for others ranged from discomfort to intense pleasure, all of the participants felt it was important to be able to talk openly about sex and sexuality. For some, developing this ability has been an important change in their lives. Douglas and Alasdair were the two oldest participants, and had consequently grown up when same-sex desire was heavily sanctioned.

> Jamie: [H]ow do you feel about talking about your sexuality with me now?

> Alasdair: I'm quite relaxed about it. As I said a moment ago, I would have found it very difficult even 30 years ago, which is before I met my wife. It's something that, once you've told somebody the terrible secret, the next time it's quite a bit easier and so on.
>
> ---
>
> Jamie: Who do you talk to about emotions and sexuality and all this kind of stuff?
>
> Douglas: I've spent a lot of my life in therapy. There's been a … that's sort of been taken care of. I hadn't [communicated about sex and emotions] with friends until probably the last 3 or 4 years and it's been a great relief to be able to do it with friends. It's nice. And we laugh … we laugh at the … there's a comedy about it as well. There's being allowed to make mistakes. That was the thing that I was never allowed to do. I always had to be in charge, always justify my existence, looking after [my brother], being an adult and making up for all the mess I've caused everybody. That's still a big load with me, that I have to justify being in pursuit of something.

Both Alasdair and Douglas described very constraining conditions, of having a terrible secret or never being allowed to make mistakes. At the same time, for both of them being able to talk has helped them to resist constraints more effectively and to enjoy life, to laugh.

Being able to talk openly and comfortably about sex is also affected by gender. When femininity is associated with a desire for romance rather that sex, and masculinity involves a fear of emotional intimacy, sexual communication becomes very difficult. Melissa talked about her partner being exceptional in this regard.

> He is really good at analysing emotions and talking about them, which is not something that I have found in boyfriends.

Meanwhile, Anita found that experience in S/M has helped mitigate her gender training, at least within that context.

> Jamie: Now to feelings about sexuality. Can you think of any examples where you felt embarrassed, guilty or ashamed about something to do with sex?
>
> Anita: Embarrassed, guilty or ashamed about something to do with sex. I feel embarrassed quite easily about it but I think that a lot of that is [that] anybody but particularly girls are not supposed to talk about sex. So I think everybody has that thing about talking about sex that they find it

> quite embarrassing and … regardless of whether you're straight or gay or into SM or what. I've found that since I've been into SM, […] talking about sex has got a lot easier because I've got more used to negotiating scenes with people that I don't know. And the first time somebody asked me 'what are you into?' I was like … 'what? You want me to say what I'm into, in public, in words? No! I would be too embarrassed and I would never say such terrible things like that.' But now I'm like, 'oh, well, I'm into blah, blah, blah. What are you into? Oh, OK ' So …and that's it. I can talk … I can negotiate a scene [...] quite openly without feeling particularly embarrassed but at the same time, I can still feel a little bit guilty or embarrassed when I'm talking to my vanilla girlfriend about the stuff that I do, which is completely outside her experience, like piercing for example, and I can feel … I wouldn't necessarily ask her to do stuff because I'm very … I'm trying very hard to not push into doing anything, which she would consider to be outside the boundaries of vanilla sex. So I'd probably, in fact, err on the side of not asking her to do anything
>
> Jamie: So it's easier to negotiate in an SM context but suddenly in this different kind of context it becomes harder then?
>
> Anita: Absolutely because in another context you don't … it's not taken for granted that you will talk about it, but in an SM context it is taken for granted that you will discuss specifics before you do anything. You will say 'I'm not into penetration' or 'I really like big dildoes' and 'I like being spanked' and 'I like this but I don't like this' or whatever. Whereas somehow you are expected to know what you like doing if you're in a vanilla context and so you won't talk about details. [...] I don't know. Maybe people that are just into vanilla do talk about it. I've never been with anybody vanilla that does talk about the specifics of sex like 'I really like blah, blah, blah'. Maybe that's just the girlfriend. Girls have to get into mind reading.

While I have emphasised respect for boundaries as an important aspect of nomadic freedom, Anita's excessive fear of crossing boundaries with her girlfriend seems to have more in common with pathological shame. While the communicative ethic of the S/M scene has been very empowering for Anita, it has not allowed her to completely overcome this shame. The good girls/bad girls division, which must be one source of shame surrounding women and S/M, also inhibits communication with her 'vanilla' (non-S/M) lover about sex in general.

Meanwhile, Phyllis and Eva described how their relationships were the most sexually open and comfortable that they had ever experienced. Communication enabled both of them to explore sexual practices and desires that they may not have felt capable of or entitled to before.

Phyllis: … he will just talk about anything with me. I haven't met men who have done that, straight men who have done that so he's quite a miracle really. No, it's … and he'll do anything as well. 'I'll buy you a toy'. I was like 'toy? Help!' I've just never done anything like that before so, for me, that is really freeing because I've got all stuff going on in your head, which you never let out anywhere then suddenly somebody who is on the same wavelength … It's very weird. So even in my gay relationships with women, I've never been close on that level. I mean somehow physically it's been really good but the mental thing hasn't gone and developed it and I suppose you have that famous lesbian bed-death[16] thing that happens, which now I might be able to unlock, having had this relationship with him but then I had no idea how to unlock it and I just didn't know what was going on [...] because you're not developing or doing anything new.

Eva: Yeah, I mean we can kind of … we can talk about things like the idea of introducing somebody else into the mix and stuff like that. It's cool. He can even humour me talking about ideas of like him with another boy and stuff so I appreciate that he can deal with that even though he wouldn't really do it, I'm sure. So yeah, it does get mentioned, stuff like me and another girl and things like that. But I don't think it's a huge part of it. But we do watch porn together and it's kind of nice that we can both be attracted to the same person in it and stuff.

Jamie: What happens when if you watch porn together? Do you talk about it? What's it like, watching porn together?

Eva: Well we're still quite beginners at watching porn. We haven't watched too much of it. We were watching something the other night and he made a comment, sort of indicating that he liked this particular woman in it and I was like 'oh, cool, I like her as well. She's my favourite because the rest are a bit crap' or whatever but … yeah. I don't know. I'd like to find better porn. I'd like to find stuff like … you know, videos that have been made by the staff at 'Good Vibrations' and stuff like that would be good, but we're trying.

Jamie: Do you talk about porn then?

Eva: Yeah.

Jamie: So what are the discussions like?

Eva: It's cool. Not just the porn but other things that we do and whatever … it's been the best sexual relationship I've had, I would say, and a lot of that is just being able to feel comfortable enough with someone to say what you'd really like and to learn to actually talk about these things instead of be really embarrassed and not able to say it. So that's really good. He says that I'm very free and that it's been good for him because it's

16 Where women in long term relationships stop having sex but remain companionate partners.

> been … he didn't have anything like this before and he wasn't able to explore his desires like this before.

In both of these cases, the descriptions of sexual communication have been the opposite of pathological shame. Rather than being bound to conformity, Eva, Phyllis and their boyfriends have felt able to explore and play. Sexual fantasies were no longer 'stuff going on in your head, which you never let out' or too embarrassing to say, but erotic landscapes without borders for these nomadic explorers.

Conclusions: (Anarchist) Practice

Resistance to state-forms, sexual or otherwise, is empowered by practice. I further suggest that empowerment is more compatible with anarchist practice than with hierarchical relationships. If who we are is a product of our social practices, then anarchist practice supports the development of anarchist subjectivities, also understood as the transitional process of becoming-nomads (Call, 2002). Such practice, at its most basic level, can be as simple as beginning to understand that reality is not fixed with the help of a science-fiction novel, television programme or music. Anarchist practice begins with imagination. While imagining alternatives is very important, participation is necessary for developing senses of empowerment and of entitlement.

So what has enabled these participants to resist sexual state-forms? In a sense, the answer is resistance itself. As Carole Pateman points out, 'participation develops and fosters the very qualities necessary for it; the more individuals participate the better able they become to do so' (1970:42-43). The division of resistance and empowerment, then, is somewhat false. The nomadic autonomy described in the previous chapter -- people defining for themselves notions of sexual identity, how to construct their relationships, and even how to understand 'sex' -- is radically empowering. It is an experience of feeling powerful through co-operation and self-management (i.e., power-to) rather than domination and representation (i.e., power-over). Environmental activist and scholar Alex Begg argues for just such a radical interpretation of empowerment.

> Power-to must involve participation, but not any kind of participation: it is only when it is active and constructive that it meets needs effectively. Empowerment is a process of self-organisation and self-realisation -- a

> process, because it is passed on through co-operation between different empowered agents. Through co-operation, we can build whole empowered societies (2000:141).

But, if it is resistance that enables resistance, from where does resistance originate? Anarchist theory, from Kropotkin to Deleuze and Foucault, insists that resistance to domination is integral to human existence. For Kropotkin, mutual aid has been, and continues to be, a significant factor throughout human biological and social evolution. The state-form cannot exist without the nomad. Could any form of social relation so efficiently reduce all of human diversity to carefully managed, controlled and represented categories as to eliminate the nomad? Foucault states that 'as soon as there is a power relation, there is a possibility of resistance' (1988b:123). Life too diverse to be contained and will always overflow borders. This resistance is also then utilised by the State in order to justify the policing actions which are the basis of its existence. For, how would people be so thoroughly controlled without the threat of the outcast, the outlaw, the outsider? Thus argue Deleuze and Guattari, 'the State itself has always been in a relation with an outside and is inconceivable independent of that relationship' (1988: 360). Finally, just as capitalist economy depends upon the unpaid labour of the 'private sphere', so too does the State depend upon a high degree of self-organisation. Naming 'the market' as the basis of our economic life depends on not acknowledging the importance of economic relations outwith the market, and thus possibilities of economics without markets. So too does crediting the State with creating social order depend upon a denial of how anarchic characteristics of everyday relationships (e.g., empathy and co-operation) are central to human sociability and, therefore, human societies, hierarchical or otherwise.

Not only is a degree of anarchy (resistance, empowerment, power-to, nomadism, autonomy, self-organisation, mutual aid, creativity) necessary for human social being, but it is a commonly held contemporary ideal of intimate relationships. The Situationists suggested a connection between love and anarchy. 'Love is inseparable from individual realisation, and from communication between individuals (opportunities for meetings) and from genuine and enthusiastic participation in a shared plan. It is inseparable from the struggle for universal self-management' (Vaneigem, 2000). It is no coincidence, then, that empowering resistance to sexual orientation looks very much like any other form of direct action, the anarchist alternative to representationalist politics (e.g. lobbying authorities or working within

hierarchical organisations). One major form of direct action is the promotion of alternative discourses through publication of books, magazines, web sites, leaflets, graffiti, stickers, film, etc which aim to remind people that domination is not necessary and that they are capable of doing something about it. The other is the practice of organising without hierarchy to achieve collective aims. This example from a history of the recent ecological direct action movement in Britain is telling.

> The first real flashpoint came at a chestnut tree on George Green, common land in the heart of the Wanstead. The 10ft hoardings which had been erected to enclose the common were trashed by a jolly mob of kids, activists and local people. On the Green a hunched woman in her 80s was crying. She had always felt powerless, but when she pushed the fences down with hundreds of others, she said she felt powerful for the first time in her life. Empowerment is direct action's magic, and the spell was spreading (Anonymous, 2003:14).

Like Mark realising that he could be liked for himself and not just for sex, this woman wept because she realised she was entitled to feel powerful. Direct action both depends upon and encourages a sense of entitlement (For more on on emotional transformations experienced by people in direct action activism, see e.g., Seel, 1998 and Roseneil, 2000). With its emphasis on empowerment, direct action is consistent with the anarchist ethics of the inseparability of ends and means. This prefigurative action aims not only to resist specific relations of domination, but to enable people to develop the skills necessary for egalitarian, participatory and libertarian political systems (Franks, 2003).

Direct action also is often taken by people working in affinity groups -- small collectives based on trust and shared aims. Researching affinity groups in the context of globalisation conflicts, Kevin McDonald (2002) argues that relationships within these forms of organisation are friend-like, unlike those in authoritarian groups.

> The affinity groups represents an inversion of the older model of social movement that we see most clearly associated with the labour movement, one where the group acts through the person. In the case of the affinity group, the person discovers him/herself and acts through the group. The basis of the affinity group is the friend-like relationship, activists constantly referring to the importance of each person in the group being able to trust others, and be confident that the others will be there for them. The mode of acting is one of personal responsibility, for oneself and for others [...] This is a mode of action that above all aims at recognising the other as a partner, as an actor who is personal as well as social. It is

> critical, therefore, that involvement is experienced as personal, as opposed to acting out one's role as a member of a group or association. Hence the constant reference to acting with friends in affinity groups -- people who know you, people you can trust. Friendship relationships recognise us in our singularity, and friendships must be reciprocal -- we cannot recognise the other as a friend with if they do not recognise us as a friend. The mode of interaction among friends is fluid -- characterised by loose boundaries, uncertain structure, talking at once, even embodied suppleness where physical interaction is fluid. With friends we act as persons, not citizens, nor as workers or in terms of some other community identity (pp 116-117).

These anarchist forms of organisation challenge the divisions of personal/political and public/private. Fundamentally, anarchist politics can be understood as arguing that the ideal of friendship can be applied to all forms of organisation, not just 'personal' relationships. This is not to say that activists are so naive as to believe that everyone can be friends with everyone else. Rather, that macro level organisation can be achieved based on networks of affinity groups -- this is how the WTO meeting in Seattle was shut down. Alternatively, macro level organisation can also be achieved in larger groups based on the values of friendship: recognition of individuals, fluid forms of organisation, open communication, negotiation, and loose boundaries.

Finally, anarchism rejects the possibility of unquestionable truth. Although those who advocate anarchism are as susceptible to dogmatism as participants in any other political tradition, any effort to produce doctrine is inevitably criticised as authoritarian. As Foucault points out, claims to truth are ultimately claims to authority (1980). This is consistent with the anarchist tradition of rejecting the authority-claims of church and State, which are based on an elitist access to truth. This rejection of doctrine leads to some confusion as to defining anarchism. Barbara Epstein (2001) recently argued that the anti-globalisation movement cannot be seen as anarchist, because as participants do not to read Bakunin in the same way that Marxists refer to the writings of Marx. Because anarchism rejects all forms of domination (e.g. in terms of the environment, gender, sexuality, colonialism, racism, economics, etc) there can be no anarchist centre, no anarchist doctrine, no anarchist equivalent of Marx or the Bible. Anarchism, in theory and in practice, is by necessity a multiplicity. As Sandra Jeppesen (2004) has argued,

> I don't believe that any one person can encompass all this organising or theorising work. Nor do I believe that there can be a unifying theory

> (certainly not post-structuralism) that will take all of these debates, and the many more that are out there, into consideration, in a sort of anarchist string theory of everything. At the same time, none of these struggles or ideas I have outlined occur independently of each other; rather they are all inter-related nodes in a rhizomic network. Thus I believe that there should be as many theorists as possible, working together or separately; indeed that every person is a theorist of anarchy, which they express as they put their ideas and beliefs into transformative and transcendent action.

Although only a few of the participants might identify themselves as theorists of anarchy, the examples in this chapter and the previous one demonstrate the ways in which these individuals have developed relationships without domination. They have found ways to resist representation and to practice autonomy. This is not to suggest that the relationships are perfect anarchies, as there may well be instances of domination within them, or that these participants are 'anarchists'. Rather, their experiences tell us something important about political practice. Orientation, sexual or otherwise, can be resisted through the practice of supportive and challenging relationships: where 'truth' is neither singular nor fixed, but multiple and negotiated; where emotions and desires are not denied, but shared and explored; where creativity and communication are encouraged, but boundaries are also respected. Even when limited to intimate relationships, such practices have profound impacts on individual subjectivities. If expanded to define all relationships, 'public' and 'private', we would 'summon forth a new world' where nomadism would flourish and where 'truths' of 'sexual orientation' and State apparatuses would be consigned to history.