

**How to do Grindr: Sensory, Visceral and Haptic Geographies of Men
who use Grindr in Newcastle-upon-Tyne**

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Abstract

This thesis explores how Grindr – a location-based dating app used mainly by men – mediates the everyday lives of the men who use it in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England, UK. I take a feminist corporeal approach that aligns with assemblage thinking, enabling an exploration of how sexualities and masculinities emerge in and through multiple bodies, objects and places. I explore Grindr as a digital screen, space and technology. I focus on emotional, sensory, visceral and haptic experiences of Grindr. The thesis is based on analysis of 30 semi-structured interviews and four participant research diaries with men who use Grindr living in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. I focus on the ways discourses of gender and sexuality work to shape the lives of men who use Grindr, and how they emerge differently through digitally mediated lives. I argue that using Grindr has the capacity –in work to disorientate and reorientate users in their everyday spaces and places, shaping the ways men perform and embody gender and sexuality differently.

Different men are learning how to do Grindr in different ways. There are multiple ways that gender, sexuality and bodies emerge through Grindr. Therefore, there are different bodily and spatial disorientations and reorientations. Exploring the ways the body *feels*, I bring feminist corporeal scholarship in conversation with geographies of sexualities and digital geographies. I attend to calls for materially grounded studies of the digital, highlighting the complex entanglements of flesh, skin, screens, emotions, desires, and discourses. I explore how geographic concepts such as public/private, home, mobility, sexual citizenship and proximity and distance are being reorientated as bodies become entangled with digital technologies. I conclude by suggesting three ways that future research can enhance understandings of the ways the digital is (re)shaping everyday spaces, places and bodies.

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Chapter One: Introducing Bodies, Grindr and Place

Sexualities are becoming increasingly mediated by digital screens and technologies. The ways we feel, perform and experience places and bodies are intimately bound up with the digital. This is where I situate this thesis. I explore how Grindr – a location-based dating app used mainly by men – mediates the everyday sexual lives of the men who use it in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. I understand Grindr as constituted by digital screens, spaces and technologies. I explore the ways bodies are increasingly mediated by technologies – or how bodies become digital. Broadly, this thesis is informed by feminist work on corporeality. In part, I explore the ways bodies *feel* when interacting with Grindr, furthering conversations between feminist corporeal scholarship with geographies of sexualities and digital geographies. The thesis is framed through feminist corporeal and queer scholarship that aligns with theorisations of assemblage and affect offered by Deleuze and Guattari (1987). I understand sexuality and gender as assembled – they emerge through working arrangements of bodies, objects and ideas that are assembled through expressive forces (emotions, moods and affects). I am interested in what happens when bodies and technologies come together, intermingle and shape one another. This involves an exploration of how Grindr assemblages enable gender, sexuality and desire to emerge through multiple arrangements of bodies, screens, words, pictures, encounters and movements and the affects, emotion and intensities that momentarily hold them together to shape how people orientate themselves in space. Therefore, I explore attempted to stabilised practices, behaviours and normativity through assemblages, and the ways they are undone. I argue that using Grindr has the capacity – in working arrangements with people, objects and places, not on its own – to disorientate and reorientate users in their everyday spaces and places, shaping the ways men perform and embody gender and sexuality differently.

I am interested in the ways bodies become orientated to other bodies, objects and places. Particularly, how digital screens, technologies and spaces reorientate bodies. I draw on Ahmed (2006) and Longhurst (2017) who work through idea of orientation, disorientation and reorientation. For Ahmed (2006), bodies become orientated towards objects. In this sense, bodies are moved closer to objects, and objects are moved closer to bodies. As we become orientated, we become comfortable and feel at ease. Bodies can become more comfortable with different objects and spaces, and they can feel more familiar. Longhurst (2017), drawing on Ahmed (2006), argues that digital screens have the capacity to reorientate people – bodies are being orientated towards different ways of being in space and place. Grindr enables bodies, objects and places that are distant to become proximate, whilst also enabling distance to be maintained. There are multiple ways to feel comfortable using Grindr. At the same time, ‘new power relations will also keep folding into’ (Longhurst, 2017, p. 120) reorientations, bodies and places. Using Grindr comes with sets of power relations that men must negotiate through digitally mediated encounters and screens. Reorientation is not a simple process. Bodies are disorientated as they learn to live with and use screens – there are times and places when digital spaces and technologies do not easily reorientate us, but make bodies feel out of place or uncomfortable. Disorientation emerges when bodies become disrupted from their usual patterns, feelings and places, and in these moments we inhabit new and/or different feelings and places (Ahmed, 2006). Using Grindr involves feeling excitement, pleasure, arousal, boredom, comfort, discomfort, anticipation, disappointment, shame, pride and disgust (to name a few). In this thesis, I use ideas of reorientation and disorientation to highlight how using Grindr is producing different ways of performing and embodying gender and sexuality in and through place.

To do this, I pay attention to the ways men are learning how to *do* Grindr; using it in public; producing profiles; having conversations; and meeting one another in bars, streets and homes. Men have to learn skill sets to become comfortable with using the app. These skill sets are not the same for all Grindr users, as not all Grindr users are the same. Instead, different men learn different ways of doing Grindr that are shaped by time, space, bodies, memories, desires, histories and subjectivities. Furthermore, different types of men have to learn different skills in order to negotiate the emerging power relations and discourses that shape men's everyday lives. There are multiple ways of doing Grindr, however some ways come to be recognised as 'normal' practice. Therefore, Grindr users are continually reorientated and disorientated as they learn to negotiate digital bodies and use Grindr. I contribute to understandings of non-heterosexual groups and identities as fragmented, uneven and disjointed (Podmore, 2001; Casey, 2007; Oswin, 2008; Podmore, 2013). Power relations and politics that shape normative understandings of bodies are assembled through digital technologies when people use them in their everyday lives.

Work in digital geographies and new media and digital cultural studies argue that digital spaces are deeply entangled with the fleshy corporeality of embodied experiences, producing 'new' ways of doing materiality and being embodied (van Doorn, 2011; Kinsley, 2014; Longhurst, 2017). Such work argues that (dis)embodied experiences should be further explored to understand how digital technologies reorientate everyday lives. I focus on Grindr to understand how normative discourses are made meaningful through screens and technologies. Sexist, racist, fat-phobic, sizeist and arguably homophobic narratives are reproduced through Grindr (Roth, 2014; Bonner-Thompson, 2017). For example, varying combinations of 'no Asians, no blacks, no fat, no fems' have become a regular feature on some profiles. Furthermore, Grindr is often embedded in debates as being 'bad' or 'good' for gay men and sexual health and risk (Burrell *et al.*,

2012; Rice *et al.*, 2012; Miller, 2015; Jaspal, 2017). Thinking with assemblage, I seek to move beyond dichotomous debates of bad/good and safe/unsafe to explore how Grindr has the capacity to mediate everyday lives in ways that enable people to live differently. Grindr does not have inherent capacities on its own. I examine how it becomes meaningful when it is in working arrangements with other bodies, objects and places, and its capacities to reproduce, reinforce, reshape, challenge, disrupt and subvert gender and sexualities.

Grindr

Grindr is an online dating application targeted at men. It is a location-based app that enables users within certain proximities to text, message and meet one another. Grindr can be accessed from most smartphones and is the most popular dating app for men seeking encounters with other men. For a user to sign up, they do not have to verify their identity via e-mail. Grindr allows users to upload one picture to their profile – this can be seen on ‘the grid’ (see figure 1.2) and on the profile. A profile is made up of multiple different components; name; headline; age; ethnicity; height; body ‘type’; weight; relationship status; what a user is ‘looking for’; Grindr tribes; bio; distance to other users; and links to other social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) (see figure 1.1). The looking for options include, chat dates, friends, networking, relationship, or right now. The tribes relate to a number of gay subcultures that can categorise gay men. The tribes are Bear, Clean-cut, Daddy, Discreet, Geek, Jock, Leather, Otter, Poz (HIV positive), Rugged, Trans and Twink. The bio is limited to 250 characters and distance usually shows in metres or feet.

Users have the option to complete as much or as little as possible on their profile – there are no ‘required fields’. The ‘grid’ is the first screen that a user will see when they open/log into Grindr. The grid consists of small boxes showing scaled down versions of

user profile pictures (see figure 1.2). This grid shows men in order of location, with the top profile being the user's own, and others become more geographically distant the further the user moves down the grid. Users can scroll through the grid and view the profiles of other men, but can only access a limited number of profiles (100 profiles) unless they pay a subscription fee (300 profiles).

The distance that Grindr extends to is place dependent. Grindr only shows a user the closest 100/300 men – depending on if the user has a free/paid version. If the location that a Grindr user accesses the app in is densely populated with other Grindr users (for example, a city), then the users will be much closer than if a user accesses the app in a place that is sparsely populated (for example, a rural place). In Newcastle-upon-Tyne city centre, around mid-day/evening on a week day, usually Grindr reaches out from the city centre to around one mile to fill the 100 profile spaces. This does vary depending on the time of day – morning, evening or night. On a morning there are generally less people

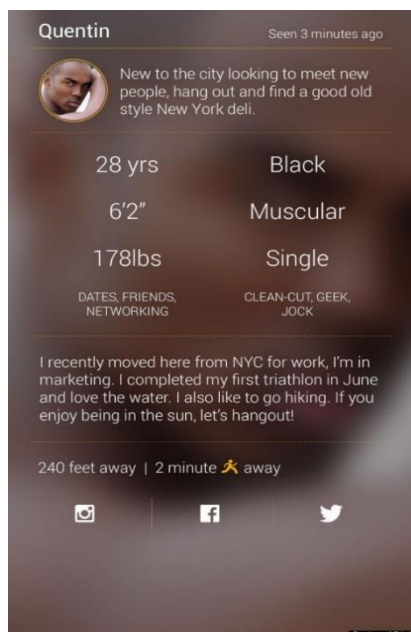


Figure 1.1: Example of Grindr profile, source: https://www.vice.com/en_uk/article/jpmvex/how-to-be-good-at-grindr

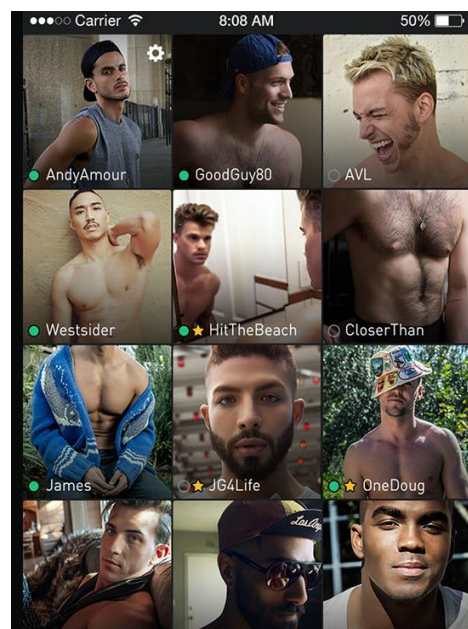


Figure 1.2: Example of the Grindr grid. Source: <https://www.appannie.com/en/apps/ios/app/319881193/>

online. On a weekend there are usually more people using the app, increasing on an evening. The image of the grid is one used by Grindr. The ‘type’ of user showed in the image is usually young and attractive, with some shirtless men. The shirtless profiles are more ambivalent in terms of age. Here, Grindr has a particular demographic that it wishes to portray – one that reproduces the normative idea of who is visible in queer urban commercialised spaces (Nast, 2002; Casey, 2007) Once a profile is ‘live’ on the grid, users can start instant chat with anyone that is in their localities – there are no ‘matches’ required as on other apps. Private conversations in which users can share multiple pictures can only happen between two users. There is also a feature that allows profiles to be a favourite (see stars on figure 1.2), with a page that shows only your favourite profiles and conversations.

The platform has arguably become a popular place for fleeting erotic encounters, sexualised behaviours and ‘hooking up’ (Tziallas, 2015). However, this is not the only use – people use Grindr for dates, friends, partners, relationships, to sell sex, advertise services, and research. I focus on men who use Grindr for eroticism, sex and dating. Grindr has generated increased media attention, often being linked to moral panics around HIV/AIDS risk, safety and casual sex cultures (Crooks, 2013; Raj, 2013). There are also multiple articles and Instagram and Facebook pages that seek to mock comments and profiles that can be found on Grindr.

It also has been blamed for the ‘detrimental’ impacts on queer/gays urban night-time economy spaces (Bitterman and Hess, 2016; Miles, 2017). Grindr is said to be providing a place for men to meet other men for dating and sex, therefore rendering queer physical spaces ‘redundant’ and change queer night time economies. Research conducted in Connecticut, USA argued that some app users are aware of these processes and concerned for the loss of community and social cohesion that online hooking up may

cause (White Hughto et al., 2017). Whilst some of my participants state that Grindr means they do not need to go to Newcastle's 'gay scene' (see section 1.5 for discussion), there are broader processes of gentrification at play that are reshaping queer night time economies. Gentrification and the reshaping of urban spaces to make them 'safer' also play a part in the changing landscapes of queer night time economies (Casey, 2007).

Grindr is a commercialised app. It is embedded in neoliberal and capitalist processes. It is a transnational company and brand that aims to promote itself to men looking to meet men. The app contains advertisements for products. It also promotes safe sex initiatives (for example, HIV and AIDS awareness). Grindr also have a tribe of 'poz' as a way for users to highlight their HIV/AIDS status. Existing research around Grindr tends to focus on gay men's 'risky' sexual behaviours (Rice *et al.*, 2012), HIV interventions (Burrell *et al.*, 2012), or the production of poor mental wellbeing (Miller, 2015; Jaspal, 2017). These studies can pathologise gay men's sexual subjectivities, as they conflate Grindr practices with sexually transmitted diseases and mental health discourses. Such discourses can essentialise the bodily complexities that shape gendered and sexualised subjectivities. Instead, I examine how masculinities and sexualities are negotiated and produced through the Grindr grid to understand the lived experience of being a man who uses Grindr.

This introductory chapter is divided into six sections. The first section situates this thesis in relation to work in corporeal feminist theory and assemblage. The second section explores key literature and concepts in geographies of sexualities – I focus on the ways I build upon ideas of heteronormativity, sexual citizenship and existing research in digital sexualities. The third section highlights how digital geographies informs this thesis, particularly examining the conceptual debates that enabled the 'digital turn'. The fourth section lays out the work in studies of men and masculinities. The fifth section provides

context to Newcastle-upon-Tyne and the sixth section gives an overview of the thesis, research questions, methodology and the thesis outline.

1.1 Sexuality, gender and bodies: assembling the thesis

sexuality as an assemblage: a process of heterogeneous attachments and detachments to norms, memories, objects, pleasures, and many other things that intimately affect how one desires and gets aroused (van Doorn, 2013, p. 157).

This thesis is framed by, and contributes to, corporeal feminist theories. In particular, feminist scholarship that aligns with ideas of assemblage and affect offered by Deleuze and Guattari (1987). I draw on scholars such as Grosz (1994), Probyn (2000), Ahmed (2004) and Longhurst (2004) who argue that the fleshy, material and corporeal bodies should not be jettisoned from feminist thought in favour of representation, language and discourse. Post-structural feminist conceptualisations of bodies as performative and discursive sought to challenge understandings of gender as natural, stable and fixed (Butler, 1993; Longhurst, 1997; Longhurst, 2004). Butler's (1990) ideas of performativity suggest bodies come to be 'fixed' through citational processes of performance, language and meaning. However, such understandings can reduce bodies to mere constructions. Longhurst (2004, pp. 10-11) argues that 'to understand bodies it is necessary to pay attention to discourses and/in/on flesh'.

Grosz (1994) has argued that thinking of bodies as either simply nature or culture works to reinforce Cartesian dualisms such as mind/body, man/woman and sex/gender. Instead, Grosz (1994) suggests that nature and culture are intertwined. For Grosz (1994; 2005) nature is not incomplete without culture, whilst nature is embedded in cultural shifts. It is the interactions of nature and culture that shape how everyday lives are experienced. Therefore, bodies are biological – physiological experiences that emerge through sensory engagement – and not simply places of cultural inscription. At the same

time, bodies are not only determined by their biology. Instead, bodies are always in states of becoming through what they have a capacity to 'do' – how they can affect and be affected. A corporeal approach understands how bodily capacities are always emerging in relation to other bodies, objects and places. This approach can enable scholars to appreciate that messy, fleshy and material bodily processes that shape how we experience everyday lives.

Thinking corporeally has initiated a turn to assemblage thinking, inspired by Deleuze and Guattari (1987). Thinking with assemblage decentres the body, meaning subjectivities emerge from affective relations with material (bodies, objects and things) and immaterial (expressive forces, intensities and affects) elements. For Deleuze and Guattari (1987) an assemblage is not a fixed thing. Instead, they are processual events that are always (re)arranging the multiple elements involved. Assemblage thinking alerts us to the ways spatial formations and relations are momentarily kept together – in working arrangements – by swirling affects that move bodies and shape encounters. It is in these moments and events that subjectivities emerge. I am interested in the ways that gender and sexualities emerge from multiple bodies and objects, and from the ideas, memories, intensities and affects that assemble them. Through this, I pay attention to the ways assemblages produce, strengthen and normalise practices, behaviours and ways of being.

Feminist geographers have tended not to separate out affect and emotion (Sharp, 2009; Wright, 2010b) – this is where I situate this thesis. Other theorisations (for example, non-representational) of emotion and affect have argued that they are separate phenomena (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Massumi, 2002; Pile, 2010). For example, Massumi (2002) argues affects are unconscious potentials, where emotions are the personalisation of these affects. At the same time, Pile (2010) seeks to define emotion and affect as distinct, arguing that they must be used in conversation with one another. Some

feminist scholars have cautioned pulling apart and distinctly defining emotion and affect.

Bondi and Davidson (2011, p. 595 italics in original) state:

efforts to delineate sharp and stable conceptual boundaries around and between emotion and affect are misplaced, and entail a form of categorical violence that risks killing the unstable subjects so many – and so very *different* – geographers are struggling to keep alive.

To create categorical barriers between emotion, affect and bodily intensity is to deny the messy, unstable and complex nature of human experiences (Thien, 2005a). Such stable boundaries seek to reaffirm the mind/body dualism that feminist thinking has tried to undermine (Longhurst, 2001; Longhurst and Johnston, 2014). This can seek to reinforce masculine approaches to the production of knowledge (Thien, 2005a)¹.

Therefore, I understand emotion and affect as intersecting and overlapping forces that are unstable, lively and complex.

Some queer geographical scholarship has also worked to understand the messy nature of emotion, desire and affect (Lim, 2007; Brown, 2008; Caluya, 2008; Tan, 2013).

Drawing together ideas of queer theory and affect, Lim (2007, p. 57) argues that:

Both queer theory and Deluzian approaches to affect relate to questions of how to desire, who to desire, and which bodies desire and are desirable by which other bodies. Both sets of ideas seek to open up the question of desire.

Heteronormativity would suggest that desire materialises from within sexed (male/female) bodies. However, queer critiques argue that sex and gender are performative – made meaningful through their multiple repetitions and institutionalisation (Butler, 1990). This challenges ideas that desire is fixed to sexed bodies, opening up

¹ More in-depth discussion of the debates around emotion and affect are not within the remit of this thesis. For more detailed analysis and debates see (Thien, 2005; Pile, 2010; Bondi and Davidson, 2011)

questions of desire beyond that of physiological bodies. As Lim (2007, p. 57) further argues, ‘in seeking to multiply the possibilities for desire and for different kinds of action, queer theories and practices attempt not to prejudge the question of what a body can do’. In this sense, desire is an unstable affect and event (Deleuze, 1997). Brown (2008) argues that desire is folded into smells, sounds, touch and objects. He argues that these play as much a role as discourses and legal and moral codes in desire (Brown, 2008). Therefore, more-than-representation produces sexual subjectivities. In this sense, desire assembles ‘various heterogeneous elements – social, biological, political’ that can throw bodies together in unpredictable ways (Lim, 2007, p. 58). This does not mean jettisoning an appreciation of power relations in favour of hopeful futures. Instead, it involves thinking about the times and places where desire opens up the multiplicities, ambiguities and subversions in gender and sexualities and how normative processes seek to stabilise them. In other words, such an approach involves being sensitive to how things are done differently and how normativity is (re)produced.

Bodies are organisations of multiple bodies, skin, flesh, organs and cells that are made clear, meaningful and coherent through discourse and language. Longhurst (2004) argues that messy bodily practices often go unnoticed when we speak of bodies. Geographers speak of fluidity regarding identities and spaces, however rarely do they discuss fluidity in the context of materiality; the fluids that bodies produce. Bodies *have* fluids, they leak, seep, excrete, eat, cough, sweat, lactate and urinate. Despite calls for a corporeal attention (Grosz, 1994), bodily fluids are still thought to be too ‘other’ for geography (Longhurst and Johnston, 2014). To give more ‘agency’ to bodies, some feminist scholars began to think about what bodies can do, and how people experience the world through their bodies (Probyn, 2000; Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy, 2008; Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy, 2010b; Waitt, 2013). This involved a turn to corporeal

feminism and, in part, exploring the ‘visceral’. The ‘visceral’ is a way to think about bodies as more than surfaces that discourses are mapped upon, but also think about what lies beneath the surface. In other words, an exploration of the spaces inside the body (Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy, 2010b). Visceral ways of thinking are central to this thesis, exploring how men *feel* as they use Grindr.

Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) ideas around assemblage and affect have been influential in thinking around the visceral. Bodies and materials assemble into working arrangements through emotions and affects in ways that work to ‘keep’ assemblages functioning. The works of Probyn (2000; 2005) on shame, eating and the visceral have been informed by Deleuze and Guattari (1987). The visceral refers to the ‘gut reactions’ we experience in response to the multisensory engagement with material and discursive environments. Therefore, a visceral approach understands gut reactions as instances when bodily sensations, intensities and moods intersect with discourses, ideologies and power structures (Probyn, 2000; 2004). Probyn (2000) explores eating as an assemblage, arguing that:

The biological, psychological and the social, are constantly reworked in terms of how at any moment we live our bodies. These modes of living are temporal and spatial, highlight the adaption of learned behaviour and context.

For Probyn (2000), practices, identities and bodies are assembled through physiological, psychological and the social. Therefore, discourse is not prioritised over the physiological. Instead, experiences of the world are understood to be a working arrangement of multiple ‘parts’ that are no more important than another. The visceral refers to the moods, bodily sensations and intensities, and affects/emotions that emerge through bodily experiences with discursive and sensory environments. Therefore, visceral experiences are moments when the material and discursive combine and have the capacity

to affect bodies. In this sense, Probyn brings attention to the multiple and unstable human and non-human elements that constitute bodies, highlighting that these elements are in a constant state of flux in ways that can (re)shape the arrangements of the assemblage. These processes are inherently spatial, as the assemblage of the physiological, psychological and sociological are always brought into working arrangement through the spaces that they are located in.

Geographical work that is in line with assemblage-inspired and visceral thinking has often explored bodily sensory engagement that is central to visceral arousal. For example, Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy (2008) and Longhurst *et al.* (2009) have focused on the ways taste, smell, touch, sounds and sights of food are deeply political, being entangled in class dynamics and experiences of migration, respectively. Waitt and Welland (2017) follow Ahmed and Stacey (2001) and think through the skin as a way to shift the privilege and centrality 'the body' has in feminist thought. Waitt (2013), Misgav and Johnston (2014), and Waitt and Stanes (2015) have explored the sensory experience of sweat, and the ways that it constitutes and (re)makes gendered subjectivities. I discuss these examples in more detail in chapter five. Taking a visceral approach enables food and sweat to be understood as not only physiological compounds, or materials that are only discursive. Instead, they are made meaningful through their physiology and discourses. These meanings are in constant states of flux as bodies move in and across spaces, which, in turn, reassembles bodies. For example, the touch, smell, and sight of sweat for women in Wollongong, Australia, can be shameful and disgusting, but also create a sense of togetherness. However, the sense of togetherness is inhibited by the spatially produced standards of femininities in work and social spaces (Waitt, 2013). I am inspired by these ideas offered by corporeal feminist work. I understand gender and sexuality as an assemblage of multiple materials and expressive forces. Gender and

sexuality do not simply emerge from bodies, but from the spatial arrangements of skins, fluids, flesh, senses, screens and technologies and the affects and intensities that temporarily hold them together and rearrange them.

Thinking with assemblage and affect in geographies of sexualities is increasing (Puar, 2007; Tan, 2013; van Doorn, 2013; Binnie, 2016; Nash and Gorman-Murray, 2017). Nash and Gorman-Murray (2017) have recently called for geographers to rethink ways queer subjectivities and identities are (re)made in and through urban spaces. For Nash and Gorman-Murray (2017, pp. 6-7), if we think with assemblage...

...we can consider, for instance, capital, gentrification, histories, bus routes, cell phones, apps, law, subjects, coffee culture, rents, new media, community centres, newsletters, organic food, alternative music, or goth sensibilities. We must be attentive to the machinic geographies of bodies as they gather and coagulate, become viscous, become moored within collectivities in places. This might help us to explain what places and why, what subjects and why, and to consider these assemblages as events, non-binding and ephemeral. Identity and subjectivity are not pre-given but are a 'sexuality/gender' coming into being through the viscosity of bodies, non-human actants, objects, ideas, capital and constituting, we can hope, a proliferation of sexualities and genders that are nevertheless unbounded, while tentatively (and recursively) formulated in and through place.

It is in these multiple ways of thinking *with* assemblage that I situate this thesis. I understand bodies, genders, and sexualities to be always assembled through a myriad of materials (human and non-human, organic and inorganic) and expressive forces (moods, emotions, intensities and affects). I understand Grindr as an assemblage of bodies, screens, phones, words, pictures, categories, mobilities, locations, proximities and distances that are brought into working arrangements by desires, knowledge, habits, memories and emotions and are always reworked by, and reworking, the spaces and places that Grindr is assembled in. The multiple elements that comprise Grindr assemblages increase and decrease in importance, and shift and change depending on the

contexts. For example, using Grindr on public transports is assembled through bodies, screens, images, non-Grindr users and moving doors, whereas online conversations are assembled through phones, bodies, words and pictures. It is through these unstable assemblages that masculinities and sexualities are made meaningful and, at times, come to be produced as normal, stable and fixed, but also challenged, subverted and undermined. In the following section, I highlight the work in geographies of sexualities that I draw upon and contribute to in this thesis.

1.2 Geographies of sexualities

The development of geographies of sexualities in the 1990s challenged the heterosexist approaches to geographical inquiry (Bell and Valentine, 1995b). Feminist epistemologies and methodologies enabled the development of the subfield, providing the tools to challenge heterosexist and masculinist productions of knowledge (Rose, 1993; Longhurst, 1995; 1997). Feminist scholarship provided the conceptual tools to challenge the assumed and fictional binaries, such as mind/body, man/women, hetero/homo, and knowledge/sex. Furthermore, it foregrounded the importance of exploring lived experiences and embodiment through qualitative research (Longhurst, 1995; Knopp, 2007). This paved the way for geographies of sexualities to develop and establish its own field of study, challenging the heteronormative discourses that govern societies and space (Knopp, 2007; Wright, 2010a).

With feminist, sexuality and space and queer geographies, work around sexualities has developed in the past two and half decades. In a review of earlier work in geographies of sexualities, Binnie and Valentine (1999) highlighted that the majority of work could be traced to three sub-fields; urban geographies, rural geographies and sexual citizenship. Urban geographies of gay and lesbian identities still remain dominant in sexuality and space research (Nash, 2006; Nash, 2013; Nash and Gorman-Murray, 2017), with some

geographers critiquing the neoliberal processes that constitute cities and the ways that they are (re)producing (hetero/homo)normativity (Nast, 2002; Bell and Binnie, 2004). Beyond commercialised urban spaces, some geographers have focused on domestic practices (Gorman-Murray, 2007a; Waitt and Gorman-Murray, 2007; Gorman-Murray, 2008c; Morrison, 2012a), the family (Oswin, 2010; Wilkinson, 2014), and the claiming of spaces through pride activities (Johnston, 2005; Browne, 2007; Markwell and Waitt, 2009). Other work has aimed to disrupt heteronormativity from the position of heterosexuality (Hubbard, 2000; 2004; 2008; Hubbard *et al.*, 2008; Hubbard, 2011; 2012). Work around citizenship is still central, especially with the debates around current marriage legislation (Bell and Binnie, 2006; Goodwin *et al.*, 2013; Hubbard, 2013; Zebracki, 2013). In this short review, I map out the conceptual and theoretical tools that inform this thesis. I particularly focus on issues of heteronormativity, sexual citizenship and public/private and the digital.

Bell and Valentine's (1995) edited volume, 'Mapping Desire', released over two decades ago, was an important step in understanding the importance of sexualities to the everyday lives of people, identities and spaces. They argue that geographical work had ignored how sexualities shape everyday lives (Bell and Valentine, 1995a; Johnston and Longhurst, 2010). The discipline of geography was critiqued for its heteronormative views of knowledge. Sex and sexuality were assumed to be invalid sources of knowledge, whilst the experience of non-heterosexual people remained geography's 'other' (Bell and Valentine, 1995a; Valentine, 1998).

Butler (1990), and her work on performativity, was arguably central in prompting geographers to interrogate the dichotomous thinking around gender and sexuality as a way to disrupt the assumed naturalness of categories of man/woman and gay/straight (Johnston, 2015). In a landmark paper, Bell *et al.* (1994) engage with ideas of

performativity to explore the embodied performances of the hypermasculine ‘gay skinhead’ and hyperfeminine ‘lipstick lesbian’. Doing so, they extend performativity to challenge the ways spaces and places come to be understood as naturally heterosexual. This paper lead to a continuing debate in – and beyond – human geography about the conceptualisation of gender and sexuality through performativity. A particular concern was the risk of ‘disembodying’ desire and sexuality through the importance of language, representation and discourse (Knopp, 1995; Probyn, 1995; Walker, 1995; Nelson, 1999). In particular, Probyn (1995) calls for a more corporeal and fleshy understanding on bodies and spaces.

The cultural turn enabled the influence of queer theory in human geography. This has resulted in ongoing tensions between feminist, queer and sexuality and space scholarship (see Knopp, 2007; Wright, 2010a; Richardson *et al.*, 2012 for tensions and debates). Binnie (1997) argues that a queer epistemology is fundamental to problematising taken-for-granted knowledge around sex and sexuality, and ‘queering’ the discipline itself. Therefore, Binnie (1997) calls for geographers to embody geographical knowledge with the materiality of lesbian, gay and bisexual lived experiences. Almost a decade later, Browne (2006) extended calls for queer to be integrated further into the discipline to further challenge geographical epistemologies and methodologies. Although space may be exposed as sexually unstable, the normative dichotomies that produce spaces and bodies (as hetero/homo, man/woman and public/private) sometimes remain uncoupled (Browne, 2006; Johnston, 2015). In this sense, ‘queer’ works to disrupt normativity itself. A queer perspective is arguable necessary in researching sexualities to challenge the assumed dichotomies of heterosexual/‘homosexual’, rather than only representing the views, experiences and lives of those who ‘occupy’ the ‘abject’ and ‘abnormal’ side of the heteronormative binary. Whilst these tensions exist, both provide

valuable insights to ways bodies, lives and desires are organised by, but also subvert, challenge and disrupt, heteronormativity (Browne, 2006). I follow those who use sexuality and space, queer and feminist theoretical work in conversation (Wright, 2010a; Johnston, 2015)

Following a call to queer the discipline of geography, Binnie (2004, p. 74) further argued that sexualities research...

...has lost a radical cutting edge. It is rare to find much discussion of pervy sex or bodily fluids. Nowadays you would struggle to find much that is challenging within queer theory—or much to make ‘straights’ squeamish.

This has been echoed by other geographers that claim geography remains too normative to discuss the sexy, dirty, messy and material practices that shape how we experiences bodies and place (Longhurst, 2004; Brown, 2008; Morrison, 2012a; Longhurst and Johnston, 2014). These authors argue that geographical research is reproducing the (hetero)normativity that it seeks to disrupt by not attending to ‘pervy sex’ lives in favour of sexual identities. Misgav and Johnston (2014) argue that the fluidity of sexual and gendered identities is, at times, rendered more fixed when people are confronted by bodily fluids (for example, sweat). In his research on gay men’s public cruising in the UK, Brown (2008) develops a queering of affect offered by Lim (2007). Brown (2008) engages in non-representational ideas of affect to understand what desire has the potential to *do*. He argues that the smells, objects and flesh that are involved in gay men’s cruising – as well as identity categories, moral geographies and legal codes – shape desires in ways that can confuse discursive identity categories. Therefore, paying attention to the geographies of sex itself – as a multisensory, visceral and affective practice – can liven the disciplinary conversations around how gender and sexualities are constantly emerging though the relationality of bodies, objects and place (Lim, 2007; Brown, 2008). I now

move to discuss key concepts and ideas in geographies of sexualities – heteronormativity, homonormativity and sexual citizenship.

1.2.1 Heteronormativity and homonormativity

Heteronormativity has been a powerful concept in challenging the way society is structured along the two gender model-norms that enshrines heterosexuality as normal and therefore lesbian, gay men, bisexuals and transgendered people as other and marginal (Binnie, 2007, p. 33)

Heteronormativity is the systems, values, knowledge and discourses that shape dominant understandings of gender and sexuality. Heteronormativity assumes that bodies fit into two sexed categories – male and female. Through this process, opposite sexed desire is constructed as normal. Relationally, people who engage in same-gender sex, romance, intimacy and love – and their associated cultures – are constructed as ‘abnormal’, ‘unnatural’, ‘deviant’ and ‘transgressive’ (Weeks, 1995). This discourse produces a sexed binary where heterosexuality becomes the normative form of sexuality (Butler, 1990). Gendered performances become entangled in this. Particular versions of femininities and masculinities are celebrated by heteronormative discourses, attempting to fix ways of doing gender to sexed bodies (Cream, 1995; Hubbard, 2000; Johnston and Longhurst, 2010). Heteronormativity continually organises everyday lives and it is (re)produced through nation states, institutions, homes and bodies (Binnie, 2004; 2007; Hubbard, 2008). Heteronormative practices, bodies and values dominate society and geographical research. Through this geographies of sexualities and queer geographers worked to ‘queer’ the discipline and challenge heteronormativity (Bell and Valentine, 1995b; Brown *et al.*, 2007).

Heteronormativity is inherently spatial – it is (re)mapped across and through space. Heteronormativity constructs spaces as being ‘sexed’ and having a sexual identity.

This means that they become imagined as heterosexual/‘homosexual’ (Weeks, 2013). In this sense, the heteronormalisation of space is understood as constructed. Therefore, sexed spaces are not fixed, but are sites where gender and sexualities are performed, negotiated and contested (Bell *et al.*, 1994; Johnston, 2017). Heteronormativity has rendered individuals and their bodies as invisible and absent from public space.

Geographers have worked to explore how places become sexed and sexualised as a way to challenge the presumed naturalness of sex and space. For example, in pride parades (Johnston, 2005; Markwell and Waitt, 2009), homes (Johnston and Valentine, 1995; Waitt and Gorman-Murray, 2007), bars and clubs (Casey, 2007; Misgav and Johnston, 2014), gyms (Johnston, 1996), toilets (Browne, 2004), bathhouses (Nash and Bain, 2007), and the rural countryside (Bell, 2000; Waitt and Gorman-Murray, 2008).

Extending ideas of heteronormativity, homonormativity was developed to attempt to understand the normalisations of queer identities. Homonormativity is the process that produces particular non-heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender and queer (LGBTQ) identities, bodies, practices and cultures as acceptable versions of queerness (Duggan, 2002; Binnie, 2007). Monogamous sexual relations between two non-heterosexual people is particularly central – especially with the legalising of gay marriage that often divides LGBT and queer politics (Browne, 2011; Podmore, 2013; Johnston, 2017). In other words, if a non-heterosexual couple conform to the heteronormative standards of love and romance (cohabiting, family values, monogamous, long term and/or marriage), then they are seen to be more ‘normal’. This arguably produces ideas of the ‘good gay citizen’ who assimilates to normalised notions of socio-sexual life and, in contrast, the radical ‘bad queer’ who refutes the conformist ideas of sex and sexuality (Bell and Binnie, 2000).

Neoliberal capitalist processes, colonialism, patriarchy and racism were argued to be normalising particular 'queer' and non-heterosexual identities (the most notable example is the white, able-bodied, middle class gay man) (Nast, 2002). These processes seek to 'other' identities, bodies and practices that do not 'fit' this 'ideal' (Duggan, 2002; Puar, 2006). The politics of homonormativity has been debated in human geography (see Elder, 2002; Nast, 2002; Sothorn, 2004; Oswin, 2005 for more detailed discussion). Most central to this, is the ways that the concept of homonormativity can risk deepening and fixing dichotomies between socially constructed categories of 'normalised' and 'radical' (Oswin, 2005). Brown (2009; 2012) is sceptical of the all-encompassing nature of homonormativity as it essentialises the lives of queers. Brown (2009, p. 1498) argues that there:

...are two different ways of reading the landscape of contemporary 'gay life': one reads for hegemony; the other reads for difference, unevenness, and geographical specificity. These two readings have different performative effects. I have made an ethical choice to read for difference.

Whilst this scepticism is useful, Podmore (2013), in her attempt to de-centre homonormativity as a frame of analysis, argues that this reinforces other analytical binaries, and it may be more productive to turn attention away from these. In the same special issue of *Geoforum*, authors attempt to explore the 'equalities landscapes', and how it is continually (re)worked through the politics of place, bodies and sexual citizenships (Gorman-Murray, 2013; Hubbard, 2013; Wilkinson, 2013). It is here that I build on conversations of normativity. I align my work with scholars that question homonormativity as an analytical framework. I seek to explore how normativities are entangled in equalities and notions of sexual citizenship. In the following section, I highlight how geographies of sexual citizenship assist the framing of this thesis.

1.2.2 Sexual citizenship

The concept of sexual citizenship explores the multiple rights – across spaces, places and scales – that bodies are granted through their sexual identities and performances (Bell, 1995a). Bell and Binnie (2006) highlight some of the key ideas of sexual citizenship and space – the ways sexual acts are defined as public or private, how sexual citizenship is scaled, its national variations and the various material sites through which people can claim sexual rights. Sexual citizenship is embedded in heteronormative ideas, for example the ways societies are focused around opposite-gendered relationships, through which institutional policies are shaped (Bell and Binnie, 2006). It is important to note that sexual citizenship does not only refer to that of LGBT or queer forms of citizenship, as this risks over-sexualising such groups. Instead, it refers to the ways that rights to spaces and resources are shaped by the ways sexuality is performed and embodied. For example, who has the right to kiss and hold hands in public without oppression (Hubbard, 2013), or the ways that relationship statuses (e.g. single, monogamous or polyamorous) can grant or inhibit access to financial benefits and shape emotional wellbeing (Wilkinson, 2013).

Work in sexual citizenship sometimes aligns with debates surrounding homonormativity. ‘Conforming’ to ‘normative’ lifestyles of monogamy and consumption arguably constructs the ‘good gay’ citizen – who may be provided with greater citizenry rights (Bell and Binnie, 2006). Those lives which do not conform to the heteronormative ideas can be argued to be creating moral panic, and therefore find themselves outside of the boundaries of sexual citizenship. Consequently, those involved lose their citizenry rights and find themselves excluded across multiple spaces throughout society (Bell, 1994; Bell, 1995a; Santos, 2013). Same-sex marriage, although it is a landmark achievement, can be argued to be an assimilation to the heteronormative ideologies of relationships, love and sex, therefore can be understood as ways of ‘normalising’ same-

sex relationships (Goodwin *et al.*, 2013). However, these ideas are arguably still (re)producing the dichotomous relationships between ‘normalised’ and ‘radical’.

By using a multi-scalar lens to explore citizenship, Hubbard (2013) has highlighted that changes in the equality of sexual rights at the national level, does not necessarily translate to local levels. Hubbard (2013) analyses the highly publicised case of the forced removal of two young white British men from a pub in Soho, London, by the landlord, for kissing each other on the lips. He argues that despite the changes in the equalities landscape, and the legality of their public display of affection, the landlord has the ‘right’ to remove the men from his establishment, due to local municipal laws (*ibid*). This demonstrates how using a more complex lens to explore the sexual lives in landscapes of equalities can deepen our understandings of the entanglements of politics, citizenship, sexuality and place. Without fully exploring contradictions and contestations, there is a risk of essentialising sexual lives, identities and subjectivities (Brown, 2012; Podmore, 2013). I am particularly interested in the ways that issues of sex, sexuality and sexual citizenship are reworked by digital technologies, especially in an age when intimacy, romance and sex are increasingly digitally entangled. In the following section, I explore how work in digital geographies informs this thinking about the relational entanglement of bodies, the digital and place that rests on a politics of becoming.

1.3 Digital geographies

This is not a means of continuing to fawn over a special domain of ‘the digital’ ... but rather conduct work which attends to the manifold ways in which technical activities convene assemblages of bodies, objects, languages, values and so on and fold them in and out of spatial practice (Kinsley, 2014, p. 378).

The growing integration of the digital into everyday lives has, in part, prompted academic interest in the ways people use and live with technologies and online spaces (Bell, 2009a).

This phenomenon has attracted academic interest from human geography, sociology, and cultural studies. It also prompted the development of ‘cyberspace studies’, ‘virtual geographies’ and more recently ‘digital culture’, ‘new media’ studies and ‘digital geographies’ (Bell, 2009a; Kinsley, 2014; Ash *et al.*, 2016). The continuing development and advancement of technologies have played a part in academic conceptualisation of ‘the digital’ (Kinsley, 2014), as humans are now able to do ‘more’ with technologies (for example, video chat, instant messaging and photo uploading), across more mobile locations (for example, mobile phones and tablets on long and short journeys). In this sense, geographers are at a ‘digital turn’ (Ash *et al.*, 2016). This thesis draws on debates within digital geographies. In this section, I explore the work that contributes to debates in digital geographies that informs how I conceptualise the relations between bodies, the digital and place.

There have been three main approaches to the study of online spaces within geographic inquiry. First, there was a call for ‘geographies of cyberspace’ that aimed to challenge the idea that the internet was spaceless and placeless. Such work argued that ‘cyberspace’ coexists with geographic space. However, the term ‘cyberspace’ became problematic (Kitchin, 1998). Studies of ‘cyberspace’ were overly concerned with the visual and what bodies could ‘see’ on screen (Kinsley, 2013). Furthermore, the term cyberspace represented an internet as *real* and stable rather than relational. This thinking became problematic as it did not consider the power relations that *different* online spaces are produced by (Graham, 2013). Following cyberspace studies, ‘virtual geographies’ developed seeking to disrupt online/offline binaries. A key contribution of ‘virtual geographies’ suggested that online and offline spaces not only co-exist, but inform each other (Crang *et al.*, 1999). It has since been argued that ‘virtual geographies’ are unable to fully undermine dichotomous thinking, as it assumed distinctions between the ‘virtual’

and the 'actual' (Kinsley, 2014). Therefore 'cyberspace' and 'the virtual' are understood to reaffirm neat distinctions between online and offline worlds (Graham, 2013; Kinsley, 2013; Kinsley, 2014)

Parr (2002) has highlighted that it is easy for researchers to suggest 'cyberspace studies' have relegated the importance of corporeal bodies in favour of exploring what happens 'inside' the internet. The challenge is to understand how and why online spaces have the potential to enable a feeling of disembodiment for users, whilst simultaneously being a corporeally embodied practice. Madge and O'Connor (2005) argue that new mothers using babyworld.com are able to 'try out' new versions of motherhood and construct alternative identities due to feelings of disembodiment. These women were simultaneously engaging in highly visceral and corporeal parenting practices, such as breastfeeding. A sense of a disembodied internet is attractive to individuals because new/alternative identities can be tried out, performed and inform corporeal selves (Madge and O'Connor, 2006; McGrath *et al.*, 2008). Therefore, 'new selves' have the potential to inform mothering practices in offline lives. These 'disembodied' practices are simultaneously highly embodied, disrupting the binaries of online/offline and mind/body. This can also be similar for young Trans people who chose to 'come out' through Skype, as moving bodies that can be heard on a screen creates both an embodied and disembodied experience (Taylor *et al.*, 2014).

By drawing upon work from 'new media' and 'digital cultural studies', Kinsley (2014) calls to move towards 'digital geographies' that considers that relations between bodies, technologies, screens, objects, affects, memories and emotions and the ways they are worked and reworked to shape how humans experience online and offline lives. Through the concept of technicity, Kinsley (2014) argue that researchers need to recognise the relational processes that occur between bodies and technologies. He argues

this approach should not centre the human body, but understand the co-constitutive nature of bodies and technologies in the production of social life. Therefore, research should examine the importance of the materialisation of thoughts, feelings, emotions, memories and desires beyond the embodied mind, and question how these are also mediated by technologies. Understanding these processes as spatially located, geographers can further explore the inter-relationships between bodies and technologies.

The work of van Doorn (2010; 2011) has assisted conceptualisations of online spaces and embodiment. When examining Myspace profiles of Dutch young people, van Doorn (2010) argues that memories of shared experiences become culturally available online, becoming mediated memories in ways that enable discourses of gender and sexuality to emerge. Friendship groups across Myspace recollect their physical encounters on each other's profiles using text and photographs. These posts become sources of memories that people can use to rearticulate the ways they understand their embodied gendered and sexed selves beyond fleshy bodies. Fleshy memories can become mediated and (re)made through the digital. van Doorn (2010; 2011) has examined the ways online lives are entangled in the fleshy. However, this work does not account for the *feeling* body.

Other work that draws more-than-representational approaches questions how bodies and technologies have the capacity to affect and be affected. Ash (2013, p. 20) argues 'technical objects are not lifeless mechanisms but actively produce spatio-temporal atmospheres, which shape the humans who are immersed in these atmospheres.' The codes and software that bring mobile technologies into existence are reshaping experiences and understandings of space (Dodge and Kitchin, 2005; Wilson, 2012). Ash (2013) argues that technologically mediated atmospheres produce new space-times. In this work, Ash is paying particular attention to the interaction between human and non-

human things. To develop ideas of technicity, Ash (2012) explores how bodily habits are relearned and renegotiated when people are playing video games. He argues that players of 'Street Fighter IV' have set habits in the form of 'moves' that have to be enacted in response to the sensory stimuli (sight, touch and sound) in game playing, in small windows of time. In other words, bodies must learn to react to multisensory game playing in order to be successful. Here, bodies come to be mediated through technologies in a way that reorientates phenomenological experiences.

In her work on Skype, Longhurst (2017) is concerned with the ways screens disorientate and reorientate bodies in the places that they use technologies. She draws on ideas of Queer Phenomenology, offered by Ahmed (2006), to argue that Skype is reshaping spatial relations in that what is proximate and what is distant becomes reconfigured. Longhurst (2017) pays attention to these disorientations and reorientations as these are central to the ways bodies are unsettled (Ahmed, 2006). These moments enable an understanding of how different people experience living with technologies differently. At the same time, it provides an understanding around how different people become (un)comfortable using different technologies across multiple places. This can assist in exposing the ways power relations emerge and (re)produce in and across bodies, screens and space. In the following section, I explore work that works to understand how the digital require a rethinking of sexualities.

1.3.1 Digital sexualities

In a landmark study, Mowlabocus (2010a) examines content on Gaydar to explore the ways gender and sexualities are entangled in the ways gay men produce and negotiate their online bodies. Mowlabocus (2010a) argues that Gaydar becomes embodied through images of bodies and identity categories. Mowlabocus (2010a) uses the concept cybercarnality to bridge the divide between online and offline gay cultures. This

discursive framework suggests that capitalist processes (re)produce normative images of gay bodies that reflect those within gay pornography – therefore men have to manage and negotiate fleshy and digital bodies to achieve that (re)presented in pornography. Although this research is important in highlighting the entanglement of online and offline, it does not consider the lived experiences of using technologies. Exploring the lived experience of producing profiles can enable a deeper understanding of the regulatory and material practices that are entangled in profile construction (Pink, 2012; Bonner-Thompson, 2017).

Downing (2013) interviewed 34 young LGBT young people from the UK about their online interactions and experiences. The networking sites these young people used enabled embodied community formation through friendships and support networks. Video-chats, photography, corporeal descriptions, and identity classifications (age, height, ethnicity, gender), all worked together to produce embodied experiences, enabling individuals to ‘recognise’ particular bodies. This was important for gay men as these participants placed particular emphasis on being ‘body beautiful’ – presenting and desiring slender, toned and tanned bodies. These were highlighted as (re)creating exclusionary boundaries around ‘normative’ gay identities (ibid). Downing (2013) argued that regulatory discourses that shape gay ‘scene’ spaces also materialise across LGBT websites. Following this line of thought, van Doorn (2011) argue that...

...online articulations of gender, sexuality and embodiment are intricately interwoven with people’s physical embeddings in everyday life, as well as the new media technologies they employ [and that] ... it is becoming increasingly difficult to separate bodies, genders and sexuality from the technological networks that give them form and meaning. Conversely, media technologies cannot be apprehended without accounting for the embodied and gendered use cultures that imbue them with significance by mobilising them within larger everyday

Here, van Doorn (2011) draws attention to the entanglement of gender, sexuality, bodies and technologies, in that everyday lives become meaningful through these entanglements. To understand how gender and sexualities are being done differently, there is a need to explore the ways technologies are part of the assemblages that constitute gender, sexuality and bodies. This research on sexuality and online spaces has been important in exposing the instabilities in online/offline space dichotomies. However, these studies often focus on online places that were accessed through a desk top computer, at the time of study.

There is emerging bodies of work that is exploring the embodied experiences of sexuality and gender in and through locative apps, like Grindr. Their mobile nature has called for a re-conceptualisation of sexuality, technology and space (Roth, 2014). Crooks (2013) and Gudelunas (2012) have questioned the political subversive potential of apps like Grindr, suggesting that they can risk (re)making gay men's sexualities invisible as they are performed and embodied through private chat spaces, and private encounters in the home. Furthermore, Tziallas (2015) argues that men can use apps for self-porn, rather than meeting face-to-face, in ways that can be considered as undermining landscapes of equality and visibility. I would argue that Grindr does not have capacities on its own. Therefore, I do not seek to expose Grindr as a politically progressive or regressive cultural object. By this, I mean it is not able to radically shift political landscapes on its own. Instead, I explore how the politics of sexuality are assembled through bodies, screens and places. Wiele and Tong (2014) have explored socio-sexual interactions of 63 men across Grindr, arguing that basic social interactions and a sense of community were important motivations behind using Grindr, as well as sexual gratification. However, Miles (2017) argues that the formation of 'queer male communities' through hook up apps are more fragmented and complex as only those men who use it most 'regularly' feel

a sense of community. In attempting to disrupt the online/offline binaries, Blackwell *et al.* (2015) argue that apps like Grindr produce a ‘layering’ of physical and virtual spaces in ways that prompt users to perform multiple identities simultaneously. However, I would argue that a ‘layering’ approach suggest ‘fixed’ and ‘stable’ spaces that can be layered onto. I seek to understand online/offline as folding into one another in ways that do not produce distinct fleshy/digital bodies. This is where I turn to more-than-human thinking, a recent conceptualisations of sexualities, technologies and place in human geography.

Recent geographical work has been exploring the entanglement of sexuality and technologies. Cockayne and Richardson (2017) argue that a queer perspective on technologies – or code/space – can enhance understandings of the ways technologies can (re)produce and disrupt how sexualities are lived and experienced. Cockayne *et al.* (2017) have argued that the digital is re-mediating how bodies understand and feel intimacies, suggesting that non-human objects can constitute feelings of human intimacies as spatial proximities are being reworked. In this sense, questions are raised about how people are living together differently with technologies (Cockayne *et al.*, 2017).

In line with this thinking, Allen (2015) takes an assemblage approach to sexuality, young people and mobile phones. She suggests thinking with assemblage can assist moving beyond debate that mobile phones are ‘bad’ or ‘good’, or that humans and phones have distinct sexualities. Instead, for Allen (2015), sexuality is always being assembled through the relations between bodies and phones (for example, sexting). In this sense, phones and bodies are not separate, but are part of the ‘assemblage through which sexuality becomes. Mobile phones can’t be anything on their own, they only exist intra- relationally with young people in an entanglement that blurs the human-non-human divide’ (Allen, 2015, p. 130). This understanding enables an exploration of the ways people are living with technologies. Also working with an assemblage framework,

Renold and Ringrose (2016) argue that control over young girls sexualities – by peers and partners – emerges through digital picture sending, sharing and tagging. Decentring the subject here, highlights how sexuality and control emerge through the multiple digital networks that constitutes young people’s socio-sexual lives. In this sense, there is an attention to the multiple elements that constitutes how bodies become digital. This thesis develops this approach when thinking through gender, sexuality, bodies and technologies. This section has explored the conceptual framing of the digital, highlighting how I think of the digital and bodies are (re)shaping socio-sexual and gendered lives, rather than one taking priority over the other. The next section explores research in men and masculinities.

1.4 Men and masculinities

Men’s studies began the endeavour to understand ‘men’ and ‘masculinity’ as gendered positions. Such conceptualisation of masculinities were prompted by feminist researchers exposing ‘gender’ as socially constructed (Connell, 1987; Haraway, 1988; Connell, 2000). Men’s studies developed as a response to ...

... the shifting social and intellectual contexts in the study of gender and attempt[ed] to treat masculinity not as the normative referent against which standards are assessed but as a problematic gender construct (Kimmel, 1987, p. 10).

Interrogating the position of ‘men’ within academia (both as researchers and the researched) opened up possibilities to understand ‘men’ as *being* and *doing* gender (Connell, 1987; Grosz, 1989). Thinking about masculinity and men as unstable gendered categories paved the way for critical men’s studies – an interdisciplinary field that explores masculinities in ways that seeks to disrupt and challenge the ways its power is exercised (Gorman-Murray and Hopkins, 2014).

Although ‘masculinity’ is assumed to be a stable notion for some men (e.g. strong, aggressive, heterosexual), there are no fixed, concrete or complete characteristics of ‘masculinity’. Attempting to define what constitutes masculinity could risk fixing particular characteristics to men’s bodies. Instead, scholars have attempted to conceptualise masculinity as produced in and through broader gender power structures. Masculinity is understood as relational. The work of Connell (1995) has been especially influential in understanding how the relationality of masculinities produces multiple versions of it, that are always constructed hierarchically (I discuss this in more detail later). Masculinities are produced in relation to femininities and other masculinities. For van Hoven and Hörschelmann (2005, p. 10)...

...masculinity can attach to bodies, objects, places, spaces well beyond the confines of biology and sex. Masculinity evokes images of maleness, yet they are by no means necessarily shared by men and can, on the other hand, be adopted and attributed by women (van Hoven and Hörschelmann, 2005, p. 10)

Masculinities are not internal too and do not ‘belong’ to men’s bodies (Connell, 1987; 1995). Furthermore, masculinity is made meaningful through gendered discourses and can shape the ways bodies become culturally comprehensible.

Men construct their masculinities in relation to women and femininities, and to other men and masculinities. Therefore, characteristics that are associated with women, for example weakness, passivity, emotionality, and irrationality, become oppositional attributes to ‘successful’ masculinities. To be understood as ‘masculine’ or ‘manly’, men must reject assumed ‘feminine’ attributes in favour of being tough, strong, aggressive, rational, and emotionally ‘controlled’ (Askew and Ross, 1988). Arguing that masculinities were constructed in relation to other men highlighted their plurality. Therefore, the experience of men and masculinity are always shaped in relation to identity

positions such as sexuality, race, class and (dis)ability. So far, I have discussed how masculinities are conceptualised through interventions of feminist scholarship and critical men's studies. Next, I trace the work that made this possible.

Willis (1977) and Mac an Ghail (1994) provided some of the initial work on men and masculinities. Their work focuses on educational contexts, exploring how young men construct and embody masculinities in and through school and transitions to work in England. Connell (1995; 2005) developed a typology of four forms of masculinities; 'hegemonic', 'subordinated', 'complicit' and 'marginalised'. These were used to argue that masculinities are hierarchical with all other masculinities being constructed in relation to, or against, the hegemonic position. The 'hegemonic' position within the field of masculinities is usually the most socially revered in a particular space, time and context. Therefore, masculinities are constructed in relation to multiple and unstable intersections of race, ethnicity, class, sexuality and (dis)ability. Moreover, they are historically, temporally and spatially contingent. Hegemonic masculinity has the ability to shift and change, therefore practices and behaviours that are assumed to be 'feminine' (e.g. grooming), can be redefined and then normalised as 'masculine' behaviour. For example, the emergence and popularity of metrosexuality (Simpson, 2002).

Men who are considered 'dominant' may not be the most socially desirable, however they perform a gender identity which is 'popular' in society. Subordinated masculinities are those which fail to meet the requirements of 'hegemony' and 'dominant'. Connell (1995) problematically assigns gay men to this category, on the understanding that hegemonic positions of masculinities are reserved for heterosexual men. Therefore, there is often an assumption that gay men can never 'achieve' 'hegemonic' masculinities, regardless of their gender performances (Nardi, 2000). Complicit forms of masculinities are those men who may not necessarily be understood

as hegemonic in a particular time/space/context, but will benefit from its patriarchal consequences through the subordination of women. Finally, marginalised masculinities are produced through the intersections of various identity positions of race, ethnicity, and class, are constructed as ‘less manly’ by society (Connell, 1992; 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005).

The concept of hegemonic, dominant, complicit, subordinated, masculinities has been employed in a numerous studies on men and masculinities (and remains influential in the field). However, it has been critiqued for its reductionist accounts of the lives of men (and women) as it seeks to place men into a hierarchy of four rigid categories (Moller, 2007). Furthermore, the characteristics of who occupies the ‘hegemonic’ position within masculinities is contested. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) later reassessed their concept to argue that only a minority of men perform hegemony, and that other men desire to achieve it. However, concepts offered by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) were continually critiqued for their essentialist ideas that men are always competing to move through for ‘types’ of gendered positions (Nardi, 2000; Beasley, 2008). Filteau (2014) has highlighted that men can occupy different positions of masculinity across the different spaces in their lives, for example work, leisure and home. Furthermore, these masculinities are not fixed to these places, but constantly inform one another. Arguably, it is difficult to categorise masculinities as hegemonic or non-hegemonic without understanding the broader lives of individuals across multiple contexts.

Geographic approaches to men and masculinities built upon existing work in critical men’s studies, exploring how masculinities are temporally spatially contingent, adding greater complexity to the understanding of masculinities (Jackson, 1991).

Geographers argue that masculinities are complexly entangled with the spaces that they

are performed and embodied in and across (Gorman-Murray and Hopkins, 2014). Therefore, research has sought to examine how the instability of masculinities are produced, constructed, negotiated and resisted in, through and across place (Jackson, 1991; Berg and Longhurst, 2003; van Hoven and Hörschelmann, 2005; Hopkins and Noble, 2009). Building on early research from critical men's studies and foregrounding the spatiality of gender, key geographical work examined how young working class men negotiate deindustrialisation in the UK through an exploration of masculinity, race, class and sexualities (McDowell, 2003; Nayak, 2003b; 2006).

Geographers have built on these insights through intersectional lenses to understand the multiplicity in masculinities. For example, Hopkins (2006) and Dwyer *et al.* (2008) explores the lives of young Muslim men in Scotland and England, respectively. These works challenge the dominant discourses that produce young Muslim men's bodies as threatening or inferior. They highlight how masculinities are more complex than dominant narratives, in that young Muslim men are relationally constructing their masculinities between themselves, their families and other men and women they encounter. They examine the class, religious and sexual dimensions that all work to shape gendered subjectivities that emerge through place. Gorman-Murray (2013) has been interested in the ways sexuality can assist the understandings of sexualities. In his work on gay-straight friendships in Sydney, Australia, Gorman-Murray (2013) argues that hetero-masculinities can be reworked through such friendships in a way that challenges existing gendered and sexed power relations, however simultaneously reinforcing middle class values. Malam (2008) explores the corporeality of men's body size when white western men travel to Thailand. In her ethnographic work situated in a bar in Thailand highlighted, 'tall and muscular' western man did not necessarily occupy the 'hegemonic' position when it came to desirability by women. In contrast, it was the smaller and

slimmer body of Thai men that was revered most by western female tourists. Therefore, gendered identities are situated within ethnic and racial power relations (Katsulis, 2014).

The fleshy corporality of men's bodies has also featured in geographical research (see chapter five for more detailed discussion). Longhurst (2004) attempted to use men's bathroom practices to disrupt dominant ideologies of men's 'hard bodies'. She explores men's relationship with messy bodily excrements as a way to expose the spaces where men feel most vulnerable, highlighting the fragility of men's masculinities. Other work that has developed a corporeal approach has begun to understand masculinity as an assemblage. Evers (2009) thinks with assemblage to challenge the assumptions about masculinity and the 'male body' for men who surf. By situating bodies in surfing assemblages, Evers argues that emotion and sensuality shape attachments to surfing rather than a desire to 'conquer' nature. At the same time, Evers pays attention to the ways gendered power relations shape men who surf. For example, the ways men should position their bodies on their surf boards and the ways shame can inhibit men from 'backing out' of attempting to ride a wave. These power dynamics are understood in broader assemblages of surfing – the sensuality and affective capacities – to argue that surfing is not simply a product of masculine discourses. Waitt and Stanes (2015) also use ideas of assemble to understand masculinity and sweating. Waitt and Stanes (2015, p. 31) argue that:

gender subjectivities emerge within material (bodies, objects, things) and expressive (ideas, affects/emotions, desire) forces that fold or assemble bodies within particular contexts. It is therefore possible to think of assembling masculinity within a context of situated body sizes, shapes, phenotypes, gestures, practices, ideas and desires while also in combination with the sensual responses to the myriad of material objects.

Therefore, bodies are not at the centre of gendered subjectivities. Instead, masculinities

are understood as emerging through multiple working arrangements that make gender meaningful. Waitt and Stanes (2015) explore the strategies men, who live in Sydney, Australia, use to avoid feeling disgust and shame at their own sweaty bodies. Sweat – that is physiological and social – can cause some men to shave their arm pits and others to use deodorant. These tactics highlight the ways men both subvert and reinforce embodied notions of a professional masculinity. They argue that professional masculinity is assembled through physiological sweat that gains meaning through the spaces that it appears, the emotional and felt responses to sweat and the embodied practices used to manage sweat. Paying attention to the ways gender and sexuality is assembled enables an understanding of the multiple ways that masculinity becomes meaningful through multiple elements, both human and non-human. I build on these conversations, understanding gender as *becoming* in Grindr assemblages (as phone, screen and digital space) – that are shaped by memories and histories of masculinities. In this sense, Grindr assemblages do not create new versions of masculinity, but the entanglements of bodies and phones enable masculinities to be assembled and reassembled in particular contexts.

1.5 Newcastle-upon-Tyne

So far I have situated this thesis in relation to corporeal feminism, assemblage, sexualities, the digital and masculinities. In this section, I explore the urban context of the research – Newcastle-upon-Tyne (referred to as Newcastle moving forward). Newcastle is a post-industrial city situated in the North East of England (see figure 1.3). In 2011 Newcastle was reported to have a population of 280,200. This figure excludes Gateshead, North and South Tyneside which have reported populations of 200,800, 200,200 and 148,100 respectively (ONS, 2012). These places often become entangled with geographical imaginaries of ‘Newcastle’. It is the largest city in the North East of

England. Newcastle city centre, and the surrounding localities, are connected by extensive road networks, local bus and train (The Metro) services. It is well connected to Scotland and London through rail links. The city is predominantly a ‘white’ city, having proportions of other ethnic and racial groups. The west end of the city is usually home to migrants with small diasporic communities gathered there. There is also a small China Town – one main street – that is on the edge of the city centre.



Figure 1.3: Map showing the location of Newcastle within the United Kingdom. Source: Ordnance Survey, GB. Using: EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service and ESRI 2017 ArcGIS Desktop.

Colls and Lancaster (2005) argue that Newcastle, as part of the North East of England has developed a strong regional identity through its history and the social, political, economic and cultural separation from the South of England. This is often separate from an ‘Englishness’ that is dominant in the South and the Midlands. Contemporary regional identity is, in part, formed through the impacts of the closure of mining industries and decline of shipbuilding (Mah, 2010). Newcastle is a former industrial city. It was a

thriving place for coalmining, engineering and shipbuilding and repair. However, at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s economic and political restructuring meant that these industries began to decline, leading to high levels of unemployment (Colls, 2005). As a post-industrial city, it is intimately bound up with its manufacturing and shipbuilding histories (Mah, 2010). The deindustrialisation of Newcastle lead to economic and social uncertainty and decline (Hollands, 1997). Nayak (2003b; 2006) has explored the implication for young working class men in who live and work in Newcastle, and how they negotiate shifting regional identities. Unable to transition from school into 'hard' labour intensive work, young working class men often find it difficult to construct masculine identities (Willis, 1977; McDowell, 2003; Nayak, 2003b; 2006). 'Geordie' men often find it difficult to 'become' men as traditional forms of masculine labour have disappeared.

Nayak (2003b; 2006) has argued that men in Newcastle attempt to embody masculinity through consumption practices – drinking alcohol and buying branded clothes – whilst performing heterosexuality through the pursuit of sexual encounters with women. Additionally, some young men exercise and lift weights to craft muscular bodies as a way to develop a physique that can no longer be gained through manual labour. This becomes part of the embodied 'work'. Race and class identity positions are central here. Masculinities are construed in relation to class through employment status and consumption choices – some working class men construct themselves as respectable by working in service industries and through their clothing brands. Whiteness dominates the region and some young men seek to construct others as not-quite white. Criminal practices often become constructed outside of the boundaries of respectable white masculinities (Nayak, 2003b; 2003a; 2006). Nayak (2006) also explored how men's voices, whiteness and regional dialect become entangled in the embodiment and

construction of local masculinities. Class dynamics shape how men from Newcastle understand ways of speaking. Working-class men sometimes differentiate between themselves due to certain roughness and harshness that are placed on particular words. Richardson (2014) argues that the intergenerational relations between men in families of Irish decent in Newcastle work to reproduce working class masculinities. However, these masculinities have to adapt to new economic landscapes and workplaces as manual labour skills do not necessarily have a 'place' in service lead economies. Masculinity in Newcastle is historically and emotionally bound up with the post-industrial landscapes, shaping the ways gendered lives are lived, performed and embodied.

The city is home to two Universities – Newcastle University and Northumbria University. These are both located in the city centre and attract large student numbers to the city. Since the closure of manufacturing industries, Newcastle has received investment in leisure, service, culture and tourist sectors to redevelop and rebrand the post-industrial city as a cosmopolitan place (Miles, 2005; Shaw, 2015). The city has undergone rebranding to move away from its ties with a working class identity and heavy industries (Chatterton and Hollands, 2001). The region's history with alcohol consumption is tied in with heavy industries and masculinities. Father-son drinking was a rite of passage for intergenerational relation in working-men's clubs. The city has now re-branded itself as a 'party place', now becoming famous for its night time economies. The central areas of the city have become redeveloped and rebranded for shopping practices and eating and drinking. For example, the extensions to the Eldon square shopping complex and developing the river side – or quayside – as spaces for arts, bars, restaurants and water front apartments. The two universities also play a role in the rebranding, as they attempt to attract students into the city centre.

As the city has moved from an industrial identity to one of drinking and partying, the spaces of the night time economy have become central to the construction, performance and negotiation of working class masculinities and femininities in Newcastle (Nayak, 2003b; 2006; Nicholls, 2017). Drinking in pubs and bars is a way that gender is embodied, and where young men attempt to construct their working class masculinity by consuming large amounts of alcohol, displaying masculine behaviours and attracting women. Zones in the city centre like the 'Bigg Market' and the 'Diamond strip' are dominated by these forms of masculinity. Through his work with young gay men and lesbian women in the North East of England, Coleman-Fountain (2014) has argued that these mainstream – or heterosexual – zones of the city can become uncomfortable for some non-heterosexual young people due to the heterosexual masculinities that are performed, embodied and celebrated there.

These redevelopments of the city are bound up with neoliberal discourses that attempt to make urban centres 'safer' (Shaw, 2015). The non-heterosexual zone of the city have become desexualised, commodified and branded 'safe' places. This zone is informally named the Pink Triangle – a section of the city that is 'triangulated' by the location of non-heterosexual bars/clubs. Similar to many 'Gay pride' events in the UK and Europe, Newcastle Pride is a commercialised – although still contested – event that is regulated by formal policing and normative ideas of sexuality embedded in commercial interests (Browne, 2007; Di Felicianantonio, 2016). Many cruising and public sex zones were placed under increased regulation and redevelopment. The scene in Newcastle is often used as a spectacle to attract tourism, therefore sexualities are entangled in the cities rebranding of the regional identity. Consequently, the non-heterosexual night-time economy became sanitised and unwelcome to, what Casey (2007) describes as, the 'Queer unwanted' – queer bodies that do not conform to the idealised young, white, able-

bodied, men that most commonly frequent the ‘scene’. White men, and white bodies, go unnoticed, unpoliced and produced as having ‘no race’. Additionally, Coleman-Fountain (2014) has argued that the gay scene for some young gay men and lesbian women in Newcastle can become uncomfortable due to the specific performances of queerness that dominate these spaces. For those men and women who do not embody, or resist, stereotypical ideas of gay men and lesbians, the scene spaces become exclusionary, with those people often feeling judged.

Newcastle provides a distinct place to study the experiences of men who use Grindr. As a place still shaped by a post-industrial landscape, particular notions of masculinities still dominate and the non-heterosexual scene remains predominantly reserved for gay men – with a particular form of gay male sexual culture dominating (Coleman-Fountain (2014)). At the same time, cruising spaces are disappearing due to policing and redevelopments of these spaces. Through dominant neoliberal processes, the city is being (re)made as a ‘safe’ sexual space. Brown (2012) reminds geographers that sexualities research often focuses on large metropolises such as London, Manchester and Sydney. He argues that there should be increased attention paid to ‘ordinary’ cities. Whilst I do not align with ideas that Newcastle is an ordinary city, I focus on the research here to extend geographies of sexualities research to a smaller city in the North of England. So far, I have situated the thesis in relation to theoretical and conceptual work on gender, sexualities and bodies and the urban context. In the next section, I provide an overview of the thesis.

1.6 Thesis overview

This thesis explores the ways that bodies and technologies are becoming increasingly entangled. I do this by focusing on the ways the men who use Grindr perform, feel and embody gender and sexuality differently. I bring together work in corporeal feminism,

geographies of sexualities and digital geographies with analysis of qualitative research. I do so to understand how masculinities and sexualities are constantly emerging through working arrangements of bodies, objects and materials and the forces (affects, emotions and desires) that assemble them. In particular, I think through the ways that this approach can further understandings of the ways heteronormativity, sexual citizenship and public/private dichotomies continually organise gendered and sexed bodies.

This thesis does not follow a traditional structure as it does not have a grounding literature review chapter. Instead, I have highlighted the key conceptual work in this introduction. Each of the empirical chapters (chapters three, four, five and six) begin with a short literature review before the analysis. The literature reviews take different approaches to bodies, gender and sexuality – emotional, sensory, visceral and haptic that are all brought together through corporeal feminist thought. This highlights the multiple – yet complementing – ways of thinking about corporeality and technologies. In this section, I highlight the research questions, methodology and the thesis outline.

1.6.1 Research questions

Exploring the experiences of men who use Grindr in and across multiple spaces in Newcastle was framed by three research questions. These questions enabled me to explore how gender and sexualities emerge as Grindr users engage with the app, and the ways affects, emotions, discourse organise bodies. The research questions are:

1. How does Grindr – as a technology, screen and digital space – become meaningful in the lives of its users?
2. How are embodied experiences of gender and sexuality mediated by Grindr?
3. In what ways do shifting arrangements of bodies and Grindr enable gender and sexualities to emerge differently?

1.6.1 Methodology

This thesis is based on empirical qualitative research that was conducted between August and December 2015 in Newcastle. I take a feminist and queer approach to the methodology that explores the everyday lived experiences of bodies in place. Due to the approach I am sensitive to the ways power shapes participants stories and narratives. I interviewed 30 men who use Grindr, with four recording participant research diaries. The 30 participants were recruited from Grindr directly through a research profile I set up. As I am a man who uses Grindr, I find myself often located as an insider in this research. Therefore, I seek to ‘write in’ my multiple positions that are always shaping this project. Chapter two explores the complexities of researcher/researched and insider/outsider debates in more detail.

1.6.2 Thesis outline

Chapter two explores the methodological grounding of this thesis. I highlight how it is informed by feminist and queer epistemological approaches. I explore the different stages of the research – recruitment, interviewing, diary recording and analysis. I frame this chapter in debates on reflexivity (England, 1994; Kobayashi, 2003; Sultana, 2015). As a man who uses Grindr, I ‘write in’ my lusty body to disrupt dominant – and heteronormative – ways of conducting and producing knowledge. Therefore, I am reflexive on the ways issues of gender, sexuality, bodies and technologies shaped how this research was ‘done’. I argue that reflexivity can have disruptive potential in research on gender and sexuality.

Chapter three explores the ways embodied moods, sensations, emotion and affects – that emerge through sensory engagements with places – are mediated by Grindr. In this chapter, Grindr is understood as a technology and screen. I begin by exploring

work in emotional geographies, aligning this work with feminist understandings of emotion and affect. I also explore how assemblage thinking – particularly inspired by Probyn (2000) – is used to understand how emotions and affects are emerging through material and affective engagement. The purposes of this chapter is to explore where and why men use Grindr. I explore how boredom, horniness and habit prompt men to access the app in their everyday lives. I also explore the moments when the presence of other bodies can limit men from accessing the app. In other words, when Grindr assemblages are unable to form a working arrangement – that mediates boredom and habit. Here, I highlight how shame (re)maps ideas of sexual citizenship and public/private.

Chapter four focuses on Grindr as a digital space. I explore the experience of constructing and looking at profiles. I start by reviewing work in visual geographies and visuality that understands visual objects and practices as part of broader contexts. I build on this with work that explores men and masculinities in visual media. I take a multisensory approach to digital visual profiles as a way to explore how profiles are embedded in broader networks of senses, bodies and places. To be clear, this is not a visual analysis. Instead, I analyse the embodied experience, motivations and feelings that shape how people construct profiles and also how they look at/through them. This enables an understanding of how Grindr profiles are assembled through the regulatory practices that shape men's material lives, but also the tactics that men employ to attempt to negotiate regulatory discourses. I argue that men have to learn different skill sets to produce desirable profiles. As not all Grindr users are the same, different users have to learn different skill sets in order to negotiate regulation. Therefore, I think through the ways race, age, gender and sexuality are assembled through practices of looking at and constructing Grindr profiles.

Chapter five adopts a visceral geographic approach to erotic digital Grindr conversations. I highlight how Grindr is not always used to meet other men, but as a tool for masturbation and ejaculation. I begin by exploring emerging geographic research around the visceral. I also explore how this has been used to inform research on men and masculinity. I engage with the visceral as a way to think through the internal bodily processes and how they are in relational arrangements with screens, words, pictures and places. I highlight how masculinity and sexuality are assembled through the physiological, social and discursive. Paying attention to visceral experiences (arousal, ejaculation and frustration) highlights how not all men have learned how to negotiate online erotic Grindr conversations. Therefore, I argue that there are some shared understandings of using Grindr that are being unevenly learned by the men who use it.

Chapter six focuses on the fleshy, material and offline Grindr encounters. I explore what happens when Grindr users meet in person in bars and homes. I take a haptic geographical approach to these offline skin encounters. I begin by reviewing work in haptic geographies, highlighting how touch is understood as more-than-tactile skin encounters. I understand human experiences of touch as multisensory. Furthermore, haptic geography encourages an appreciation of the relationship between the skins, muscle receptors and nerves that are aroused by bodies, objects and things that we do/do not want to be touched by. I focus on the multisensory experience of meeting bodies in the flesh and how it re-configures the desire to be touched. I highlight how multisensory experiences in the flesh can disorientate men who use Grindr, meaning encounters must be carefully negotiated. Through this negotiation, I argue that Grindr users are still learning how to 'do' Grindr encounters.

Chapter seven concludes the thesis. I argue that multiple Grindr assemblages are dis/reorientating men who use Grindr. By doing so, I provide contributions to work in

geographies of sexualities, digital geographies and studies of men and masculinities. I specifically draw out how this thesis contributes to understandings of how masculinities and sexualities come to be practiced, embodied and experienced as men use Grindr. Furthermore, I explore the ways that thinking with assemblage and corporeal feminism can highlight how geographic concepts such as public/private, home, mobility, sexual citizenship and proximity and distance are being (re)produced, disrupted and reorientated as bodies become entangled with digital technologies. This enables me to show how I contribute to geographic understandings of the ways technologies are shifting how we understand and experience space, place and bodies. I highlight how bodies are *becoming* digital in different ways. Whether it is through digital profiles and conversations, offline encounters or living with screens in our hands and pockets, bodies are increasingly becoming digital. Therefore, I conclude by providing the following three directions for future research around bodies, technologies and places. First, to explore the material, embodied and corporeal practices that shape how and why we become digital. Second, to examine how bodies – that are always located – negotiate everyday life that is mediated by screen. Third, to think through how researching these practices can help explore the power relations that organise gendered and sexed bodies. I argue that these directions can assist feminist and queer scholars hoping to understand how issues of gender, sexuality and bodies are becoming reorientated through the increasing mediation of digital technologies.

Chapter Two: Erotic Research/er: Embodying Methodologies.

2.1 Introduction

I logged onto Grindr at my desk this morning to organise more interviews. I opened the app to appear online. Some people had left me messages. Two of these users were interested in the interview. After responding to these I found myself scrolling down the page looking to see if I found any men attractive – if a face was handsome and chiselled and if their bodies were slim or toned. As I was waiting for potential participants to respond, I had forgotten that I was looking for interview participants. I did not approach anyone that I found attractive as I felt a certain sense of guilt and shame. I thought I was breaking ethical codes and regulations. It was at this point I began reflecting upon my actions. As I moved through this space my body, thoughts and potential actions were shaped by the hypersexual sense of place. My identity positions as researcher and gay man were – and always are – existing together. In this sense, my corporeal desires emerged in conflict with my academic ones. The digital and work spaces I was co-present in, assembled my visceral, sexual, erotic and professional body (Fieldwork diary, 18.08.2015).

Conducting qualitative research is a messy, complex and embodied process (Crang, 2003; Longhurst *et al.*, 2008; De Craene, 2017). In this chapter, I explore the fleshy, material and ‘lusty’ experience of doing this research. This chapter is guided by feminist and queer epistemologies that call for material ‘bodies’ to be more fully ‘written’ into methodologies (Binnie, 1997; Crang, 2003; Longhurst *et al.*, 2008; De Craene, 2017). Reflexivity has been central to feminist methodological interventions as a way to challenge positivist ways of doing research and open up discussions of the power relations that co-construct knowledge (England, 1994; Kobayashi, 2003; Sultana, 2015). England (1994, p. 244) argues that...

...reflexivity is critical to the conduct of fieldwork; it induces self-discovery and can lead to insights and new hypotheses about the research questions. A more reflexive and flexible approach to fieldwork allows the researcher to be more open to any challenges to their theoretical position that fieldwork almost inevitably raises.

One way that scholars seek to do reflexivity, is to reflect upon how their multiple positions – identities, backgrounds life histories – shape the research process (England, 1994; Al-Hindi and Kawabata, 2002). By doing so, researchers are able to understand how insider/outsider positions are never fixed. Researchers are not fixed to one of these, but are constantly negotiating these positions (Katz, 1992; Valentine, 2002).

Some scholars have been critical of the ways reflexivity is ‘done’, arguing that we risk simply listing our identity positions or only analysing our own lives (Kobayashi, 2003; Kohl and McCutcheon, 2015). However, following the lines of Moss (1995) and Rose (1997), reflexivity involves a certain spatiality – we need to look ‘inside’ but also ‘outside’ to the spaces that we occupy as researchers. Thinking about reflexivity in more holistic ways involves an analysis of how researchers’ needs, emotions, and fleshy bodies – that are always located in the research – are shaped by the people and things that we encounter ‘in the field’ (Al-Hindi and Kawabata, 2002; Kohl and McCutcheon, 2015; Sultana, 2015; De Craene, 2017). In this sense, reflexivity is not solitary, but involves thinking about the ‘gaze’ of participants – and others – in a way that can enhance understandings and discussion of the topic of research.

I conducted this research between August and December 2015 in Newcastle, where I live and work. I recruited the 30 participants using Grindr in Newcastle and conducted interviews in the city centre. I supplemented the interviews with four participant research diaries. I am a man who uses Grindr. I have used Grindr before, during and after the data collection that produced this thesis. I am entangled in this research in ways that work to shape how knowledge is produced and understood. I pay particular attention to the ways my position as a man who uses Grindr shaped the ways gender and sexualities emerged when research is planned, performed, negotiated and produced. I reflect upon the ways my body is always already located in the field in a way

that complicates understandings of insider/outsider. However, I consider more than my position as a white, able-bodied, gay man who uses Grindr, and explore ‘the flesh and blood, everyday needs and realities’ of bodies and how they (re)shaped by encounters in the field (Billo and Hiemstra, 2013, p. 321). I am concerned with the ways visceral desire of researcher and participant worked through this research. I argue that a ‘fleshed out’ account of this research project; extends understandings of insider/outsider beyond identity positions; gives a deeper understanding of how this research project was done; and gives greater insight into the experiences of men who use Grindr. I do this to as a way to challenge dominant and institutional ways of producing knowledge.

To do this, first, I explore the feminist and queer epistemological underpinnings of the research. Second, I discuss recruitment, who the participants are and the ethical concerns of doing research with men who use Grindr. I pay particular attention to the ways I used feminist ‘boundary making’ to ‘separate’ myself from my participants and position my online Grindr profile as a ‘research’ profile. Third, I explore the practice of conducting interviews and participant research diaries. I highlight the ways masculinities and sexualities come to be (re)worked when doing research. I argue that the focus of the research and the ways participants are recruited reorientates power relations. Fourth, I discuss how sexualities and desire have to be negotiated when doing research on sexualities. I seek to disrupt dominant and masculinist ways of producing knowledge by writing in my desires and sexualities. However, I highlight how attempts to subvert power dynamics can also be (re)framed through power and normativity. To conclude, I draw together three points that highlight how conducting, writing and constructing a methodology that considers the embodied experiences of desire, gender and sexuality can further understandings of embodied methodologies.

2.2 Feminist and queer methodologies

This research was shaped by a combination of feminist and queer epistemological frameworks. Feminist and queer methodological interventions foreground human experiences of gender, sexuality and embodiment. In other words, how gendered and sexualised power relations organise bodies and lives. I was guided by both of these intersecting epistemological approaches as they help pay attention to the lived experiences of bodies, people and place (McDowell and Sharp, 1997; Browne and Nash, 2010a; Di Feliciano *et al.*, 2017). In this section, I explore these two approaches, before I highlight how I use them to think about this methodology as embodied.

The establishment of feminist research and scholarship has, in part, enabled challenges to masculinist and objective approaches to knowledge (Haraway, 1988; Rose, 1993). However, Longhurst and Johnston (2014) have argued that these challenges are yet to be fully achieved. Some feminist scholarship foregrounded people's lived experiences to decentre positivist ways of doing research, arguing that embodied experiences cannot fully be explained and understood through quantitative methods and analysis (Haraway, 1988; Rose, 1993; Longhurst, 1995). Through this critique, feminist researchers highlighted the importance of everyday lived experiences - particularly those of women - to productions of knowledge. Therefore, feminist research enabled the acknowledgement of experience, exclusion and emotion in academic inquiry. In this sense, stories and narratives are understood as legitimate ways of knowing (Waitt and Gorman-Murray, 2011). This works to disrupt positivist and masculinist ways of knowing and what constitutes legitimate knowledge.

Positivist approaches often assumed that researchers have no impact on the production of knowledge. Feminist epistemologies challenge the notion that researchers can ever truly be objective (Haraway, 1988; Rose, 1997). In this sense, multiple and

emerging positions of researchers (and researched) work to shape all parts of the process (Rose, 1993; McDowell and Sharp, 1997; Rose, 1997). Engaging with feminist epistemology highlights that knowledge is situated (Haraway, 1988; Longhurst, 1995; Rose, 1997). In part, this means that research, and the data produced, is shaped by the social, cultural, political and economic contexts of that particular time and space. Furthermore, emerging identity positions of both the researcher and participant(s) inform the ways research situations play out (Haraway, 1988; Al-Hindi and Kawabata, 2002). Therefore, research contexts are constructed through power relations that are produced through positions of race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, and ability (Haraway, 1988; Al-Hindi and Kawabata, 2002; Harding, 2004).

Queer methodologies, in part, have developed by building on feminist methodological interventions (Knopp, 2007). However, it would be a discredit to queer theory to simply say that it replicates feminist methodologies (Taylor, 2010). Queer frameworks furthered critiques of the heteronormative productions of knowledge whilst also drawing attention to the instability of sexual binaries (Bell, 1995b; Bell and Valentine, 1995b; Binnie, 1997). Additionally, a queer approach attempts to shift the focus of academic research from heterosexual lives. Developing feminist aims of empowerment, a queer methodology is centred on ‘redefining ontological views, which frame everyday realities that, within normative categorisation, have been rendered as marginalised, silenced or oppressed’ (Munzo, 2010, p.57). In other words, queer methodologies seek to interrogate the normalising discourses that produce unequal power dynamics and marginalising identity categories. ‘Queer’ is a disruptive tool. In spite of this, queer methodologies are still contested. Do methods become queer? Can we have queer methods? What are ‘queer methodologies’ and how are they shaped by epistemologies? Browne and Nash (2010b) have suggested that attempting to ‘pin down’

a queer methodology could undermine the complexity of the approach. However, they do argue that they should be disruptive in nature, exploring the ways gender, sex, sexuality and desire organise human lives and the ways they are undermined (Filax *et al.*, 2005; Browne and Nash, 2010b). These disruptive techniques are centred on challenging and deconstructing dominant relations of disempowerment, that subordinate sexual identities (Brown *et al.*, 2007).

The methodological approach I take in this research combines feminist and queer ways of doing and thinking about research. In particular, I draw on the ways queer and feminist methodological interventions have called to recognise the role bodies play in research (Crang, 2003; Longhurst *et al.*, 2008; Lloyd and Hopkins, 2015; Di Feliciano *et al.*, 2017). Crang (2003) argues that geographic qualitative methodologies have tended to jettison the body from their discussions. Researchers often acknowledge and reflect upon their bodies in terms of their race, gender, class, (dis)abilities and age, however other embodied dimensions – for example emotions, desires, and the senses – go unnoticed (see Longhurst *et al.*, 2008; Wimark, 2016; De Craene, 2017; Di Feliciano *et al.*, 2017 for notable exceptions). In this sense, the materiality of the body still remains absent from mainstream geographic thought (Binnie, 1997; Longhurst and Johnston, 2014). Longhurst *et al.* (2008, p. 208) have argued:

Bodies are ... always interpellated by a range of ideological practices and this includes research practices. Researchers and participants perform different embodied subjectivities (sometimes contradictory) in different spaces. Bodies produce space and knowledge, and space and knowledge produce bodies. Being and knowing cannot be easily separated.

Longhurst *et al.* (2008) draw attention to the centrality of bodies to their research on food. In a project with migrant women in New Zealand, they use their bodies and senses as research instruments to explore how their distaste (and disgust) for food reveals

insights about their embodied identities. In terms of sexualities, Diprose *et al.* (2013) highlight the shame that emerges through unwanted sexual encounters when conducting fieldwork. Being recognised as ‘bad’ researchers prompts Diprose *et al.* (2013) to manage their bodies (for example, covering up more skin and not engaging in social activities like drinking alcohol) in a way that positions them as ‘good’ ‘objective’ researchers. Furthermore, Bain and Nash (2006) reflect on the ways they dressed and positioned their bodies and interacted with other bodies when conducting research in queer women’s bathhouses. They highlight how they felt uncomfortable at simply being ‘out as researchers’ in the bathhouse, yet did not feel comfortable engaging in the erotic practices. Paying attention to bodies of researchers and participants can provide insights into the ways dominant productions of knowledge organise bodies. By this, I mean the ways materiality and discourses work together to produce everyday experiences (Probyn, 2000). However, bodily sensations and experiences of researchers are usually ‘written out’ of research.

Researcher desire is often omitted from methodologies (De Craene, 2017). Whilst sexual identity can be claimed, embodied arousal and desire of the researcher is usually ‘left out’. De Craene (2017) highlights that through conversations – ones that regulate desire and eroticism – with other scholars and academics, researcher desire comes to be ‘written out’ of the majority of research. In a rare example, Carter (2016) writes about desire and sexualities in her work with lesbian women in Toronto. Here, desire was a tool used to communicate in interviews. Flirtation, shared identities and queerness worked through her research. In her reflections, Carter (2016) acknowledges that desire and sexuality shaped the topic choice, how participants engaged with her, and moments of flirtation. The ways desire and sexuality shape research does not end at data collection. Thomas and Williams (2016) argue that researcher desire also shape the ways data is

analysed as researchers can never separate themselves from their fleshy bodies. These examples highlight that embodied desire is entangled in the ways knowledge is produced – from the selection of the topic to analysing and writing up. Therefore, to jettison researchers' lusty bodies from methodologies can risk simplifying the messy ways that knowledge comes into being.

I pay attention to the ways sexualities (both sexual acts and sexual identities), desire and masculinities organise, regulate and produce bodies (as a combination of materiality and discourse). I use the disruptive tools offered by feminist and queer epistemologies to write in the materiality of my body as a way to explore the production of knowledge. I also explore the ways that organisation can be subverted. I highlight how power relations and binary ways of thinking are unstable, fluid and contradictory. In the following sections, I use the epistemological tools offered by feminist and queer methodologies to explore how gender, sexualities and bodies emerged in the multiple spaces I did this research.

2.3 Becoming sexual, erotic and digital: recruitment, participants and ethics

2.3.1 Recruiting from Grindr

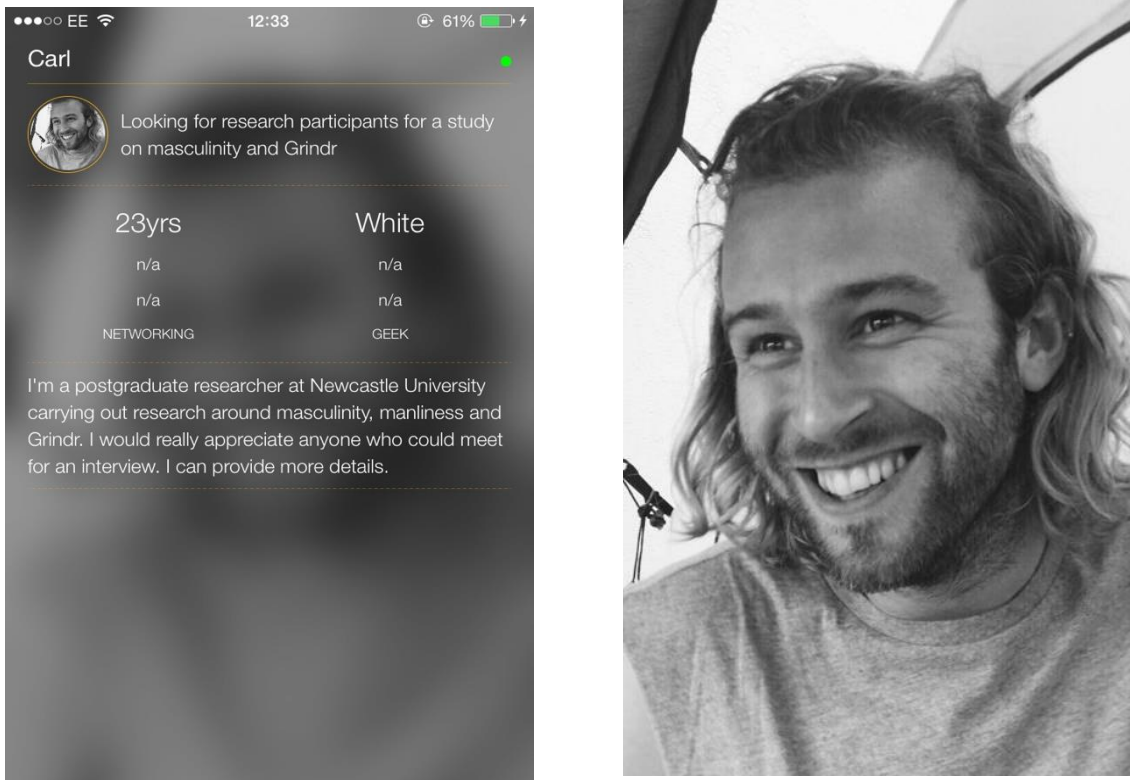


Figure 2.1: Grindr profile and picture. Source: Grindr screen shot

I used Grindr as the method of recruitment for this research. I set up a ‘research’ profile (see figure 2.1) that was separate to my previous personal Grindr profile. The profile stated that I was looking for participants to part take in a research project on Grindr, masculinity and manliness. I uploaded the profile at the beginning of August 2015 after I returned to the city from a three week holiday. Being absent from Newcastle meant that I was not ‘present’ on Grindr. I chose to do this as a prolonged absence from Grindr could make me ‘appear new’ when I used the app again. I did this as a way to attempt to position myself as a ‘researcher’ rather than a ‘user’. I used a picture of me (see figure 2.1) (instead of a picture of the Newcastle University symbol, for example) as I wanted to ‘flesh’ out the research project. In other words, I wanted to give participants an insight into who I was – or at least how I looked – if they were going to meet me in an offline

context to discuss issues of gender, sex and sexuality.

I chose to fill out four categories – my age, ethnicity, ‘what I was looking for’ and a Grindr tribe (geek). I chose these categories as I wanted participants to have some information about me and my identity. I chose geek as I felt that it reflected perceptions of someone who is university educated and conducting academic research. I chose to leave my body ‘type’ (Grindr labels of stocky, slim, toned, muscular and large), height, weight and relationship status blank as I felt these categories work to further sexualise my digital body. Bodies on Grindr often come to be recognised as sexual due to the sexualised nature of the place, therefore I chose to leave particular ‘aspects’ of my embodiment off my profile as a way to challenge the sexualisation. Digital categories produce digital bodies in ways that do not reflect the messiness of everyday lives and identities (Roth, 2014). Digital identity categories that are focused on the size and shape of our bodies on digital dating and hook up spaces can sexualise online bodies (Mowlabocus, 2010a). This sexualisation emerges as a focus on the fleshy materiality of the body creates a more ‘touchable’ and ‘sexy’ body. I also chose to leave off my relationship status – single at the time. I felt that stating that I was ‘single’ may have led to the assumption that I was ‘looking’ for sex, dates and/or relationships. Here, I was attempting to separate out my personal life and research. However, in the context of this insider research, it is difficult to truly pull these identities and practices apart (Billo and Hiemstra, 2013). I was constantly trying to construct and maintain a position as a researcher, instead of a Grindr user, through these decisions. Cuomo and Massaro (2014) argue that some feminist research ‘insiders’ may actually benefit from constructing certain boundaries to protect the wellbeing of researchers and researched. However, I am also working to produce a disembodied idea of a researcher – one that is not ‘attached’ to

a material corporeality (Longhurst, 1997). Here, research ethics that prompt me to establish boundaries can also work to redraw the boundaries between mind/body.

Using Grindr as a recruitment tool was inspired by the success of researchers within health disciplines (Burrell *et al.*, 2012; Rice *et al.*, 2012; Landovitz *et al.*, 2013; Rendina *et al.*, 2013). Rice *et al.* (2012) argue that this ‘novel’ recruitment tool enables participants to be sampled beyond known non-heterosexual residential and leisure spaces and community groups. Additionally, participants can be accessed; within a short space of time; from any location; and at any time of day. I extend these arguments for social science research. I was able to recruit 30 participants in five months, with each participant willing to give one to three hours of their time in interviews.

I waited for Grindr users to contact me about their interest. After three weeks of conversations I noticed that some Grindr users would say to me ‘I wouldn’t be much help, I’m not that manly’. Although I was able to explain that my study was not targeting particular types of men (or masculinity), multiple messages of this kind prompted me to change the profile text. I decided that the words ‘manly’ and ‘masculinity’ may have suggested that I was looking for particular types of men to speak to. Therefore, I changed the text to read:

I’m a postgraduate researcher at Newcastle University carrying out research around gender, sexuality and Grindr. I would really appreciate anyone who could meet for an interview. I can provide further details.

By changing the words ‘manly’ and ‘masculinity’ to ‘gender’ and ‘sexuality’, I hoped that different ‘types’ of men would be attracted to the study and would start conversations with me. These interactions with Grindr users gives an insight into the ways masculinity is understood. Manliness and masculinity are often conflated with ‘hegemonic’ notions that are entangled with heterosexual performances of masculinities, for example ‘passing’

as straight. ‘Straight acting’ and ‘no camp, no fem’ are phrases that feature on some Grindr profiles and work to regulate non-manly performances of masculinities (see section 4.7 for discussion). Therefore, the language on my profile may have regulated other men who use Grindr. Following the profile changes, I did not receive any messages where men suggested that they were not ‘suitable’ for the research.

Two months through the research, I changed my profile picture to one of my face and body (see figure 2.2). I decided that I wanted to ‘update’ my picture to one that was more recent of me. I hoped that it would further ‘flesh’ out the research project, as it displayed a different part of my body/flesh. Additionally, I thought having a ‘fresh Grindr profile’ may ‘attract’ other Grindr users to the profile, read the information about the project and begin a conversation. In this sense, I was providing a ‘fresh’ recruitment advertisement.

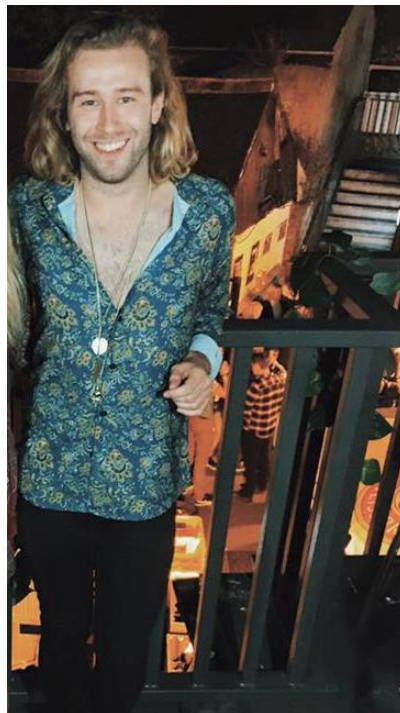


Figure 2.2: Grindr profile picture. Authors own

This picture was subject to several messages that focused on my exposed skin – my chest. Although I still received sexual and flirtatious messages when using the first picture on my profile, it was the second picture where users commented on my chest. As a young,

gay man who has previously used Grindr socially, I could easily be understood and recognised as an ‘insider’. Upon noticing the sexually suggestive messages, I added the phrase ‘looking for research participants only’, alongside the details about the project as a way to ‘separate’ myself from Grindr users. However, I still received multiple sexually suggestive and explicit messages and pictures. My face and my body were sometimes the focus of these messages. Other Grindr users said things such as, ‘I didn’t read your profile, I just saw your cute face and long hair’ and ‘wow, you’re hot’. One particular user spoke about my chest being ‘visible’. Upon realising that I was not interested in a ‘hook up’, he said ‘you’re being a tease, showing us your chest like that’. In the context of the conversation he was making a joke. On reflection, my body and profile were subject to regulation as I was not a source of erotic potential. This did prompt me to change my picture back to the one where only my head and shoulders were visible and my body was more fully ‘covered’ (figure 2.1). Grindr users often look at the profile picture and start a conversation without reading profiles. I soon realised that the profile picture had to be more carefully selected. Choosing a picture where I was ‘covered up’ – alongside leaving particular categories blank – was a tactic I used to de-sexualise my digital body. I strategically used digital space, and the ways bodies come to be digital, to construct a researcher identity. In this sense, I jettisoned my desire and sexuality from this digital body, in favour of a ‘researcher’ identity. This was a way for to attempt to conduct ‘ethically sound’ research (I discuss this in more detail in 2.5).

Despite attempting to construct a researcher profile, I was still clearly entangled in the sexual politics that shape Grindr. Walby (2010) highlighted that despite his efforts to present himself as a professional researcher (dressing in a shirt, tie, and formal trousers), throughout his interviews with man-to-man escorts, his body was often subject to sexualisation. Participants made several suggestive comments that transgressed the

researcher-researched context. Despite engaging in identity work, bodies can come to be framed within narratives of desire and sexualities. In other words, the ways researchers attempt to present their bodies is not how they are understood by other people. My exposed body emerged as a site of erotic potential, rather than that of a researcher. Despite managing the exposure of my body and the categories that reveal relationship status, body size and shape, height and weight, I was still understood as a sexually 'available' body to many Grindr users. The gaze of the people – both participants and non-participants – who I encountered in the field complicated the construction of my digital body. The experiences of doing research are always (re)produced and complicated through the multiple encounters in the field (Al-Hindi and Kawabata, 2002). Therefore, the ways I presented myself had to be negotiated. It is important for researchers using apps for recruitment to fully consider the potential readings of their bodies in profile pictures.

Many people contacted me with their interest in this project. Once a potential participant had contacted me, I provided more information about the interview. For example, I explained that it would be informal and semi-structured, and I offered users the option to read over information sheets and consent forms before agreeing to take part. The forms were sent via e-mail. I then attempted to keep further communication through e-mail. If the user agreed to be interviewed, we arranged a time and place to meet via e-mail or through Grindr. I conducted interviews in public cafes in Newcastle city centre or in a Newcastle University building. Despite having the option, most participants preferred that I chose the location. I chose cafes as they provided an informal public space that enabled friendly conversation between myself and participant.

Using e-mail to communicate and meeting in cafes, bars or university spaces was a way to position myself as a 'researcher' instead of a 'Grindr user'. This was another

way of constructing boundaries between myself and participants (Cuomo and Massaro, 2014). Using my university e-mail that has a Newcastle University domain address (@newcastle.ac.uk) legitimised my position as a researcher. This was one way I could try to inhibit any unwanted sexual encounters. By choosing to meet in public places rather than private home spaces was also a way I could prevent participants for mistaking interviews for hook ups (see section 6.4 for discussion of touch, homes and hook ups). The presence of other bodies in public spaces was a way I prevented any unwanted touching from participants. In the following section, I provide more details about the participants.

2.3.2 Men who use Grindr

I focus on the experiences of men who use Grindr to explore how men who engage in non-heterosexual interactions think about, embody and experience masculinity, sexuality and desire in and across the digital. Work in critical men's and masculinities studies argues that researching men is necessary to disrupt the dominant position of masculinity in gender hierarchies (Connell, 1987; Kimmel, 1987; Grosz, 1989). Therefore, I examine the experiences of men who use Grindr to understand how discourses of masculinities work to shape desire, and how they are shaped by desire. 30 Grindr users in total were interviewed (see table 2.1 for list of participants), with two follow up interviews and four participant research diaries (see table 2.2). I conducted the two follow up interviews with Ben and Marcus due to time restrictions. The participants and I felt that they could continue their discussion if they had more time. After I had transcribed their original interviews, I contacted them to arrange the follow ups.

I/V	Pseudonym	Age	Ethnicity	I/V	Pseudonym	Age	Ethnicity
1	Jack	21	White British	16	Joel	20	White Irish
2	Marcus	25	White British	17	James	26	White British
3	Ralph	22	Mixed	18	Chris	31	White British
4	Jacob	21	White British	19	Ben	33	Pacific islander
5	Nathaniel	22	White British	20	Zack	32	British Pakistan
6	Darren	25	White British	21	Russell	28	White British
7	Lewis	26	White British	22	Toby	23	White British
8	John	50	White British	23	Josh	23	White British
9	Bram	31	Dutch	24	Alex	24	South East Asian
10	Joe	24	White British	25	Rhys	22	White British
11	Charlie	33	White British	26	Tom	44	White British
12	Rupert	37	White British	27	Jamie	21	White British
13	Connor	20	White British	28	Kirk	23	Filipino
14	Adam	34	White British	29	Robert	27	White British
15	Gareth	42	White British	30	Axel	21	White British

Table 2.1: Interview participant demographics (diary participants highlighted in blue)

Diary Participants	Date Started	Length Of Time
Marcus	26.07.2015	6 weeks
Lewis	15.08.2015	4 weeks
Connor	30.08.2015	12 weeks
Toby	15.11.2015	4 weeks

Table 2.2: Diary participants

All of the interviewees were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identity. Participants filled out a ‘demographic’ form before the interview started (see appendix A). The form did not use tick boxes, instead it required participants to write their; age; ethnicity; relationship status; sexuality; how long they had used Grindr for; and if they used any Grindr tribes. I used open questions so participants were not forced to use pre-selected categories. Therefore, I was able to appreciate the messiness, contradiction and fluidity in social identities. Table 2.1 highlights the age, and ethnicity of the participants. The ages range from 21-50, with 24 being white British, one white Irish, one white Dutch, one British mixed, one Pacific Islander, one British Pakistan, one South East Asian and one Filipino. All participants identified as gay, with Josh also saying he sometimes identified as queer. Almost all participants stated their relationship status as single, apart from Chris who is in a non-monogamous relationship.

All of the participants were Grindr users at the time of the data collection. Dating apps are becoming increasingly integrated in everyday sexualities (Roth, 2014; Blackwell *et al.*, 2015; Miller, 2015). I chose to focus on Grindr users in Newcastle as it is the most popular and frequently used app. Some of my participants provided some support for this as they suggested that they use Grindr more than other dating apps – such as Tinder,

Scruff, Hornet and Jack'd – as Grindr provides more potential for conversation and meeting. Jack and John state:

Jack: well, I only really use Grindr, like it's the only one where you can meet people, if you know what I mean (Jack, 21, white British).

John: I have scruff, and I used to have hornet, but no one speaks, it's bizarre ... so I use Grindr more (John, 50, white British).

Jack and John reflect the views of all participants. Grindr was seen as the app with the most potential. Many participants understood Grindr as a place where 'people speak' and can lead to offline encounters. Therefore, I chose to explore Grindr as it seemed to be more integrated into the lives of men who use dating apps in Newcastle. The ways that they used Grindr did vary. Participants used the app for different purposes – dating, friends, intimacy, sex, eroticism and hooking up. All of them had used Grindr to 'hook up' at some point.

My socio-sexual interactions across Grindr, previous to the research project, provided a difficult terrain to navigate when recruiting participants. Browne (2003, p. 141) made an active decision not to interview women she had previously had romantic or sexual relations, as she feared she could have 'led women on'. She argues that by including these women it may cause participants 'harm', questioning the ethical credibility of the research. However, this meant certain women were excluded from her research, something she had not anticipated. In contrast, research by Lambevski (1999) and Brown (2008) into non-heterosexual men's public cruising sites highlighted that engaging in sexual practices with other men enabled access to participants and a deeper understanding of the performance of gender and sexualities. I decided to include Grindr users who I had sexual or romantic encounters with. I did not have any sexual encounters with participants during the research process, only before and after. I did not wish to 'lead

people on' as this could potentially cause embarrassment and harm to both myself and the participants. This would question the ethics of the project (Browne, 2003). At the same time, I did not want to exclude potential participants. In addition, when considering to not to include these Grindr users, I found it difficult to 'draw boundaries' around the encounters I would define as 'inappropriate'. To be clear, during the research process I did not have any sexual encounters with the participants. I did this as a way to manage my 'insiderness'. Furthermore, I had never had any sexual encounters with participants that were students before or after the research. I also never taught any of the students that took part in the research project.

There are multiple forms of online and offline Grindr encounters – for example, dating, meeting for casual sex, digital conversations about the mundane, and digital conversations about sex, with or without, pictures. If I had decided to exclude men I encountered through Grindr, it would be necessary to define the encounters that I would consider to be too 'sexy' to be included in the research. The interactions and complexities between online and offline spaces shape everyday experiences and become meaningful in different ways. For example, would sharing naked pictures through Grindr be 'more inappropriate' than meeting 'in the flesh' for a hook up. Both of these interactions can be meaningful – and enjoyed – in different ways and to different extents. It is difficult to prioritise one over the other – online over offline (van Doorn, 2011; Kinsley, 2014; Cockayne *et al.*, 2017). Offline sexualised encounters do not necessarily constitute deep and meaningful interactions for some men. It may not matter to some men whether we have engaged sexually (Hubbard, 2008). (Re)drawing boundaries around particular online and offline sexual encounters would have created hierarchies around what encounters are more meaningful and sexy. This risks (re)making binaries between digital and offline interactions, spaces and bodies – binaries that feminist, queer and digital geographers

have attempted to disrupt (Kinsley, 2014; Chen, 2015; Ash *et al.*, 2016; Longhurst, 2017). Therefore, I chose to include *all* Grindr users in the study.

To further calls from Binnie (2004) to pay attention to acts of sex and eroticism, I was concerned with the ways men who use Grindr engaged in sexy practices as well as sexual identities. I wanted to explore how discourses of masculinities and sexualities work through material, sensory, visceral, fleshy and haptic practices of sex and eroticism. To do this, I chose to speak with Grindr users, employing a semi-structured interview approach. I discuss the use of interviews and participant ‘Grindr diaries’ later in section 2.4. In the next section, I explore some of the practicalities of doing research with men who use Grindr.

2.3.3 Practicalities of doing feminist and queer fieldwork

Recruiting from Grindr raises unique ethical issues. Research ethics are not uniform or stable. Ethics are always changing in ways that require negotiations between researchers, institutions and participants (Hopkins, 2007). In a review of feminist research in online spaces, Morrow *et al.* (2014) argues that there is little understanding of feminist ethics when researching online environments. Offline ethical procedures do not necessarily map neatly onto digital environments as these spaces work ‘differently’ (van Doorn, 2011). They question the ways that researchers can use comments and narratives of internet users if permission and consent has not been granted. By taking information freely from the internet, researchers may run the risk of plagiarising the words of internet users. Morrow *et al.* (2014) suggest that how we geographically conceptualise online spaces – as public, private, personal, political, or communities - shapes how we ‘do’ ethics. In this sense, internet users can be referenced as authors of text or as participants in a research project. However, this arguably reinforces the expert/researched binaries that some

feminist work seeks to move beyond (ibid). They argue that ‘transparency’ is important in online research; being transparent about how people and spaces are conceptualised; and transparent about researcher identities.

I understand Grindr as both public and private (see chapters four and five) (Mowlabocus, 2008; van Doorn, 2011; Kinsley, 2014). I also understand Grindr users as participants who have agreed to this research. Therefore, it is necessary to ask for permission to use their online information (profiles and conversations). However, I also interviewed the men in this research, as a way to avoid simply being a ‘lurker’ online (Madge, 2007). Additionally, by establishing a research profile I was transparent about my research intentions (Seymour, 2001; Morrow *et al.*, 2014). The transparency of the research positioned myself as a researcher, not as a participant in Grindr. However, my research identity was not fixed and I was read in a multiple of sexualised and gendered ways (I discuss this in more detail in section 2.5). The use of information sheets and consent forms (see appendix B, C, D and E for examples of interview and diary information sheets and consent forms) enabled me to maintain an ethical position with participants (Cuomo and Massaro, 2014). The project was granted ethical approval by the Newcastle University ethical committee (see appendix F). It was requested that I give participants the option to edit or delete transcripts after the interview. No participant chose to do this.

When ‘doing’ online research, dichotomies of researcher/participant and professional/personal have been disrupted and blurred (Ashford, 2009; Hall, 2009; Taylor *et al.*, 2014). The boundaries between personal life and research can blur into each other when doing online research, even though researchers may wish to position themselves as ‘researchers’ for the purposes of conducting ethically sound research. In interviews about everyday lives (this included digital lives) with ‘queer youth’, Taylor *et al.* (2014) created

online boundaries to maintain their researcher identities. For example, when researchers accepted Facebook friend requests from participants, the researchers ‘hid’ the majority of information about their private lives from their profiles. By hiding private information online, the researchers separated out parts of their personal and professional lives, simultaneously maintaining a ‘friendly’ persona. The researchers ‘ended’ these online friendships once the research process was over. I removed links to Facebook and Instagram from my Grindr profile, and attempted to use e-mail or Grindr to contact participants. I suggested giving my contact number to participants who recorded diaries so they could easily contact me. Marcus was the only participant that I exchanged numbers with so that he could send the diary through Whatsapp.

As Grindr is often used to mediate hook ups, maintaining a researcher position attempted to limit the expectation of erotic encounters from participants. Additionally, all interviews were conducted in public spaces or university buildings to further highlight that these encounters were not erotic. However, I may be establishing a binary between public and private by assuming particular (sexual) behaviours are expected to occur in certain spaces. Morrow *et al.* (2014) have argued that institutional ethical procedures do not necessarily map across feminist ethics, practices and epistemologies. Following certain guidelines can sometimes reinforce dichotomous thinking. Although I am attempting to maintain my safety and the wellbeing of participants, I am suggesting that particular sexual activities will not be enacted in public spaces. In other words, I could be suggesting that there is ‘no space’ for sexual touch in public places. Geographers researching sex and sexuality have attempted to challenge the spatial binaries of public/private and sex, highlighting that constraining desires to private space is a heteronormative process (Bell, 1995b; Longhurst, 1995; Hubbard, 2000; Brown, 2008). Participants in my research did not appear to assume that the interviews would be sexual

or that sexual contact would happen after the interview. However, some participants did mention that they thought I was attractive, with others sending me sexually suggestive messages days/weeks after the interviews – I discuss this in further detail later (section 2.5). Therefore, meeting in public may have prevented participants from making any comments or ‘touches’ that would initiate erotic encounters.

Due to the ‘risk’ of participants reading the research in an eroticised way, participants had the right to withdraw themselves from the research at any time – although no participant withdrew from the research. Newcastle University’s ethical process requested that I provide participants with the option to *edit or delete* their interview transcripts after the interviews have been completed (see appendix F) – no participants chose to do this. Although this may change the essence and subject of interviews, institutional ethical policies must be followed. This demonstrates the ways ethical issues around sex and sexuality are understood in institutions – through heteronormative discourses that produce knowledge (Bell and Valentine, 1995b). In this methodology, I attempt to subvert and challenge (hetero)normative understandings of knowledge production. I use feminist and queer reflexivity tools as a way to challenge institutional power relations (Al-Hindi and Kawabata, 2002; Sultana, 2015; De Craene, 2017). In the following section, I examine the ways that research on gender and sexuality can prompt research to be ‘done’ differently through the practice of interviewing, participant diaries and analysis.

2.4 Men talking about sex: using interviews and diaries

This research was guided by feminist and queer epistemological framings that foreground lived experiences. This approach enabled me to highlight the ways men practice, understand and experience gender and sexuality. In this section, I explore how the

epistemological framing of this thesis guided my choice to interview participants about experiences of gender, sexuality and embodiment and why I supplement these with participant 'Grindr diaries'. I pay particular attention to the ways these methods and their analysis were shaped by, and shape, discourses of masculinity and sexuality.

2.4.1 Talking with men who use Grindr

Interviewing is a popular method in human geography (Dowling *et al.*, 2016). However, interviewing has been open to debate in geographic and broader social science research. There are no simple ways to recruit, conduct and analyse interviews (see Silverman, 2001; Dunn, 2010; McDowell, 2010; Dowling *et al.*, 2016 for in-depth discussions). Arguably, they enable the exploration of stories that reveal emotions, affects, lived experiences and identity formation (Wiles *et al.*, 2005; Gorman-Murray, 2007b; Hesse-Biber, 2014). Telling stories can also enable 'marginalised' identities to speak about their experiences of sex and sexualities (Gorman-Murray, 2007b). It has been suggested that interviews exist on a continuum that ranges from heavily structured interviews to unstructured ones (Dunn, 2010). Structured interviews are managed by the researcher, whereas unstructured gives the participant freedom to control discussion. A semi-structured interview lies in the middle of this continuum, where the researcher guides the interview but gives the participant greater liberty over the content. I used semi-structured interviews as a way to guide participants to speak about the topics of gender, sexuality and Grindr. I developed an interview schedule based on experiences of Grindr, masculinity and sexuality in Newcastle (see appendix G). This enabled discussions to move beyond the interview schedule when participants told interesting stories. Such an interviewing technique can uncover underlying meanings of experiences and gain more nuanced responses through clarification (Arksey and Knight, 1999; Wiles *et al.*, 2005).

I began the interviews by asking participants to ‘tell me a little bit about themselves’ as a way to ‘break the ice’. After getting to know the participant a little more, I would ask them ‘tell me about the first time you downloaded Grindr’. I asked this as it was not directly about sex, eroticism or gender. I followed this up with questions around how long they had used Grindr, how they construct their profiles, where and when they use it and what they use it for. Some participants seemed hesitant saying that they used Grindr for hooking up and casual sex. For example, Joe said ‘to meet guys’ and Russell said ‘depends what I’m in the mood for’. After I asked for clarification, both of these participants would later say that this – for the most part – meant hooking up. Due to this hesitancy, I often waited until later in the interview to talk more explicitly about sexual practices and Grindr encounters. When I did, I often asked them to use examples and recount stories of their past experiences. This seemed to help participants talk more openly about using Grindr. Following these initial questions, I moved to discuss issues of masculinity. I began with asking them what words like ‘manly’ mean to them, and to describe what a desirable man looks like. Then I asked how they understand their own gender. I chose this order as I thought it would be an easier way to start a dialogue around issues of masculinity, making it more comfortable to reflect on the ways they perform and embody gender.

Interviews are shaped by unique sets of power relations (Valentine, 2005; Walby, 2010; Gailey and Prohaska, 2011). By this, I mean that they are not extracted from the discourses that shape everyday lives. Instead, discourses and power relations are constantly emerging in and between researchers and participants (McDowell, 2010). Both participant and researcher are always already shaped by their identities and life histories that give rise to particular ‘assumptions’ that we have about the world (and one another) as they enter into research encounters (Mohammad, 2001). Furthermore, the ways

interviews play out is a product of these identity positions and assumptions, but also the location (for example, café, bar, or home) of the interviews, the ‘things’ in the space, the questions, the topic and the ways bodies are presented and positioned (Cope, 2002; McDowell, 2010). The physical presence of bodies and objects are also tools for research (Longhurst *et al.*, 2008; Adams-Hutcheson and Longhurst, 2017).

Doing research on technologies and digital geographies, I could have conducted ‘online’ research through Grindr. However, this would have prevented observing the ways participants moved, facial expressions and tone of voice, which can enhance data on emotion, affect and embodied experiences (Davies and Dwyer, 2007; Longhurst *et al.*, 2008; Longhurst, 2017). In previous research around online non-heterosexual environments, offline interviews generated rich, in-depth and emotive responses and stories around social relations in online spaces (Nip, 2004; Brown *et al.*, 2005; Downing, 2013). The multisensory experience of doing interviews shapes the ways they play out (Adams-Hutcheson and Longhurst, 2017). When discussing research with people who use Skype in New Zealand, Adams-Hutcheson and Longhurst (2017) argue that the ways bodies are filtered through screens shifts how emotions and affects flow and fold. In this sense, bodies cannot always be used to ease interactions (for example, gesturing in certain ways or sharing food and drinks). For Adams-Hutcheson and Longhurst (2017), participants preferred interviewing in person as the physical closeness was more comfortable. For my research, being able to put participants at ease through everyday practices of drinking coffee provided useful ways to ‘lubricate’ discussions of gender and sexualities. By this, I mean being able to take a sip at particular moments to lessen awkwardness when discussing intimate sexual moments.

Hearn (2013) has argued that the traditional interview processes and practices are not easily transferable when speaking to men about their gendered lives and experiences,

as men often perceive themselves as having ‘no gender’. Furthermore, men interviewing men establishes unique gendered power relations as masculinity emerges relationally (Gailey and Prohaska, 2011). Therefore, the multiplicity of identity positions work to shape different gendered experiences of the researcher and participant (Morgan, 1992; Hearn, 2013). The constant emergence of identity positions produce multiple and unstable power relations throughout interviews. Some researchers argue that the structural hierarchies that operate in everyday contexts are (re)produced in interview settings (Morgan, 1992; Connell, 1995; Connell, 1998). In one sense, this would suggest that participants may attempt to occupy positions of hegemony in interviews (Connell, 1995). Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were a useful tool to enable men to talk about their experiences of gender, sexuality and Grindr. Although it can be difficult to prompt men to talk about gender (Hearn, 2013), using various questions helped examine the complexities around masculinity and sexuality.

At times, discourses of masculinities shaped interview encounters. Prominent discourses that emerged were around age. Participants who were 30 years old and above often made comments about age and generation, particularly when referring to gay culture. For example, Zack and Rupert said:

Zack: I’m quite dubious about people, which, I mean you probably don’t remember Gaydar [laughs], back in the day Gaydar was all the rage.

Carl: I’m aware of Gaydar (Zack, 32, British Pakistani)

Rupert: I have tried using Grindr to find dates, I have been on a couple of dates through Grindr, one worked out. Probably the last partner I had, wasn’t from Grindr, but was Gaydar, you’re probably too young for that [laughs], and it was something similar before iPhones came out [laughs],

Carl: I’m 23, I know what Gaydar is (Rupert, 37, white British)

The aged differences between myself and participants emerged in these ways. Older participants would often use cultural references that framed narratives through our aged differences. Using phrases like ‘you probably don’t remember’ or ‘you’re too young’, alongside gay cultural references works to (re)enforce our generational experiences of being gay men. This positions the participants as having more experience of dating, sexuality and gay culture. There are aged, gendered and sexualised power dynamics working through the interviews. As can be seen from the quotes, I am not removed from these power relations. In both situations I attempt to establish my knowledge and awareness of Gaydar. I did ensure that I did not appear angry, and the participants and I did laugh. I argue there are ‘struggles’ between who is the ‘expert’ – as Grindr users and researcher. Both the participants and I are knowledgeable in gay culture, sexuality and dating, and this emerged through our aged differences. Humour is a tactic that I used to not disrupt the rapport I developed with participants (Watson, 2015). Humour is used as a way to negotiate the power relations in the interview (Browne, 2016). In other words, humour enables power dynamics to be enacted by both myself and the participant, as the performance of age, culture and sexuality is produced through humorous narratives. These enactments of power demonstrates how, in some interview scenarios, relational masculine hierarchies can come to be performed through sexuality, age, generation and humour (Vanderbeck, 2005).

To assume that men are always attempting to achieve forms of hegemonic masculinities does not appreciate the ways multiple identity positions are constantly emerging dependent on relations with people, contexts and place (Jefferson, 2002; Vanderbeck, 2005). For interactions with my participants, it is important to think through the ways sexualities emerged in relation to masculinities. During discussions of sexual

practices, sexualities and Grindr, sexualised narratives often emerged. When I asked Connor about why he chose to take part in the interview he said:

Connor: I don't know why I decided, why not? I think it could be quite interesting, and it has been, the things you asked me about and then like you've actually forced me to think about things I wouldn't usually think about on Grindr and partly because I think you're ridiculously good looking as well, so there's that.

Carl: did that motivate you to speak to me?

Connor: yeah, that definitely grabbed my attention to begin with (Connor, 20, white British)

Connor admits that he chose to start speaking to me, and take part, because he was attracted to me. Here, Connor's performance of gender and sexuality is more complex than attempting to claim a position of hegemony. Instead, he was opening up about his desires. In research with heterosexual men, Flood (2013) argues that participants expressed deeply personal and emotional issues, contrasting the performances associated with hegemonic masculinities. Flood (2013) suggests that age and class positions are at play here. His participants were relatively young (aged 18-26), and of middle class backgrounds. Therefore they may be enabled to perform different versions of masculinities in comparison to traditional working class ones (Willis, 1977). Flood (2013) also highlights that when participants spoke about particular encounters with women, they engaged in (hetero)sexual scripts. He argues these were almost rehearsed, and were similar to those performed in homo-social bonding contexts. Therefore, embodied performances and constructions of masculinities in interviews can be multiple and contradictory, in a way that is more complex than constant power plays for hegemony (Vanderbeck, 2005). This was often the case in the interviews I conducted with men who use Grindr.

Walby (2010) argued that throughout his 30 interviews with man-to-man escorts, men ‘did’ gender differently. There was little attempt at control and competition, suggesting that ‘queer sexuality’ mattered to these interview situations. Walby (2010) highlighted that sexualised discourses emerged as participants made sexual remarks and comments. As participants were recruited from Grindr and the topic included sexual practices, it may have created a space where they could be more open and honest when speaking about our interactions. Additionally, some of the participants may be aware that I was/am a man who uses Grindr – either through seeing me previously or through assumptions. In his research on Gaydar, Mowlabocus (2010a) argues that bodies that are present on online non-heterosexual dating sites are always already read as non-heterosexual, unless stated otherwise. Therefore, I may constantly be recognised as a ‘Grindr user’, gay man and a researcher, at different moments. In this sense, I am an ‘insider’ in this research.

Occupying an insider position can ‘cultivate degrees of intimacy between people’, enabling deeper understandings of experiences (Taylor, 2011, p. 10). Researching the queer scene of Brisbane, Australia, Taylor (2011), highlights that her insider position and social network became fundamental to the project. Her pre-existing networks allowed her to be informed about ‘illegal’ events that ‘outsiders’ would not usually be told about. Therefore, recognition of ‘insiderness’ enables participants to be more ‘open’ about their experiences. This has the potential to initiate a fuller comprehension of people’s lives. As my research encounters were produced through Grindr, there is an assumption that I ‘know how Grindr works’ and that we have a shared experience of sexuality. Therefore, the men I interviewed may have felt comfortable in expressing particular desires (about other men and me). I discuss my negotiation of this in section 2.5.

Some participants were also reflexive when discussing issues of sexuality, masculinity and desire. In discussions about why participants took part in the research, some expressed that it had prompted them to think through their practices and performances:

Gareth: and it makes you analyse your own use of Grindr as well and look at it in a bit more detail rather than just thinking it's just a hook up app and I just use it for shags like. And it's nice to see [that] people are interested in getting under the skin, and what makes people tick, and research is just like getting under the skin of something, and I like to get under the skin of people, so it's translation of that really (Garth, 42, white British).

Marcus: its reflective isn't it, you're prompted to think about things you wouldn't really say out loud and in some ways ... but I've not chosen to find camp people unattractive, that's just the situation I find myself in ... I think it makes you think 'am I really judgemental?', although you can't help who you find attractive (Marcus, 25, white British).

Gareth and Marcus highlight how taking part in the interview enabled them to think through issues of gender and sexuality more critically than they would in their everyday lives. Here, masculinities that are considered hegemonic are not necessarily upheld, instead participants are open to thinking differently about gender and sexuality – this also plays out in participant diaries (see 2.3.2 for discussion). Drummond (2005) has highlighted that gay men are often more reflexive on issues of gender and sexuality than heterosexual men. Being reflexive on these issues may be shaped by the position of non-heterosexuality in social hierarchies. However, both interviews demonstrate how reflections come to be framed within discourses of masculinities. Gareth states that he likes to 'get under the skin' of things and people in a way to 'understand' the world more fully. For Gareth, this involves framing his narrative in masculine ways of wanting to 'know' universal 'truths' (Rose, 1995). Marcus frames his reflections on desire through

discourses that produce attraction as an internal bodily force that people do not control (Lim, 2007). Marcus uses physiological discourses to reduce desire to chemical and hormonal reactions, in a way that legitimises his attraction. By separating out his critical reflection and his embodied desires, Marcus works to construct a disembodied masculinity (Norman, 2011). Therefore, his narrative is framed within, and works to reinforce, mind/body dualisms (Grosz, 1994; Longhurst, 1995; Berg and Longhurst, 2003). Despite there being moments when masculinities are disrupted, they sometimes come to be articulated through the dominant narratives that they have the potential to subvert.

Power relations that produce, shape and construct masculinities do, in part, work through my interactions. However, these are not the only discourses playing out when men interview men. This complicates the ways men have been assumed to perform in ‘man-to-man’ interviews (Morgan, 1992; Connell, 1995). The ways that participants are recruited, the topic of discussion and the multiple identities of the participants and researcher work to shape how interviews play out. I argue that it is important to pay attention to these multiplicities of positionality to understand the ways identities constantly emerge in research situations. In this case, paying attention to desire and sexuality highlights complexities in performances of masculinities.

2.4.2 The diary of a man who uses Grindr

Using diaries as part of a multiple method approach within a social research project is strongly recommended. It provides the subjects of research substantial scope for reflection and self-determined knowledge presentation, it provides the researcher with extensive amounts of intensive material and it reinforces analyses of data gleaned from other methodological sources (Meth, 2003, p. 203)

To supplement the 30 semi-structured interviews, four participants completed research

diaries. Participant research diaries can be a useful way to enable participants to discuss their experiences in ways that are not always structured by the questions researchers ask (Valentine, 2001). Research diaries are used in different forms such as audio, visual, drawn and written (Latham, 2003; Sweetman, 2009; Gibson *et al.*, 2013). These different forms arguably provide a more corporeal and embodied dimension. I offered participants the opportunity to record diaries in different forms, however all of those who recorded a diary chose to use written or typed words. Unlike a personal diary, research diaries are written with the full knowledge that they will be read and analysed by a researcher (Bell, 1998). With the development of emotional geographical research, diaries can be used to access emotional complexities in situ. Drawing on their work with scientists who work in Antarctica, Filep *et al.* (2015) argue that diaries can create a private space that enables reflection on emotional relationships with nature and culture. This can further understandings of the entanglements of place, bodies and their capacities to affect and be affected, providing an insight into the multiplicities of everyday lives. Therefore, diaries ‘are partial, situated and embodied accounts, located in time and place’ (Morrison, 2012b, p. 74). Whilst some researchers suggest diaries are useful in accessing accounts of emotionality, Thomas (2007), drawing on his work about the emotional responses to HIV/AIDS in Namibia, suggests that researchers should be mindful of the potential harmful impacts of diaries on participants.

Using diaries was a way to offset some of the issues that can arise from ‘static’ interviewing, heightening the possibility to reveal complexity in gendered and sexualised subjectivities (Dowling *et al.*, 2016). Producing socially contextual research is celebrated by some feminist and queer methodologies (Rose, 1997; Filax *et al.*, 2005). Arguably, both interviews and diaries remove participants from their ‘normal’ everyday lives into ‘abnormal’ situations (Meth, 2003; Cloke *et al.*, 2004). Diaries can often cause

individuals to record their narratives in situations that are removed from their everyday activities and encounters (Meth, 2009). In contrast, interviews enable participants to interact with bodies (researchers), in ways that can be valuable to the understanding the performance of gender and sexualities. The extent that diaries become decontextualized is subject to the nature of the research (Meth, 2003; 2004). Diaries can be recorded in the everyday spaces that are important in shaping subjective experiences (Markwell and Basche, 1998; Meth, 2003; Cotton *et al.*, 2010). Furthermore, the longitudinal dimension of diaries can provide insights into the contradictions in identity construction as participants may not always construct the same narrative over time (Meth, 2003; Monrouxe, 2009). I used diaries to provide more context to participant narratives – beyond the interviews – as they can be recorded in the everyday spaces that their lives are enacted (Markwell and Basche, 1998; Meth, 2003; Cotton *et al.*, 2010).

The diaries were recorded from four to twelve weeks. Williamson *et al.* (2015) argue that mobile smart phones provide a source of data recording and transfer that is accessible to participants, as individuals do not have to carry extra devices. I asked participants what medium they would prefer. Participants chose to record and send their entries in different ways; via word document and e-mail; photographs of hand written diaries that were e-mailed; and Whatsapp instant messaging. Interestingly, the one who used Whatsapp was one of the more in-depth and reflexive diaries. All interview participants were asked if they would like to record a Grindr diary. Only nine agreed, with four participants completing and returning them to me (see table 2 for list of diary participants). Diaries require increased time and energy from participants, meaning they can be reluctant to engage and record them (Koopman-Boyden and Richardson, 2012). Therefore, it was difficult to involve a higher number of participants in this part of the research. I decided to include these as they provided further empirical support for claims

made in interviews. I discuss this further below. I provided semi-structured diary guidelines (see appendix D). I asked participants to record their everyday Grindr experiences (this included; scrolling through the grid of profiles; looking at profiles; speaking to and meeting people), describe what happened in these scenarios and how they made them feel. I chose to use diaries following the work of Meth and McClymont (2009). In their work with 20 South African men, they highlight how diaries enabled participants to construct differing and contradictory versions of masculinities. They highlighted that most of the participant diaries were more open and honest than the interviews. The men in their study documented their experiences of marginalisation and how this made them feel less ‘manly’. In the interviews and focus groups participants tended to make themselves absent from their narratives. They suggest that recording diaries in their ‘everyday’ contexts (for example, homes) enables for more complex reflection. The combinations of these methods revealed the contradictory masculinities in the ways men publicly and privately perform gender.

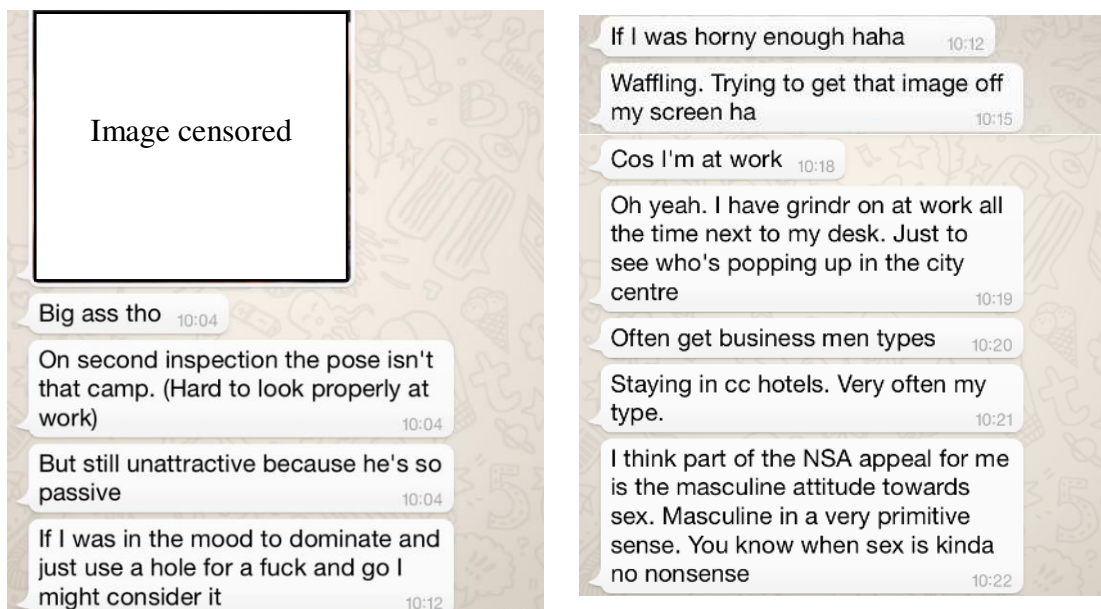


Figure 2.3: Extract from Marcus' diary, 15.08.2015: Source: Whatsapp screen shot

Marcus sent me one diary recording when he was at work (see figure 2.3). The censored image was of a naked man exposing his buttocks, but cropping his face. This picture was sent to Marcus by another Grindr user. I censored the image as I did not have the consent from the person who is in the picture. In this diary entry, Marcus – who works in a shared, open plan office – provides support for claims that men use Grindr at work. He also highlights the ways shame can emerge from Grindr – and pictures of naked men – being seen on a phone screen in a public and semi-public spaces (see chapter three for more detailed discussion). Recording the diary prompted him to further discuss the everyday spaces of his Grindr usage and reflect on the ways discourses of masculinities work through sexual desire. Therefore, the diary method enabled me to access experiences of using Grindr when participants are in the very spaces they engage with it. In this sense, the diaries can be more contextual (Meth, 2003).

Reflecting on masculinity and desire was also evident in diary entries. Connor, for example, wrote:

Since my interview I've been much more aware of how masculinity is portrayed. I'm still not entirely sure what it is about certain people that makes them masculine but I did begin to think about my attraction to masculinity. I used to think that I was just attracted to masculinity - plain and simple. But then I noticed qualities about people that I found quite attractive that weren't masculine. I realised that when I found these things attractive that I coined them as masculine in my mind because that's what I thought attracted me. But that's not necessarily the case. For example: Confidence. I used to consider it a masculine quality (p.s. I'm a feminist not a misogynist - I'm purely talking from a male only, gay attraction perspective). But then I realised, through spending more time with my gay friends, that confidence doesn't have a set place on the masc-fem scale. I've got lots of flamboyant and camp friends that are way more confident than lots of super masculine guys. I think the reason I find confidence attractive is not because it's masculine but because I don't consider myself as confident and it's what I'd like to be (Connor, 20, white British).

Connor highlights how discussions of gender and sexuality in the interview have prompted him to think through his own embodied desires. Monrouxe (2009) argues that diaries recorded over longer time periods can give a fuller understanding of identity formation. In her 18 month research with 15 first year medical students in South West England, Monrouxe (2009) found that audio diaries highlighted the gradual and contradictory ways participants change their views on the world – from a ‘human’ gaze to a more ‘medical’ one. These diaries demonstrated how students reacted differently to the mundane and extra-ordinary events in their lives over time. In my research, the diaries have enabled an understanding of the ways that narratives are discontinuous and fragmented as participants come to reflect upon their gendered and sexualised positions across multiple spaces - whereas interview narratives can sometimes be performed from a particular position (Meth, 2003; Meth, 2004; Monrouxe, 2009).

At the same time, the research diaries were not always as fully engaged with. Many interview participants chose not to record a diary due to the time requirements. Additionally, some of those who did say that they would record a diary did not return it to me. Furthermore, one of the diary participants was not as reflexive and did not describe

many Grindr encounters in detail. The majority of Toby's entries were short and had little reflection on how they made him feel (see figure 2.4):

Toby was more detailed in discussions of his sexual practices, desires and gender

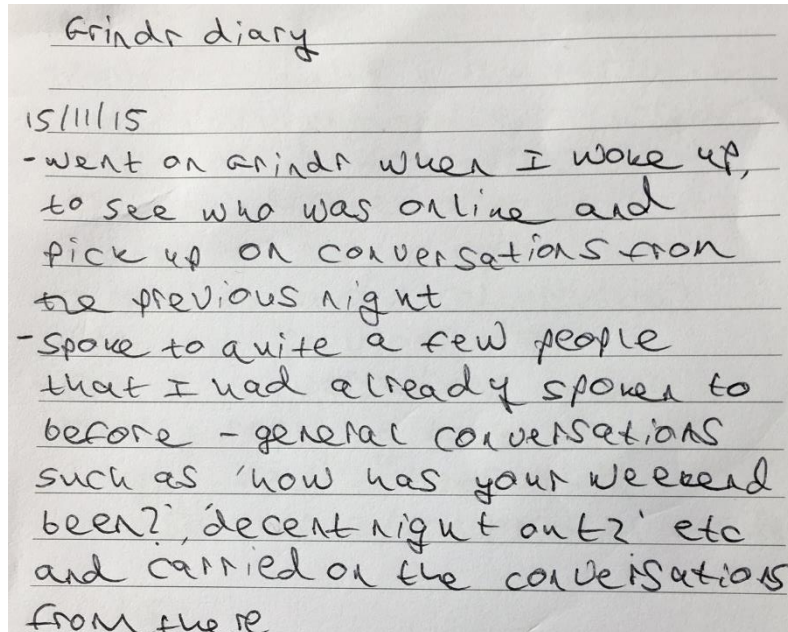


Figure 2.4: Extract from Toby's diary, 15.11.2015

in the interview. Diary recording requires increased time and involvement of a participant than an interview. This can cause less engagement, willingness to participate and can be difficult when securing returns (Worth, 2009; Koopman-Boyden and Richardson, 2012).

For many of the men in this study, interviewing provided space and time for open discussions of gender, sexuality, bodies and Grindr. The presence of me as an interviewer and the short time was more useful in discussing the sexual practices. Using diaries, then, was not necessarily the main source of data, but it does provide enhanced context to those participants who recorded them and provide insights into the ways masculinities are felt and constructed. In the following section, I move to discuss the ways interviews and diaries were analysed.

2.4.3 A queer analysis? transcription, coding and desire

All interviews were transcribed using a foot peddle and Microsoft word. I also 'typed up'

diaries and field notes. My analysis was both inductive and deductive – it was framed by concepts and theories from past research whilst also shaping and contributing to existing theories and concepts (Corbin and Strauss, 1990; Baxter and Eyles, 1997; Crang, 2001; Frisby *et al.*, 2009). I undertook three main stages of analysis. As I transcribed I began the first stage of analysis by making a note of themes or ‘points of interest’. Transcription provides initial analysis as researchers become familiar with the data, giving greater understanding when beginning to code (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Crang and Cook, 2007). I used a pen and paper to note down initial thoughts and ‘things to remember’. I then typed these up in word documents. Written words could arguably be more ‘disembodied’ than listening to recordings. Therefore, I often made notes about the ways participants would say things, for example, if there was ‘disgust’ in someone’s voice. I would also listen back to the recordings if I wanted to recontextualise particular quotes when I was analysing or writing. Additionally, it made the data easier to manage, than having audio, text and ‘image’ (screen shots or picture of diary entries) files.

The second stage of analysis involved using Nvivo software to code the interviews. There is some debate around the effectiveness of data analysis if researchers rely on computer software, as it may limit the depth of critique (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; Spencer *et al.*, 2003). However, software assisted analysis does not necessarily jeopardise the academic critique, if time is taken to ‘get to grips’ with the interface (Basit, 2003). I attended a day long workshop as a way to familiarise myself with the program. I used Nvivo rather than coding via hand as it enabled me to manage my data more efficiently. For example, I could use Nvivo to gather all of the ‘coded’ extracts so they could viewed ‘together’. This enabled me to continually refer to different parts of the coding framework as I analysed each interview. Using Nvivo also allowed me to see

when particular quotes had fallen into multiple codes, permitting the exploration of complexity.

The codes that I established were developed as I analysed the data and also based on past research on masculinities, sexualities and embodiment. Further codes were developed whilst reading and analysing the data. Coding allows ‘the researcher to communicate and connect with the data to facilitate the comprehension of the emerging phenomena and to generate theory grounded in the data’ (Basit, 2003, p. 152). Here, I was thinking through the ways that I could contribute to existing research and theory. Coding involves assigning analytical ideas, themes and categories to ‘parts’ of data (Dey, 1993). The coding framework I developed was divided into four themes that were influenced by the literature reviews I had previously completed (see appendix H for complete coding framework). The four main themes were; Grindr/digital; masculinities; sexualities; and methodologies. These themes were then broken down into codes (or nodes in Nvivo). For example, ‘masculinities’ was broken down into ‘materiality’, ‘discourse’, and ‘(dis)embodiment’. These were broken down even further. For example ‘(dis)embodiment’ was separated into ‘practices’, ‘voice/sounds’, ‘smells’, and ‘touch’. These were developed as I analysed the data. Often, data extracts were assigned multiple nodes as they ‘fit’ into different codes from different themes. For example, the reasons why someone would use Grindr in a particular place (Grindr/digital) intersected with their sexual practices (sexualities) and how they worked to construct respectable masculinities (masculinities).

The third stage of analysis involved revisiting the interview quotes and diary extracts in the codes to think through what they ‘mean’. This involved linking them back to wider research, concepts and theories and thinking about how I can develop and contribute to them (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). To begin with, I used the codes with the

most references in them – a feature of Nvivo. To do this, I pasted all quotes and extracts from each code into a word document. I re-read all the data adding comments to each one that connected them to wider literature, themes and ideas.

Analysis, like other aspects of the research process, is not separated from researcher positionality and embodiment (Rose, 1997; Thomas and Williams, 2016). When listening back to the interviews, reading the transcripts and coding the data, I sometimes found myself feeling aroused. Many of the stories that participants recounted involved descriptions of sexual acts – for example touching, undressing, kissing, biting, licking, rubbing and sex. The imagination of two (or more) men engaging in these acts had an affective arousal on my body. When I was conducting an Overseas Institutional Visit at the University of Wollongong, Australia, in 2016 I would often work whilst commuting from Sydney to Wollongong. I wrote the following reflection on one of these train journeys about my arousal:

I am currently sat on a train on the way back to Sydney from Wollongong, reading and listening to interview quotes. I find some of these sexually exciting. There is a physiological reaction in my body – I am affected by the words that my participants use. It is not that I find all of my participants sexually attractive. Instead, the written word and sounds of the interview conjure ideas of erotic touch in my mind. I started to become concerned that my body could be read as aroused on this train – can other passengers notice a twitch in my leg, the intense stare in my eye. I also wonder if they can read the words on the screen, or overhear the sounds travelling from my earphones (Fieldwork diary, 19.10.2016).

As researchers, we are never separate from our located, visceral, fleshy, feeling bodies (Longhurst *et al.*, 2008; De Craene, 2017). Our bodies are entangled in the process of producing knowledge (Crang, 2003). Carter (2016) argues that desire and sexuality should be considered when thinking through analysis. My visceral response to empirical data was shaped by my desire for other men. For me, eroticism, sexualities and desire

work through the analysis of this research. Thomas and Williams (2016) argue that desire and sexuality shapes how researchers 'do' and position their analysis. A researcher's sexual desire can appreciate sexualities in a way that resists pathologising and marginalising identities and practices. My desire for men-on-men sex and eroticism, in part, shapes the ways I think about the empirical data. Acknowledging that my position as a researcher and my sexualities emerge simultaneously – and in sometimes contradictory ways – works to further complicate notions that researchers can be fully disembodied from their research. Furthermore, despite leaving the field – through the end of fieldwork and being geographically absent from Newcastle – I was still embedded in the sexualities of my participants. This complicates the notion that researchers can ever fully – and objectively – 'leave' the field. In the next section, I further explore how I had to negotiate insiderness and sexualities in particular moments during the fieldwork.

2.5 Negotiating sexualities, eroticism and the digital': sexy positions

After two weeks of Marcus sending me diary entries via Whatsapp I asked if he could go into more details about his encounters with Grindr users and how they make him feel. I suggested he think about the moment he speaks with other Grindr users and when they meet and have 'fun' or sex. He responded with 'does our hot fuck count?'. I was not really sure how to respond. I said 'I'm not sure, probably not'. I felt a little uncomfortable with it – was it ethical to use my own sexual encounters? Is this breaking Newcastle Universities ethical guidelines? At the same time, immersing myself 'deeper' into the field is definitely encouraged by queer and feminist methodological approaches. I also was not sure I wanted to hear an account of my own past sexual encounters (we had sex previous to the research project). I felt uncomfortable about Marcus scrutinising the shape and size of my body and the way I moved my body, the sounds it made and the fluids it produced. I also felt uncomfortable about this potentially being presented in my final thesis – do I want senior academics to read about my visceral, material and sexy encounters? (Fieldwork diary, 7.08.2015).

Choosing to not exclude any Grindr users provided methodological and personal issues to negotiate. The opening fieldwork reflection is from Marcus' diary – a participant I previously had an offline Grindr encounter with. We did not have any sexual interactions throughout the research. During the Interview, Marcus did not make any suggestive or explicit sexual comments. However, instant messaging enabled him to remind us both of our encounter, and may be a form of flirting. The interaction between Marcus and I highlights the ways I negotiated our previous encounter. When I received the message, I had to negotiate my role as an ethically sound and professional academic and a gay man who uses Grindr. My identities are constantly interacting. The opening reflection to this chapter also highlights this. Whilst working on my PhD and recruiting, I was 'scrolling' through Grindr thinking about the men I found attractive. Here, my identities as researcher/gay man/Grindr user blurred through my corporeal desire for men's bodies. As a man who uses Grindr, it would be very difficult for me to have only been a 'researcher'.

My reflections from my encounter with Marcus highlights some of the questions I considered when 'writing in' my desires. They also reflect the concerns about me writing about the interaction. I considered not discussing this as I was uncertain about the institutional and ethical repercussions. Although I take inspiration from feminist and queer methodologies that argue that our bodies are tools of research (Longhurst *et al.*, 2008; Thomas and Williams, 2016; De Craene, 2017), I am hesitant about my sexual body being 'fully' integrated into this thesis. A central concern were the institutional politics. How much of my body I write into this project was shaped by these institutional approaches to research. Two main issues for me were/are producing the PhD under Newcastle University's ethical guidelines and my thesis being subject to academic review. I was particularly concerned with the institutional heteronormativity that governs

what is considered rigorous, legitimate and valid knowledge. This was one of the reasons why I prevented Marcus from discussing this encounter.

Alongside the encounter with Marcus, I received flirtatious comments from participants in interviews. I have already highlighted one from Connor, but other participants mentioned attraction to me as a reason they spoke to me on Grindr:

Rupert: I think it was me that spoke to you. With one of my direct approaches, I think you came back and said no, I obviously said ‘fuck you’ [laughs]. Then I read your profile and say that you were looking for research people, I think I asked you what your research was.

Rupert: How I saw you on Grindr, I don’t think you look anything like your picture,

Carl: [laugh] really, how?

Rupert: no, I’d ... probably one of these question I’ll refuse to answer,

Carl: that’s cool.

Rupert: I mean there’s obviously, you might feel awkward, but there was a reason why I approached you to begin with

Carl: okay

Rupert: so I obviously thought something at that point (Rupert, 37, white British).

In these encounters our non-heterosexual identities, bodies and desires emerge. These comments always took me by surprise and I did not know how to respond to them – I was often embarrassed. Each time I blushed – I could feel my face turning red, I pulled a small awkward smile and I avoided eye contact with the participant. Although I was flattered, I did little to directly acknowledge the comments in the conversations. Instead, I asked another question, said ‘okay’ or waited for the participant to say something else. Each time, I became hyper-aware of my located body (Probyn, 2005; Longhurst *et al.*, 2008). I was aware that I was conducting an interview and that we were in a café that was occupied by other people who may be able to hear the conversation. In section 6.3 I discuss how the sound of voices have the capacity to affect Grindr users in offline encounters in bars and cafes. I did not feel the same desire as the participants who said the

comments, and no sexual contact ever materialised between us. I was often disorientated by the comments as it shifted the atmosphere of the interview (Probyn, 2005). Instead of talking about their interactions with other men or about gender identities, my body was suddenly the focus of the conversation. Again, I was not ready or prepared for my body to be spoken about in this research. At the time on the interview, I thought that if my participants found me attractive I would be jeopardising the ‘validity’ of the research and the extent that I was ‘protecting’ them from harm. However, this is impossible to do. Bodies feel and experience desire (Lim, 2007). For me to ignore this would jettison the very desires that I was intending to explore (Carter, 2016). For example, although I positioned myself as a research on Grindr and in the interview, Rupert still read my body as he would another Grindr user. Rupert reflected upon the ‘differences’ between my profile image on Grindr and my body in the flesh – something he would rather not talk about. Therefore, at times in this research I was understood as a man who uses Grindr, with the sexual desires of myself and participants having to be negotiated.

Answering calls to integrate researchers ‘lusty bodies’ into academia may be met with challenges (De Craene, 2017). Methodologies shaped by feminist and queer epistemologies do not neatly map onto University ethical procedures (Morrow *et al.*, 2014). Browne *et al.* (2010) call for researchers to challenge the heteronormative assumptions around field work by bringing attention to moments that fall ‘outside’ of normative research boundaries. Whilst I seek to subvert these normative discourses by thinking through the ways my desire and sexualities are entangled in this research, I am also hesitant to fully disrupt them. There is a certain level of shame that I felt in writing in my sexual experiences with participants. I felt as though such experiences may not necessarily constitute ‘viable’ research. Diprose *et al.* (2013) highlight how shame can work to regulate the ways emerging researchers do research. They argue that pressures on

early-career scholars can prompt ‘us’ to construct and perform professional researcher identities. Whilst I attempt to highlight the blurry relations between researcher/participant and the multiplicity in positionalities, I also (re)draw the boundaries of ‘legitimate’ knowledge. Therefore, I chose to construct barriers between my identity as a researcher and a gay man (Cuomo and Massaro, 2014), that can reaffirm masculinist notions of viable research (Diprose *et al.*, 2013). Diprose *et al.* (2013), go on to say that the experience of shame can be disrupted through open discussion. Therefore, I have focused attention to the choices and moments in my research where normative practices are challenged, blurred and disrupted as a way to continue dialogue with emerging scholars. Next, I conclude this chapter, arguing that ‘insider’ research can be produced by unique sets of power relations that can complicate understandings of researcher/researched binaries in ways that have disruptive potential.

2.6 Conclusions

This chapter has focused on the ways gender, sexuality, desire and embodiment are constantly emerging when ‘doing research’. By ‘fleshing out’ this methodology, I have argued that insider/outsider positions are never fixed. Instead, there is a constant negotiation involved when researching people who you ‘share’ identities and/or practices with. This has provided a deeper understanding of how this research project was done. By this, I mean the visceral experience of being a researcher and a man who uses Grindr. By ‘writing in’ desire, sex and sexuality, I contribute to complicating and disrupting the heteronormative and masculinist epistemologies that shape normative understandings of knowledge (Cupples, 2002; De Craene, 2017). To conclude this chapter, I draw attention to three ways that conducting, writing and constructing this embodied methodology – that considers the embodied experiences of desire, gender and sexuality – can further

understandings of doing research.

First, this project does not exist outside of the gendered and sexualised power relations that it explores. Paying attention to ways the experiences of masculinities and sexualities are (re)produced and (re)worked highlights that research is always situated and produced through the very context that it seeks to examine (Haraway, 1988; Rose, 1997). Therefore, to understand these emerging identities, positions and power relations, it is important to bring them into discussion with the existing work on gender, sexuality, desire and embodiment.

Second, Diprose *et al.* (2013) urge emerging scholars to talk about their own desires, sexualities, shame, emotions and affects that they experience as a way to provide an ‘ethic of care’ for other researchers. In this chapter, I have partly written in desires, arousals and lusty bodies as a way to continue a dialogue around researchers and their sexy sexualities. Doing so may help other researchers that may feel ‘too Other’ for geography. Finally, by writing in the experience of sex and sexuality – and messy materiality that is associated with it – alongside my own visceral arousal and desire, I seek to continue feminist and queer geographies disruptive task. Longhurst and Johnston (2014, p. 274) argue that ‘‘real’ fleshy bodies still represent that which is too banal, too material, too feminised, too mysterious, too Other for geography’’. Therefore, in this chapter I ‘write in’ the fleshy experiences of doing research that still remain outside of the dominant disciplinary boundaries of geography. However, I also draw attention to the ways that I redraw the disciplinary boundaries due to the fear and shame of being ‘too Other’ for university geographies. It is these embodied, visceral and messy experiences of men who use Grindr that I explore in the following four analysis chapters.

Chapter Three: In the Mood for Grindr: Emotional and Spatial Politics of Grindr.

3.1 Introduction

For men who use Grindr, moods, emotions, sensations and affects are central to how, where and why they access the app. In this chapter, I highlight how Grindr is becoming integrated into the emotional lives of the men that use it. Grindr as a technology and digital space is mediating moods, sensations, emotion and affects, such as boredom and horniness (the feeling of sexual arousal, or being in the ‘mood’ for sex). This mediation is spatially contingent. The ways moods and emotions are experienced through Grindr is dependent on the spaces users are ‘in’. Attempting to manage moods comes into conflict with the visceral experiences of shame that are felt as men do not always feel comfortable using Grindr in certain public spaces. Therefore, I argue that using Grindr has spatial limits. Paying attention to the ways shame emerges through Grindr assemblages – the working arrangements of bodies and digital technologies and the forces that assemble them – enables an understanding of how gender and sexualities become meaningful when bodies are using screens and technologies. For example, how experiences of shame (re)assembles ideas of respectable sexual citizens and (re)maps moral geographies. This emergence of sexual citizenship and morality highlights how sexualities are not only enacted through bodies. Instead, phones and screens are entangled in how comfortable bodies feel in enacting sexualities. Therefore, sexual citizenship is constituted through working arrangements of bodies, screens, and the moods that assemble them. This challenges the dichotomies of online/offline and bodies/technologies. Furthermore, as notions of sexual citizenship regulate how men use Grindr in public, I highlight how notions of public/private and gay/straight work to (re)map sexual practices.

According to Ahmed (2014, p. 15), ‘a mood is rather like an atmosphere’. Moods do not come from within bodies, they emerge from multiple bodies, objects and places and come with sets of emotions and affects. Feeling bored comes with a feeling of not being stimulated and feeling horny comes with sexual excitement. I explore how moods shape how people use Grindr to manage their emotions, states, sensations and affects. In this chapter, I bring together feminist geographical work on emotion and affect alongside work in digital geographies – I attend to the way the body *feels* when accessing and using technologies. This enables me to argue that using Grindr has spatial limits as people do not consistently feel comfortable using it. I pay attention to the ways the organic (bodies) and inorganic (technologies) co-mingle in a way that (re)produces bodies and reorientates people in space. This material approach to the digital (Kinsley, 2014) enables a deeper understanding of how gender and sexualities are constituted through Grindr assemblages. Therefore, I attend to the multiple ways masculinities and sexualities are reorientated through interactions of online, offline, digital, and material.

To do so, I review literature on emotional geographies and digital technologies. I highlight how they can be used productively to understand how moods, emotions, sensations and affects are mediated, negotiated, and reorientated through Grindr assemblages. I demonstrate how I use feminist geographical ideas of emotion and affect, alongside Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and Probyn’s (2000; 2004) ideas of assemblage, to think through entanglements of bodies and technologies. Four empirical sections follow. In the first, I explore the use of Grindr-through-boredom. I highlight how boredom and Grindr enables sexualities and masculinities to emerge in contradictory and conflicting ways. Participant narratives highlight that Grindr is used because places are boring (suggesting they would not use it otherwise). Therefore, users feel excitement through the potential sexual encounters that can materialise. By drawing on ideas of spatial boredom

(Joelsson, 2015), I demonstrate how 'boredom' is entangled with home, work, technologies, masculinities and sexualities. The second section highlights how being horny prompts men to use Grindr. I examine how heteronormative ideas of sexual practices shapes engagement with Grindr, and how this (re)produces spaces of morality. In the third section, I turn attention to habits. I highlight how Grindr is becoming habitual for the men who use it. However, only certain – usually private – spaces enable Grindr-as-habit to emerge. I highlight how using Grindr in public can cause users to feel shame. This shame emerges through the stigma that is attached to the sexual practices associated with Grindr. The final empirical section explores Grindr 'on the move'. Drawing on mobilities research (Bissell, 2007; Adey *et al.*, 2012; Cresswell, 2012), I highlight how identities are constituted as people use Grindr on long and short journeys. I pay attention to the feelings of shame that can emerge if men are seen – or potentially seen - using the app on public transport. I argue that this produces ideas of being a 'good sexual citizen'. In the conclusion, I draw attention to three main points in this chapter. First, using Grindr on mobile phones is being integrated into emotional management and negotiation in the everyday lives of the men that use it. Second, I show the ways Grindr is central to the emotional and sexual lives of men who use it, as Grindr assemblages reorientate how sexualities are lived, felt and embodied. Third, I highlight that the ways Grindr can be used to manage corporeal experiences has spatial limits as Grindr users do not always feel comfortable using the app across all places. This spatiality of Grindr can simultaneously unsettle and (re)make spatial and bodily dichotomies. The next sections brings together literature on emotional and digital geographies to highlight how they will be used alongside one another.

3.2 Emotional geographies

Our first and foremost, most immediate and intimately felt geography is the body, the site of emotional experience and expression *par excellence* (Davidson and Milligan, 2004, p. 523).

Emotional geographies seek to explore the spatial dimension of emotions – how emotions are shaped by place and how emotions shape our experience of place (Bondi and Davidson, 2005b). To make sense of places, bodies feel place on, in, and between them (Davidson and Milligan, 2004). Emotions are constantly emerging through places and bodies, rather than simply being a product of mind and body (Bondi and Davidson, 2005b). Emotions are relational, dynamic and complex. Therefore, social lives are experienced through emotions (Anderson and Smith, 2001). For example, in her work with lesbian and bisexual women in London, UK, Kawale (2004) argues that the emotional work – negotiating when and where emotions can and should be expressed and who can express them – is shaped by the institutionalisation of heterosexuality. Kawale (2004) argues that concealment of emotions was complicit in upholding non-heterosexual invisibility, in turn (re)producing sexualised identities as non-normative. The ‘emotional turn’ in geographic research understands feeling and emotions as valid knowledge (Anderson and Smith, 2001). Spatial approaches to emotion are used to rethink geographic ideas, such as geopolitics, trauma and justice (Pain, 2009; Wright, 2010b; Marshall, 2013), embodiment (Davidson and Milligan, 2004; Bondi and Davidson, 2005a) gender and sexuality (Kawale, 2004; Gorman-Murray, 2009; Waitt and Stanes, 2015; Warren, 2015), and the digital (Davidson, 2008; Longhurst, 2016). Alongside this, feminist geographers have critiqued and reworked the dominant understandings of the relationship between emotions and affect (see section 1.1).

Ahmed (2004) argues emotions and affect are relational. She highlights how objects and things come to be ‘sticky’ with emotions, and therefore have the capacities to affect bodies. Similarly, in her work on the visceral, Probyn (2000; 2004) locates emotions outside of the body. Probyn (2000; 2004), drawing on assemblage work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), understands emotions as emerging through shifting constitutions of the sociological, physiological and psychological. In other words, experiences of moving in and through places produces emotions and affects. Probyn (2000) develops a visceral approach to bodies to highlight how we make sense of everyday lives. The visceral refers to the ‘gut reactions’ we experience in response to our sensory engagement with material and discursive environments. Gut reactions are instances when bodily sensations, intensities and moods intersect with discourses, ideologies and power structures. Probyn (2004) argues that shame emerges as bodies feel ‘out of place’, becoming uncomfortable in the environment they are in. In this sense, it cannot be separated out from pride, as the two emotions act relationally. Shame results in particular physiological responses (for example, blushing), but it also makes us act in multiple – sometimes unpredictable – ways (Probyn, 2005; Munt, 2008). Probyn (2004) understands bodily intensities as unstable and messy in a way that does not delineate between emotion and affect. Instead, they emerge in different ways in relation to the political, social and corporeal.

In this chapter, I explore how bodily moods emerge, and are negotiated, through place. Emotion and affect are not understood or defined as separate entities. Instead, I seek to explore how emotion and affect are dynamic in (re)producing everyday experiences. In the next section, I review conceptual work around the digital as way to highlight how emotions and technologies become entangled.

3.3 Digitally mediated emotions

The relationship between bodies, technologies and space is complex and embodied (Kinsley, 2014; Longhurst, 2016; Cockayne and Richardson, 2017). In this section, I explore how moods (and their emotions, sensations and affects) are mediated by technologies. Mobiles phones are intimately bound up in everyday lives (Hjorth and Lim, 2012). The proximity of mobile phones to our bodies is central in producing how we feel through our phones – in some ways it becomes attached to the body giving it greater capacity to mediate emotions (Vincent and Fortunati, 2014). It is important to note that technologies do not necessarily produce emotions, but have varying capacities to mediate them in different assemblages (Longhurst, 2016). Mobile phones are used to manage emotions, with the capacity to mediate and reorientate emotions between bodies across different scales – bodily, local, national, and global. Vincent and Fortunati (2014) argue that mobile phones reorientate how people negotiate emotions in public spaces. As we move in and between places we use mobile phones to deal with how we feel (for example, digital conversations with friends and family and comical imagery/videos on the internet), therefore engaging in multiple forms of identity and emotional work. At the same time, phones can produce dysfunction and problematic emotions that people are unable to manage, and therefore cause disorientation. Davidson's (2008) work on autism highlights how the internet enables relief from anxieties through connectivity. Therefore, the organic and inorganic co-mingle to (re)produce the spatial, emotional and bodily experience of everyday life. The intimate proximity of mobile phones, and their capacity for reorientation, comes to mediate gendered ideas, bodies and identities (Hjorth and Lim, 2012).

In their work with young (teenagers aged 11-18) men and women in New Zealand, Cupples and Thompson (2010) argue that mobile phones often leave existing

gender relations intact, but they can reconfigure the ways gender is done in a way that can be empowering for teenage women. For example, in romantic contexts power dynamics can be reworked when young women negotiate how and when to ‘text back’ young men. Cupples and Thompson (2010, p. 14) argue...

... paying attention to the multiple materialities implicated in the performance of gender, including the body but also machines and texts, enable a greater understanding of the relations through which gender is mobilised.

In other words, unpacking digital assemblages can reveal how power dynamics are being subverted, disrupted or if they are being done in different ways.

Longhurst (2016) explores the emotional geographies of mothers who use digital media and communication to keep in touch with their children. By bringing together work in emotional geographies and geographies of media and communication, Longhurst (2016, p. 135) argues ‘digital media do not have inherent capacities or qualities that necessarily determine different mechanistic emotional outcomes but [...] they do play at least some role in facilitating different emotional outcomes’. Longhurst (2016) highlights that when mothers kept their mobile phones and laptops proximate to their bodies, it created a sense of closeness to their children as they could immediately contact them. In other work, she argues that digital screens involved in Skype come to be ‘sticky’ with emotions, in a way that helps mediate ‘missing’ (Longhurst, 2013). Therefore, the inorganic (technologies and screens) and organic (flesh and bodies) are becoming intertwined, reorientating how people do emotions, gender and embodiment.

Whilst Longhurst (2016) is interested in feminist work on emotion and affect, Evers (2014) draws on ideas of assemblage offered by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) to examine how the masculinities of men who surf are coming to be mediated through mobile phones. Drawing on ideas of assemblage, experiences of gender ‘always emerge

differently as assemblages are always moving, provisional and disparate' (Evers, 2014, p. 377). Assemblages – made up of the human, non-human, biological, psychological, sociological, objects, ideas and affects – move, shift and re-emerge in multiple ways (Probyn, 2000; Müller, 2015). Using ethnographic research with 15 white, heterosexual men from Australia, Evers (2014) examines how men learn to become part of 'mediated assemblage' whilst also learning how to do gender. The idea of mediated assemblages is used to understand how social life comes to be reorganised by digital technologies. For example, group conversations on mobile phones can amplify intimacies as they become spaces of homo-social bonding and support. Here, emotions come to be mediated and managed through mobile devices, therefore providing new ways to 'do' masculinities. Therefore, mediated assemblages are useful in thinking through the ways organic (bodies) and inorganic (technologies) materials (re)produce and reorientate gender and sexualities as users move in and between places. When thinking about the co-mingling of the inorganic and organic, this chapter explores how moods, emotions, sensations and affects that emerge.

I draw on these ideas to highlight how Grindr on mobile phones is entangled in networks of embodied experiences. This involves thinking about how they mediate and reorientate understandings of everyday spaces. Whilst Longhurst (2016) is concerned with the emotional outcomes, I want to also highlight the moods, emotions, sensations and affects that bring men to use Grindr. I explore how men who use Grindr manage their emotional, affective, and embodied states, and how this can reorientate them in the everyday spaces they move in and between. This chapter explores how Grindr assemblages materialise through masculinity and sexuality, and how this reorientates emotional experiences of place (Parr, 2002; Kinsley, 2014). This involves thinking about the entanglements of embodied gendered and sexual experiences with technologies and

how this produces ways of doing and feeling sexuality and gender (van Doorn, 2011). I am furthering Kinsley's (2014, p. 365) call for geographers to pay 'greater attention to the material conditions of digitally inflected spatial formations' and to develop more 'materially grounded geographical studies of the digital'. In the next section, I move to exploring how boredom – as a mood, emotion and sensation and affect – mediates the use of Grindr, and the emotions that are spatially produced through Grindr assemblages for the men using it.

3.4 'boredom, pure boredom': seeking excitement through Grindr

Whilst I am sat at my desk in the Daysh Building in Newcastle University, I am trying to think through how boredom, sexuality, technology and embodiment work, or do not work, together. When I try to write I find myself becoming bored. My concentration shifts away from my work and on to other things - I stare at my screen or I gaze out the large windows at the blue and grey skies. I also find that I reach for my mobile phone, unlock it with my finger print and open Grindr. As I open it, I do not feel horny, I am not aroused, and I am not looking to meet anyone for a hook up - I have become bored. My body does not feel stimulated and I begin to feel agitated. As I think about this act, I ask myself what I hope to achieve. I desire something to take my mind away from the task at hand – writing my thesis. I want a message from a new face, or regular contact. When I open the app, my body is slightly excited if I feel or hear my phone vibrate. I can also feel a sense of disappointment if I do not feel or hear the 'buzz'. In the past, I have noticed that I reach for Grindr when I am bored, but as I think about participant narratives, I come to feel and relate to their experiences (Personal reflection, 14.04.2017)

Boredom is often overlooked in social sciences research on emotion, yet is central to contemporary human experience (Joelsson, 2015). Like my reflection here, almost all participants in this research mentioned boredom as the reason why they used, and opened, Grindr. Many men who use Grindr were prompted to open the app because they felt bored – an awareness of the body that feels that it is not stimulated and sometimes agitated – in

various spaces and places in their everyday lives. This section explores how Grindr operates as a way to mediate boredom. I examine how boredom – as a mood with emotions, sensations and affects – (re)assembles Grindr in ways that enables gender and sexualities to emerge differently (Sheller, 2007).

The following interview quotes are from Josh and Chris who highlight the importance of boredom in shaping Grindr usage:

Josh: sometimes when I'm out, sometimes it's like when I get home, or I'm in the house when I'm bored. It's like finding something to do, literally, like something to like get away, it's like when I'm bored, boredom's the worst, when I'm bored I tend to go on it quite a lot, and, it's at home quite a lot (Josh, 23, white British)..

Chris: I'm just generally more of a night person, I mainly do 8 o'clock starts at work, but I still wouldn't be in bed well before 1 [am]. So my housemates are getting off to bed about 10, 11, so that down time, I'll do that [Grindr] as well as TV, or whatever. I kind of associate it with like that time of night, flicking through boredom (Chris, 31, white British).

These quotes explicitly highlight the role that boredom plays in motivations to use Grindr. Anderson (2004) highlights that boredom is an embodied emotional state of affective 'in-between-ness'. Boredom prompts bodies to 'do' activities that reorientate ourselves away from this embodied state of liminality (Anderson, 2004). People become 'bored' in different places, for example, home, work, university and transport (I discuss transport in section 3.7). Josh and Chris highlight how they experience their homes as 'boring' places. In particular, Chris explains how his boredom is temporal in that he often 'flicks through' Grindr on an evening, when his housemates have gone to bed and he has 'down time'. Grindr becomes a way that users experience relaxation and boredom.

Grindr is a way for men to mediate boredom by exciting their bodies. The following quotes are from John and Jamie who explain what is exciting about Grindr.

These participants highlight that receiving messages from Grindr users and the potential for offline encounters are central to negotiating boredom:

John: if I'm honest, mainly boredom more than anything else, obviously horniness plays a part too. But that [boredom] mainly, I just like open it up, I scroll through to see if I've got any messages, if like I like the look of them, reply, or just scroll along. If I like the look of a couple then just like message them, 'hey, how's things?' See where it goes from there, if anywhere (John, 50, white British).

Jamie: boredom, pure boredom, see who's on. With Grindr I guess I open it up and see if there's anyone hot close to me, who fancies talking to me. If anything it's for a self-esteem boost, and so yeah, boredom. And plus if something comes of it, if there is a guy that is actually nice. I always have that hope, 'oh there will be someone who is actually attractive, good to talk to and nice and actually likes me back'. But it's Grindr, it's not gonna work out like that. Yeah, so, I guess, in the dizziest day dreams of whatever, then there's going to potentially be some amazing freaking guy on there who just so happens to want to talk to you ... But at the moment there is no one on Grindr that I happen to be talking to a lot, then just in lectures, at home when I'm feeling bored (Jamie, 21 white British).

As John and Jamie highlight, Grindr is used as a way to shift emotional and affective states of boredom into excitement. In their work with young men who modify cars (Volvo greasers) in a peri-urban area of Sweden, Joelsson (2015) argue that boredom is a temporary emotion for the young men. These Volvo greasers see boredom as something that can be fixed by actively creating exciting situations and experiences. Joelsson (2015) thinks about boredom as dynamic – as more than a negative state of mind – by developing the idea of 'spatial boredom'. Spatial boredom 'refers to the co-constitution of place and culture' (Joelsson, 2015, p. 1260). This conceptual tool explores how boredom is produced through entanglements of place and culture – it highlights that boredom as something more than just being bored because of the spaces bodies are in. In this sense, spatial boredom is appreciative of the ways identities work through space,

emotion and bodies. In their research, Joelsson (2015) suggests that boredom is a resource that the Volvo greasers deploy to remake themselves as young ‘risk takers’. For the Volvo greasers, taking risks in local car parks is a way to avoid boredom, or being seen as boring, and therefore they position themselves as in control of their bodies and emotions. This works to construct masculinities. Thinking about boredom as more dynamic opens it up to understand the ways identities, bodies and places are constituted through emotion, moods and affects.

The previous participants’ quotes highlight how boredom is felt and negotiated spatially. There are particular places that men in this research come to feel bored – work, lectures and home – as they do not feel ‘stimulated’. These places come to be central in the ways men use Grindr. The men in this study often blamed boredom on the spaces and places they were in. This suggests that Grindr is not important to identities and sexual practices unless the spatial conditions require it. In this sense, Grindr is suggested to be a remedy for ‘boring places’. In the following quote, Tom says he does not have the urge to open the app if his body is already occupied. When he becomes bored at work, the notifications (sounds and vibrations) are distractions that excite his body:

Tom: I use it a lot more at work and there are time when it becomes a distraction, when that little notification comes through and there’s that instant ‘ooh, I wonder who this is going to be, I’ll just have a quick look shall I’. If I’m bored at work, it’s that initial, ‘oh there’s something to occupy my mind with’, so I’ll open it up. If I’m busy I can leave them [messages on Grindr], I don’t have to check them initially. For me it’s that initial interest, it’s a bit like Facebook notification – is it a friend, is it someone you’ve talked to before, is it someone you know, or is it someone fresh (Tom, 44, white British).

The notifications provide a visceral arousal of the body. The mobile phone has a capacity to affect bodies through the sounds it produces and the tactile sensations on the skin (that can be felt by touching phones or through objects that phones are on, for

example, tables) (Bissell, 2010). Vibrations and sound alerts notify bodies that apps have received information. This arousal produces a curiosity of who the message could be from and the potential of what it could become. These sensory notifications come to be understood through socio-sexual meanings. This changes Tom's experience with his work office - he no longer feels bored, instead he feels excited and curious. It can be seen from my opening reflection that I also feel this – the sensory experience of phones-bodies can (re)make work spaces in a way that brings excitement and possibilities. Sexualities emerge as men come to be aware of the multiple potential encounters. Grindr-through-boredom shifts how bodies experience places and practices. Professional identities can come to be disrupted through particular sexual practices as men engage in Grindr in work places. Sexualities and professional identities emerge at the same time, working in conflict with one another. In this sense, ideas of public/private are disrupted as sexualities emerge in public work places. The ways men attempt to manage their boredom is spatially contingent. If men are using Grindr at work (or other public/semi-public spaces), they are less able to shift boredom into sexual excitement, compared to home spaces (see sections 3.6 and 3.7 for examples). Therefore, the spaces that constitute boredom also shape how Grindr users attempt to negotiate this boredom.

For men who use Grindr, their sexual and gendered identities work through their spatial boredom. The potential to interact with Grindr users are seen as remedies to boredom. In this sense, boredom is negotiated through technologies, romances, sex, dates and conversations. In chapter five, I discuss the relationship between Grindr conversations and boredom specifically. As Jamie, John and Tom highlight, they may be looking out of boredom, but there is a hope they will have a new message, or that they will be able to meet another man for eroticism, a date or a partner. For Jamie especially, there is an urge to feel wanted and desirable to other men. A sense of self-worth can also

be sought through entanglements of boredom, sexuality and Grindr. Feeling desired and attractive is a way that men can seek to (re)construct masculinities, with Grindr providing that potential.

The sense of self and visceral excitement that is experienced through messages contradicts the idea that Grindr is used as a remedy for spatial conditions. The excitement experienced at making connections with other users highlights the importance of the app to self-worth and socio-sexual lives. In this sense, men who use Grindr want to be seen on the screens of other Grindr users. Paying attention to the feeling of wellbeing and visceral arousal reveals how Grindr constitutes masculinities and sexualities for the men who use it. Grindr-through-boredom may be a way for men to appear in control of moods and emotions (Joelsson, 2015). Here, masculinities are enabled to emerge as using Grindr is understood through the conditions of place. Therefore, men who use Grindr seek men to reaffirm their gendered identities. These Grindr assemblages can enable gender and sexualities to emerge in multiple and contradictory ways, and can work to manage and mediate mood, emotions, sensations and affects that emerge in and between objects, bodies and place.

Sexualities are not always brought into existence and corporeally felt simply through the desire for other men. Instead, sexualities are entangled with boredom as it prompts men to actively bring their sexual bodies into being. In this sense, some of the men are moving bodies into states of sexual arousal through boredom. Boredom and horniness are not dichotomous moods, but act relationally. At the same time, discourses of masculinities suggest that men only use Grindr when the places they are in are 'boring'. These contradictions highlight how masculinities and sexualities may be working in conflict with one another. In these examples, mobile phones are objects used to manage, mediate and control emotional states (Vincent and Fortunati, 2014).

Therefore, mediated Grindr assemblages work to (re)produce sexualities and masculinities. This shapes how men experience the spaces they are in as not-boring. Although boredom is central in producing how the interactions of technologies, bodies and space, sexual arousal still works through how men use Grindr. In the following section I explore how horniness - as mood, emotion, sensation and affect - works to shape how men use Grindr.

3.5 ‘when I’m horny, pretty much that’: in a mood for Grindr

Alongside boredom, many of the Grindr users in this research also spoke about being horny as the reason why they used Grindr. Both boredom and horniness act as moods that prompt men to use Grindr. By horny, they are referring to the bodily desire to have erotic and sexual contact with other people, usually resulting in an orgasm. For men who use Grindr, the app is often understood as a convenient and easy way to manage feeling ‘horny’ (I discuss the complexities of convenience, arousal, orgasm and sex in chapters five and six in more detail). The following two quotes highlight the feeling of horniness and Grindr:

Alex: when there are sometimes you feel like you want to meet people, that the feeling is so strong that you met someone at the right time or the right place, you do it.

Carl: when you say feeling is strong?

Alex: horny (Alex, 24, Asian).

Russell: depends on the mood that I’m in really, if I’m at work on my break it’s just seeing what’s about, bored, if I’m in the mood for something in particular, I’ll go on, then I, that’s my motivation for it ...

Carl: you said when you’re in particular moods, what moods do you mean?

Russell: oh, when I’m horny, pretty much that (Russell, 28, white British).

Russell and Alex state that it is horniness that brings them to open Grindr. Feeling horny is often understood as an internal bodily mood that is unable to be controlled (Lim, 2007). Moods urge our bodies to act, interact, move and feel (Thien, 2005a; Ahmed, 2014). Men who use Grindr have come to use the app to negotiate horniness. Bodies and technologies come together as a way to manage sexualities. Participants seemed to be cautious about saying they used Grindr through horniness. Instead, they often referred to being in a particular 'mood'. There seems to be an element of shame or embarrassment in claiming horniness. Arguably, men do not yet feel comfortable explicitly discussing sexual arousal and app usage.

Evers (2014) argues that men come to learn and do gender through 'mediated assemblages'. Mediated assemblages are used to think about the ways technologies facilitate, produce and shape the assemblages through which gender is learned, enacted and experienced. Technologies connect us to different spaces, worlds and bodies, but also (re)shape experiences of the spaces we are in (Vincent and Fortunati, 2014). For men who use Grindr eroticism, sexuality and bodies come to be mediated by technologies. However, evident from the interview narratives, men are still learning how to claim how this embodied desire is mediated through technologies. In this sense, men are still learning to manage their moods through technologies.

For men who use Grindr, mediated assemblages are constituted spatially. As Russell highlights, if he is using Grindr at work it is not out of horniness. Work spaces are not thought to be enabling men to use Grindr out of horniness. Here, mediated assemblages that are brought into arrangement are made more possible in home spaces (see chapter five for more in-depth discussion of horniness at home and work). Homes – usually understood as private spaces – are constructed as places where (particular) sexualities can more freely be performed, embodied and felt (Bell and Valentine, 1995a;

Johnston and Valentine, 1995; Morrison, 2012a). Homes can enable Grindr assemblages to come together through eroticism, meaning sexualities emerge through this co-mingling of the organic and inorganic. As horniness comes to be enacted in private spaces, it can reaffirm spatial and bodily boundaries of public/private.

The men in this research spoke about the ways that alcohol and changes their moods, often making men 'hornier'. In turn, this reorientated how they used Grindr.

When drinking alcohol, bodies...

'...experience, negotiate and perform shifting emotions (over a few minutes, hours and longer time periods), including subjectivities that are multiple, emergent, diverse and complex, bound up with bodily sensations and affective experiences that are challenging, at times unpredictable, fun, sad, and often un-rememberable (Jayne *et al.*, 2010, p. 553).

Alcohol changes the relationship with our bodies (Leyshon, 2008) and it has the capacity to affect moods, sensations and emotions (Waitt and Clement, 2016). Men who use Grindr often spoke about how being drunk would prompt them to open the app. Men often spoke about using Grindr as they had less inhibitions, or felt horny because of alcohol in the body. Charlie speaks about using Grindr when drunk and Jacob discusses using it on a night out whilst drinking:

Charlie: I'd probably use it late at night when I'm a bit drunk for hook up sort of situations, then I do for more dating type ... so yeah, I'm probably a bit more open when drunker
(Charlie, 33, white British).

Jacob: on a night out I would probably be on it, quite a lot, or just maybe when I'm on my own for a minute, or when my friends are out for a cigarette, and I don't smoke, so I'd just probably be without them ... if I'm on Grindr and there's someone nearby we can message each other and meet up on the night out and maybe get a drink and see where it goes (Jacob, 21, white British).

Charlie says that he is more 'open' when drunk. This exemplifies how he feels less inhibited using Grindr when drunk to find erotic encounters. Drinking alcohol shifts how Charlie practices his gendered and sexual identity. Alcohol can lubricate bodies in a way that can increase their flirty, erotic and sexual behaviour (Tan, 2013). Here, alcohol opens him up to erotic possibilities with other Grindr users, (re)shaping sexual subjectivities. On the other hand, Jacob speaks about using Grindr whilst drinking in pubs and bars. For Jacob, alcohol and the spaces of consumption work to shape why and how he uses Grindr. Jacob uses Grindr here to increase the potential of meeting other users – not necessarily for an instant hook up, but to facilitate encounters in bars/clubs. Here, Jacob has enhanced confidence to meet other Grindr users. Spaces of the night-time economy have long been used as places where people can meet for a numerous socio-sexual reasons (for example, one night stands, exchanging phone numbers, and finding potential partners) (Chatterton and Hollands, 2002; Hubbard, 2011; Misgav and Johnston, 2014). For some men in this study, Grindr was used to facilitate these encounters in spaces of the night-time economy. However, for Jacob this was only practiced when his friends were not present. When his friends went to smoke, it enabled him to use Grindr to speak with other users. Men used Grindr in these spaces as they had less inhibitions and understood them to have more potential to meet other men. Alcohol is understood as a way to make bodies 'horny'. Therefore, alcohol, and the multiple spaces it is consumed in, works to constitute sexualities for the men who use it.

Bringing together mediated assemblages when drunk, or on a night out is dependent on wider everyday geographies. For example, some users who lived with their parents found it difficult to do. In the following quote, Nathaniel explains how, since graduating from Newcastle University, he has moved back to his parents' house as a way

to save money whilst he works full time. Moving out of his student house has shifted how he uses Grindr on a night out:

Carl: have you ever used it on a night out to meet up with someone?

Nathaniel: I have in the past, when I was at uni and I had my own place, it didn't matter, I wasn't full time and I could do whatever I wanted and stuff. So it didn't have any drawbacks, but again I would only want to do that if it was people I had already chatted to before, because they could be psychos.

Carl: would, or have you had sex?

Nathaniel: Like if I thought 'oh yeah they're really fit', but by then because you are drunk you're just like yeah whatever. Which is obviously a terrible, terrible thing where do you just have, like lose your inhibitions and think 'fuck it'.

(Nathaniel, 22, white British).

Having a place of 'his own' enabled Nathaniel to use Grindr without restrictions on a night out. Nathaniel highlights how being drunk and using Grindr is often dependent on having a home and bedroom space that can be used to invite men into. Therefore, the mediated Grindr assemblages are dependent on multiple spaces, not just the spaces that bodies are in at that time. Spaces are not self-contained entities, they inform and flow into one another (Massey, 1994). For men who use Grindr, sexualities are experienced through multiple places simultaneously – for example, work, homes, leisure, and online. For Nathaniel, this means policing his drunken erotic practices because he now lives with his parents and works full time. Previous geographic research has highlighted how young non-heterosexual people who live with parents or family have to carefully negotiate their sexualities (Johnston and Valentine, 1995; Gorman-Murray, 2008b; Oswin, 2010). Heteronormative discourses usually dominate home and family spaces in a way that can inhibit particular expressions of non-heterosexual identity (Johnston and Valentine, 1995). However, it did not mean that men who lived with parents or family were not 'out'. Instead, these Grindr users did not want families to witness them practicing

alcohol-shaped casual sex through Grindr. In this sense, sexual practices are often in conflict with familial positions and identities, meaning desires are not always enacted. Through these discourses, fleeting erotic encounters come to be constructed as immoral practices as they challenge normative ideas of sexuality, gender that are produced through the home (Hubbard, 2000). Therefore, using Grindr becomes entangled with wider moral geographies that define acceptable and normative sexual practices (Hubbard, 2000; 2012).

The day after drinking alcohol, bodies can be left feeling 'hungover'. This can be characterised as feeling tired and suffering headaches and nausea (Wiese *et al.*, 2000). Hangovers also affect moods, emotions and sensations. Some men in this study spoke about using Grindr when they had a hangover. Many men spoke about feeling horny when hungover. In the following interview quotes, Jack and Josh speak about using Grindr when they are hungover:

Jack: hungover, that does make a difference, yeah. I think as well like, when I was sober, it seems, there seems to be a lot more, not planning necessarily, just a lot more, it takes a lot more from me to be convinced to want to meet up with the person, because you have a bit more rational thought and you can sort of think properly, 'do I really want to meet this person, do I really want to?'. And it's a bit of a risk, sort of every time you meet up with someone from Grindr, you could be being cat fished, could be like, you always get horror stories of like... but when I'm hungover, I have met people when I've been hungover and sort of like, laid in bed, hangover horn sort of thing (Jack, 21 white British).

Josh: well like I said I tend to go on Grindr when I'm hungover, it's like 'oh hey, what you up too?' Nothing much, just in bed'. So like 'oh, cool, yeah me too, should really get up, but can't be bothered'. 'No point, you don't have to get up really do ya?' 'Well no'. So, it's kind of suggesting, 'oh why don't I come and join you' sort of craic, like that's sort of stuff. Or like 'what are you doing?' 'Nothing, my flat mates have gone out', I'm like 'just in'. Or like 'really bored' 'yeah me too', 'we should do something'. That sort of dynamic (Josh, 23, white British).

In these cases, Grindr users have a particular goal – to find a hook up. The men in this study spoke about the ‘hangover horn’ – a term used to describe sexual arousal that can be felt more intensely from hangovers – as an embodied intensity that urged them to use Grindr. For Jack, being hungover over-powers anxieties around the potential risks of meeting men from Grindr for erotic encounters. Josh, on the other hand, refers to the conversations that occur when attempting to arrange these hook ups.

Both of these participants speak about particular places where this practices is enacted – the bed. Connor also speaks about using Grindr in his bed when he is hungover, however he is not using it to find hook ups:

Connor: yeah the thing I don’t get is the hangover horn that people have on Grindr, when I’m hungover I’m dead, I’m not horny, I want to sleep. So I do use it when I’m hungover because I use it for lounging around in bed most of the day, but I don’t use it to look for anyone to have sex with (Connor, 20, white British).

For Connor, feeling hungover actually inhibits his sexual desire. Instead, he speaks about the fatigue that affects his embodied mood. However, he still uses Grindr. In this case, Grindr becomes a way to experience time when he is feeling hungover. Technology becomes a way to occupy the body and mind away from corporeal discomfort. Although Connor may not be using Grindr as a way to find hook ups, he still practices sexualities in his bed. For men who use Grindr, the bedroom comes to be an important site where technologically mediated sexualities are practiced. Beds and bedrooms are places where bodies can rest and recuperate, but they are also the normative place for sexualities to be enacted. As men recover from their alcohol consumption in their beds, they also enact their sexual identities, in different ways.

The mobile phone and Grindr are mediating embodied moods with sexualities coming to be experienced, felt and practiced through Grindr assemblages. However, this

is done in different ways. For men who use Grindr, the app enables a way to bring bodies together when it is convenient (see chapter six for discussion of touch and convenience), or as a way to simply experience time in a different way. Grindr in becoming a central part of the ways men negotiate moods, emotions, sensations and affects, simultaneously (re)producing gender and sexualities.

3.6 ‘I just find myself sat on the toilet at work’: everyday habits and routines

Grindr is routinely accessed in the everyday lives of the men who use it. Similarly to other smart phone apps like Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat, men are routinely opening and closing Grindr in a variety of cycles. In this section, I explore the routine habits that Grindr becomes entangled in and how it has the capacity to mediate bodies, identities and emotions.

Some work in cultural geographies and cultural studies have examined habits, highlighting how they are more complex than simple and unconscious repetitions and movements (Bennett *et al.*, 2013; Noble, 2013; Bissell, 2014; Dewsbury and Bissell, 2015; Pedwell, 2017). As Bissell (2014, p. 183) argues, habit:

...haunts the temporalities of the endemic, eases our everyday routines, and sculpts out tastes, aptitudes and desires. But habit also dulls excitement and sense, spas creative impulses and attenuates our horizons. Habit at once provides the material grips on the world that we require to form attachments and allegiances; whilst at the same time provides the bedrock against which we can fashion new stimulations.

Therefore, habit is more than embodied repetition. Habits are the processes through which bodies adjust to the surrounding environments and become attuned to be ‘in’ places. For example, the ways people learn to *do* commuting is a way to ease journeying (Binnie *et al.*, 2007). As bodies learn adjustments, the habits that are constituted ‘free’ more time for us to think through and do other things. At the same time, whilst we can be comforted by

our habits, their mundaneness can prompt us to seek out new and exciting out of habit activities and spaces (for example, holidays). Furthermore, it is the very habits that we try to escape that can shape how we interact with ‘exciting’ and ‘new’ places. Therefore, habits come to be practiced in holiday destinations.

Cultural geographers have emphasised the spatial dimensions of habit. Drawing on the work of Bourdieu (1990), Ravaisson (2008) and Deleuze and Guattari (1994), geographic work has sought to think through the ways space and place are entangled in habit – how they are formed, deteriorated and transformed in and across space. Dewsbury and Bissell (2015, p. 23) highlight this when they argue that:

Habit is then a way of appreciating that a sense of place is emergent and developmental, rather than static or authentic. Through repeated inhabitation, our sense of place can change in profound ways. As our experience tells us, the strange can become familiar; the exciting can become dull; the unseen can become perceptible. Habit offers us an exciting way of understanding how a sense of place is precisely of these virtual dimensions of inhabitation

In this sense, habits come into being through our engagement with places, bodies and objects. However, this is not a stable process. How we experience place is mutable through our habits. Therefore, habit can help us understand how people relate to places by exploring how comfort is a process that is constantly changing, whilst also examining how habits come to rework our experiences of time. Thinking about habit in this way highlights the potential to rework experiences of place (Bissell, 2014; Dewsbury and Bissell, 2015). This approach reveals how habit is a constitution of organic (bodies) and inorganic (for example, trains, chairs and mobile phones) materials that constitute place and time. I draw on these ideas to explore how Grindr can become habitual from the men who use it. I bring work on habit together with digital and emotional geographies to highlight how habits come to be mediated through technologies and the ways that

mediation provides challenges to the formation of habits.

The following quotes are from Jacob, Josh and Ben, who are discussing the routineness of their Grindr practices:

Jacob: so say when I wake up and I'm just checking apps on my phone like Facebook and Twitter and stuff, and then I'll open up Grindr and see if I have any messages and reply to the messages and just leave it for a while (Jacob, 21, white British).

Josh: like literally it's become like a habit, I just find myself sat on the toilet at work, trying to kill time. Not going on it for sex or anything, just like compulsively go on it. I don't know what that is, it's weird. It is almost like a compulsion. It's a similar thing, like I do it with Instagram, Facebook, it's like I'm drawn to it (Josh, 23, white British).

Ben: I check it everywhere, in class, at home when I'm in bed, while I'm eating lunch. (Ben, 33, Pacific Islander).

These participants highlight how they come to check Grindr in multiple spaces, across multiple times due to habits. Jacob highlights how he checks Grindr when he wakes up to see if he has any messages. The majority of the participants did not pay for Grindr xtra – an upgraded version of the app that provide enhanced services. Despite using Grindr so frequently, they felt it was something 'not worth' paying for. One of the added features of Grindr xtra is that it sends push notifications to phone home screens when a Grindr message is received. Therefore, users who do not pay for this service are required to open the app to see if they have received any messages. Additionally, this is the only way users can appear to be 'online' to others. When Jacob opens Grindr on a morning he is doing his 'usual' checking of messages. Josh's habits are a way to kill time. He highlights how Grindr does not always become a device for eroticism, sex, and/or hook ups, but a space where time can be experienced differently (Bissell, 2007;

Cresswell, 2012). Ben's quote exemplifies the multiple and extending spaces that Grindr habits can occur.

Whilst also being an active habit, Grindr can also be left open. A small number of participants spoke about opening Grindr and leaving it active whilst they move around their homes. For example, Gareth, who lives alone, and Jack, who lives with his university housemates, say:

Gareth: sometimes I'll just have it on and not actually be interacting, I'll put it on my phone, logged on, and I'll do stuff kind of around the flat (Gareth, 42, white British).

Jack: I've done that 5 minute check on the app, I'll just leave my phone on the side, and then if it buzzes I'll look at it, then maybe after half an hour, an hour, I either sort of go offline for a day or two, then check it again (Jack, 21, white British).

These interview quotes highlight how some users are engaging with Grindr in different ways. For these users, Grindr is being left open and visible on the screen whilst they conduct other home-based practices. Longhurst (2017) questions if people would ever be comfortable leaving Skype on and open whilst they move around their homes/offices. Although Skype operates differently to Grindr, men are still leaving it open as a way to be visible and active/online to other users in the area. These users are simultaneously occupying online and offline spaces, being visible and active in both. As men are seeking to 'always' be visible and active to other Grindr users, they are choosing to keep themselves 'available' for people to start conversations. Always being online opens more potential for conversations. In this sense, sexuality is entangled in habits and how men practice 'doing' Grindr. Therefore, there are multiple identities being performed and different identity work is being done. For example, homemaker, housemate and Grindr user. Online and offline worlds start to work together and are able to exist in cooperation and conflict.

Technologies are (re)shaping our everyday habits and practices (Sheller, 2007; Ash, 2012; Bissell, 2014). For participants, the routine nature of opening Grindr becomes habitual. Digital technologies – for example mobile phones and the apps that operate on them – are designed in a way that complement our habits (Sheller, 2007; Bissell, 2014). Grindr is opened through habit in the everyday spaces users frequent – homes, bedrooms, cafes, bathrooms and work. It is both a routine, but also a way to negotiate time. For Josh especially, checking Grindr is a way for the body to deal with the feeling of having ‘too much’ time. Therefore, Grindr becomes a habit that enables time to be ‘wasted’. In this sense, technologies are mediating our embodied relations with place and time. Identity work emerges as we negotiate the multiple and intersecting online and offline spaces. Grindr can reorientate us in place, and it is through this reorientation that it becomes habitual for the men who use it.

Habit also forms through other means. The following quotes demonstrate that habits form when men become connected to Grindr through the way it makes them feel.

Bram: I don't think I've got a real drive to open it, it's more a habit now, oh what's happening in the world. There will be different people every day, they will tell me how nice I look. 'Oh that's nice, thank you'. You feel better about yourself... I don't have any real intention of meeting anyone new, so I'm probably just clogging up Grindr and wasting space for other people (Bram, 31, White non-British/Dutch).

Joe: usually when I've got a free moment to see if there's someone on [online] that I've been chatting to, I know a lot of people use it for casual hook ups but I use it for a lot more than that. It's actually a way to keep connected to the gay world really, you know. I don't go out much on the scene, I don't really associate with people who are gay that much, so it's my portal to like-minded people. So, I use it probably on an hourly basis when I can, you know breaks at work, when I'm off, usually just keep it open and it allows people who are around me to find me and say hi and what not (Joe, 24, white British).

Arguably, habits make everyday life more pleasant for people (Bissell, 2014). The habitual use of Grindr emerges as men 'feel good'. Bram – who is in a monogamous marriage to a man who lives in The Netherlands – suggests that his Grindr routines have formed through the compliments he received. Whilst for Joe, it is about feeling connected to imagined gay communities. Although these practices may be habitual, they are entangled in embodied experiences of emotion and belonging. Feeling attractive or connected are positive experiences that people continually desire, and therefore the actions that cause this are repeated. Ravaissou (2008) argues that habits almost become unconscious acts as the body comes to be stronger at the movement, whilst the movement also leaves a lesser impression on the body. As Bram points out, his use is almost automatic, but he still places importance on feeling sexually attractive. However, for Joe the habit is less of an unconscious repetition – although sometimes this does occur – and it is more about being able to speak to other men who desire men. Habit becomes conflated and entangled with a desire to feel a sense of belonging. Therefore, a desire to feel connected, attractive and valued is sought through technologies, transpiring into habits.

The formation of habits usually requires repetitions that are not challenged in the spaces they are enacted (Dewsbury and Bissell, 2015). Some of the men in this study spoke about ways that their habitual repetitions were met with barriers. Josh and Ben highlight how the presence of their friends – whether in public or private spaces – would disable them from effortlessly checking and using Grindr:

Josh: but like sometimes, like if I'm in my group of friends, they sort of know what I'm like and they're like 'fuck sake Josh, get off it' and I'm like 'I'm not on it', and they're like 'you are' and I'm like 'well yeah, I am'. So I like put it away (Josh, 23, white British).

Ben: If I'm with a friend that I'm really comfortable with, while they're chatting I'll go on secretly whilst they're chatting. Although friends who are in the know see it in the reflection in my glasses and call me out on it. Yeah pretty much, if I'm bored especially, so yeah everywhere (Ben, 33, Pacific Islander).

Josh and Ben have previously been inhibited from using Grindr amongst their friends.

The formation of habit does not mean that the body becomes resistant to the capacity for change and transformation (Bissell, 2011). For men in this study, Grindr is sometimes prevented from becoming seamlessly part of habits and routines. Although many participants spoke about Grindr as habitual, the repetition is not easily carried out. The presence of other bodies (friends) disable men who use Grindr from easily connecting with the app. Attempting to conceal using Grindr or being 'called out' by friends when accessing the app highlights the ways habits are prevented from being enacted. In this sense, habitual practices are (re)made. This is spatially contingent - in certain contexts Grindr does not become a habit. Users become hyper-aware of their habits and what this symbolises for their sexual practices. In particular places, the visibility of Grindr on digital screens does not enable the app to easily 'fade' into the 'background'. Therefore, Grindr has spatial limits.

Men who use Grindr are still learning where and when they can 'use' the app. It is evident that users are negotiating how to 'do' Grindr when they are in different places that are occupied by particular people. As James says, his use of Grindr (see chapter five for discussion of James habitual use of Grindr before bed) comes into conflict with his working identities:

James: I try not to use it at work, mainly because my face picture is up there, I work in the Metro centre, and there's a lot of shops around there and a lot of men around there. Like, next door there's these two Asian guys in there, they flashed up [on Grindr] and came in [to the shop he works at] to chat to me and, I don't want that ... I'm out to my friends, but to me, the whole gay side of my life is kept separate ... it's

kind of I don't like my sexuality known, like they know. I think someone might of, someone came from behind me and noticed I was on Grindr. (James, 26, white British).

For Josh and Ben the spatial limit of Grindr was shaped by the presence of friends, however for James it is shaped by location-based nature of Grindr, and the visibility of the app on the screen. If James opens Grindr at work, he is aware that other Grindr users who work in the Metro Centre may be able to recognise him from the app, and then approach him in work. Therefore, James does not always want to be seen on the screens of other Grindr users.

The example that James' presents is embedded in the racialisation of bodies. When James – and many other participants in this study – refer to white men who use Grindr, race and ethnicity go unnoticed. In western societies, whiteness often goes unnoticed, and usually operates as having 'no race' (Bonnett, 1997; Abbott, 2006). James narrative employs racial identities to express the unusualness of the encounter. At the same time, Asian men in western queer spaces are often perceived as unattractive, unmanly, or undesirable - unless they become fetishised as an exotic other (Caluya, 2008; Ruez, 2016). Additionally, Asian men who use Grindr are often discriminated against (Roth, 2014). The demarcation of non-white bodies highlights how white participants experience other men who use Grindr. Grindr comes to be experienced through emerging categories of race, gender and sexuality, as users make sense of their experiences, emotions and encounters. In this sense, experience of Grindr are assembled and reassembled through normative discourses that prompt bodies to engage in identity work. This can reorientate habitual practices.

Grindr at work is not always habitual. Instead, it involves strategic avoidances or openings. James often conflates being gay with being a Grindr user and casual erotic

practices. For him, these identities and practices are bound up together, with Grindr being symbolic of non-heterosexuality. Therefore, being seen on Grindr – both through his profile and being watched using the app by another person – can disrupt professional identities that men attempt to construct. Being recognised as a Grindr user is problematic for James as he feels that it does not neatly map onto his professional identity. Therefore, he attempts to keep them distinct – to varying degrees of success. Here, binaries of offline/online and bodies/technologies are rendered unstable, as digital screens come to be extensions of sexual subjectivities and practices.

Grindr-as-habit, then, is only enabled in the particular places where the men who use it are not made to feel hyper-aware of their sexual practices. In this sense, there is stigma attached to Grindr. The stigma is formed through the idea that Grindr is ‘only’ used for casual erotic encounters. Therefore, heteronormative discourses that shape dominant understandings of sexualities – where monogamy becomes the norm – works to produce stigmas (Bell and Binnie, 2006). Through the ways they attempt to conceal using the app, Josh, Ben and James highlight that there are feelings of shame in using Grindr. Probyn (2004, p. 345) argues that shame is ‘the body saying that it cannot fit in although it desperately wants to’, whilst Waitt and Clifton (2013; 2015) argue that men’s bodies can come to feel shame if they are unable to embody qualities of hegemonic masculinity. Shame works to regulate bodies (Probyn, 2004). This shame emerges when men think they are recognised as ‘Grindr users’. Therefore, sometimes men do not want to be seen using Grindr, in the flesh and on other screens. Here, the stigma attached to Grindr works to produce shame in men that use it when they are in public space. Therefore, mobile phones and the apps themselves do not produce emotions (Longhurst, 2016). Instead, when mobile phones and Grindr are part of assemblages that involve public spaces and other people, Grindr has the capacity to mediate shame. The shame experienced amongst

friends is *different* to that experienced at work. Grindr users have a level of comfort amongst their friends as Grindr is spoken about (Ben admits being ‘caught out’). On the other hand, using Grindr at work, for some, is not as comfortable. There are multiple ways to feel comfortable (Ahmed, 2006). Therefore, the ways Grindr has the capacity to mediate shame and (dis)comfort is enhanced or diminished depending on the material context.

Heteronormative discourses shape how men who use Grindr think they will be recognised by other people, therefore they attempt to hide their Grindr usage in different spaces. Using Grindr in public, or amongst other people, involves emotional and identity work. Men must constantly negotiate their identities and emotions that are (re)produced in mediated assemblages. Therefore, Grindr can come to be understood as being more ‘appropriate’ in private spaces, as bodies do not necessarily experience shame in using it. Landscapes of morality come to be produced here, as particular places come to be felt more (im)moral when performing sexual identities (Hubbard, 2000). Therefore, dichotomous thinking of public/private comes to be (re)made, as sexual practices come to be ‘felt’ as out of place in public. Therefore, Grindr has spatial limits.

Men are trying to integrate Grindr into their habits. There are moments when Grindr becomes routine and it takes the form of habit. However, the examples highlight how these habits are being learned and negotiated. Bissell (2014) argues that habits are seamless movements that form as bodies adjust to the spaces they regularly frequent – we become orientated to positions, temperatures, bodies, objects and spaces. Grindr has yet to become seamless across all spaces. Some work in cultural geographies has foregrounded the transformative potential of habit. By engaging with feminist geographical accounts of emotion and materiality, I have highlighted situations and spaces where Grindr users do not always feel comfortable using Grindr habitually,

meaning disorientations emerge. These disorientations are produced through relational power dynamics. Through such power dynamics, sexualities and embodiment – in relation to masculinity, race and morality – come to be experienced, felt and lived. Therefore, there are moments when bodies are not easily reorientated by mobile phones and Grindr. Instead, men who use Grindr must negotiate ways to use it amongst certain people, or avoid using it, to stabilise material identities. The stabilising of material identities is a constant negotiation for men who use Grindr. In this sense, whilst binaries of online/offline and bodies/technologies may be rendered more unstable, others such as public/private come to be (re)made. In the next section, I explore how these processes work when men use Grindr when are (im)mobile.

3.7 ‘I’m literally driving past you’: Grindr on the move

In the previous section, I discussed how Grindr-as-habit is formed, stabilised and disrupted across the everyday places – for example, homes and work. Building on this, this section explore Grindr whilst ‘mobile’. Grindr is an app for mobile phones, therefore it can be accessed as people move through and between places. In this section, I turn attention to the spaces of mobilities and journeying. Although commuting spaces are often thought of as ‘in-between’ spaces, they are still spaces in their own right that constitute experiences, identities and emotions (Noble and Poynting, 2010; Wilson, 2011). Some of the participants in this study referred to using Grindr ‘on the move’, for example in cars and on trains. They also spoke about using the app whilst waiting. Therefore, this section engages with work from mobilities research around journeying, movement and stillness. The first two interview quotes are from Jack and Josh who talk about opening the app whilst waiting and journeying through Newcastle. They both refer to using it on the Metro – the inner city train service that connects the Newcastle city

centre to Gateshead, Sunderland, the city's suburbs and areas leading to the coast (Tynemouth, South Shields and North Shields):

Jack: usually at home, or if say I'm in uni waiting for a lecture, or I'm waiting for the Metro and I've got a spare 5 minute, I might just have a quick check, just to see if I've got a message or anything (Jack, 21, white British).

Carl: so, when you said you sometimes it is just second nature, do you do that anywhere?

Josh: I do, sometimes I think, oh wait I'm on the crowded metro, 'maybe I shouldn't be doing it here', and it's like the thing, 'oh fuck, what is someone is looking over my shoulder and I get a picture of a giant dick'. I kind of like don't want that in public (Josh, 32, white British).

Jack highlights how his use of Grindr is a way to manage his spare time whilst waiting for the Metro. Josh refers to his 'second nature' usage on Grindr when travelling on the Metro. Being still and waiting has the ability to expose the ways that we manage, perform and experience identities and their relation to place (Cresswell, 2012). Furthermore, waiting is something that we 'do' – it is not simply a moment of stillness, but it requires embodied knowledge and energies (Bissell, 2007). Bissell (2007) argues that whilst we wait on public transport we become hyper-aware of our bodies through corporeal experiences – for example fatigue, boredom, and restlessness. As a way to manage waiting and stillness, we attempt to occupy ourselves with activities such as listening to music, reading, and mobile phones (Jain, 2006; Bissell, 2007). The men I spoke with used Grindr as a way to experience waiting 'differently'. Grindr is a tool that men use to manage experiences of time whilst journeying. Here, Grindr becomes a way for men to manage their corporeal states of boredom and stillness that materialise on public transports. In this sense, the app is partly becoming integrated into everyday lives and routines as way to negotiate moods. However, these are not seamlessly practiced.

The capacity of Grindr to mediate and manage waiting is often presented with spatial barriers. The visibility of Grindr on the screen causes the men who use it to feel uncertain and uncomfortable at being recognised as a user. As Joel also says:

Joel: I mean I would be conscious of like people looking at the screen if I was in public or whatever, or if somebody was sat right next to me like on the bus, but essentially no, so long as it's not openly visible to anyone else, I would use it anywhere.

Carl: why wouldn't you like people to see?

Joel: I don't know, I think because it, obviously it does have quite a seedy reputation, also cos of the fact that it's almost an exclusively gay app it probably has a wee bit of stigma attached to it too in like public perception.

Carl: what stigma?

Joel: just that it's kind of like tramp-ish. Plus like as well like, you might just be browsing out of boredom and clicked onto it, but I would be conscious of people, like, 'oh look at him arranging like a ride²', you know what I mean? (Joel, 20, white Irish).

Joel exemplifies how he does not want to be recognised as looking for hook ups and sex. Men who use Grindr become very aware of the ways bodies may be comprehended if seen using Grindr when immobile and still. Therefore, when using the app, Grindr users become hyper-aware of their bodies on public transport. This narrative highlights how there is a certain shame in using Grindr in public places. Here, men's bodies come to feel shame at the idea of being seen using Grindr. As Joel explains, there is a stigma around using Grindr. Such stigmas are formed as the sexual practices that become associated and entangled with Grindr do not map onto respectable ideas of sexuality. In other words, fleeting erotic encounters, hook ups and casual sex are predominantly perceived immoral behaviours (Bell and Binnie, 2000; 2006). The awareness and discomfort is shaped by heteronormative discourses. The visuality of Grindr on the screen becomes reflexive of

² 'Ride' is a Northern Irish colloquialism that refers to a one night stand, or hook up.

sexual identities and practices. This highlights how dichotomies of online/offline and bodies/technologies are unstable, as they inform the experiences of each other. Being seen using Grindr may produce hypersexualised identities for the men who use it. Here, shame works to regulate identities in public spaces in order to produce respectable and moral masculinities and sexualities (Waitt and Clifton, 2013). This produces notions of sexual citizenship. By sexual citizenship, I mean the ‘rights’ that people have to enact, perform and embody their sexualities in and across space (Bell and Binnie, 2006; Hubbard, 2013). Particular sexual identities and practices – for example, kissing between two men in public – can be constructed as ‘out of place’ (Hubbard, 2013). This produces ‘bad’ sexual citizens who do not have ‘right’ to be in place. Therefore, what constitutes ‘good’ sexual citizens comes to be (re)produced on public transports, through emotion, technologies and bodies (Bell and Binnie, 2006). These notions of sexual citizenship come to (re)make public/private dichotomies, as particular sexual practices come to be felt as ‘private’.

Shame is experienced through mediated assemblages on public transport, highlighting the capacity of technologies to affect bodies (Longhurst, 2016). Men who use Grindr can become cautious of being read as immoral by people in public spaces, despite not always using Grindr to find hook ups. As Grindr assemblages move into public spaces, the working arrangements, emotions and affects are reshaped. The assemblage of seats, mobile vehicles, automatic doors, announcements, the movement and sounds of trains/buses and the bodies that get on and get off, work to shift how emotion is mediated. Bodies no longer feel excited by Grindr, and sexualities do not emerge through horniness and boredom. Instead, sexualities and masculinities emerge, and are regulated, through feelings of shame. As men who use Grindr come to *feel* the gaze of others in public, their identities and practices can be felt as immoral. Whilst sitting still, the visuality of the screen becomes more difficult to conceal. The movement

of people on and off public transports can become a way that bodies are surveyed. Therefore, the gaze of others comes to be felt more explicitly as Grindr users are immobile on certain transports. The emotional labour that is required to negotiate gaze, shame and stillness works to reinforce heteronormative ideas of gender and sexualities (Kawale, 2004). This feeling is brought into being through interactions of bodies and technologies, shaping how men who use Grindr experience public transport and journeying. Here, I have highlighted how being a man who uses Grindr in public spaces (particularly transport) does not map neatly onto the constructions of acceptable sexual citizens and respectable men. In this sense, as dichotomies of online/offline and bodies/technologies become more unstable, others such as public/private and gay/straight are (re)made.

The examples I have discussed so far focus on shorter journeys that men who use Grindr make around Newcastle and Gateshead using buses and metros. Here, I move to the longer journeys that Grindr users take between cities and towns. Some of the participants in this study mentioned opening up Grindr and leaving it active whilst moving between cities in England. Russell and Gareth discuss using Grindr on journeys to London and Middlesbrough respectively:

Russell: long journeys that kind of thing. In fact, I went to London recently on the coach, and it [the coach] was diabolical. And I used it half way down and a few people were pinging up, I'm literally driving past you. So, I've actually made two friends and I was only there for weekend, I say friends, you know what I mean, regular contacts shall we say, I've never actually met them yet, but who knows (Russell, 28 white British).

Gareth: if I'm out and about I'll have it on in my pocket, sometime if I'm travelling from Middlesbrough to here I'll stick it on the car. But obviously for the journey you kind of, when you GPS updates as you go, you pick up a new batch, for lack of another, a different group of people. Usually if you leave it on for the journey you

get messages throughout the journey or you get back and you've had messages from the journey, from between here and Middlesbrough. It's just a bit of change because it's the same old faces all the time. The only time when it tends to change massively, cos all the students are coming into town so you suddenly get a load of new faces, or a load of no faces, or a load of blank profiles which have just left home form the first time, being able to dip their toes in the water for the first time, and all the jazz (Gareth, 42, white British).

Both Gareth and Russell are using the location services of Grindr to open potential discussions with men as they move through and between places. Journeying is used to extend the reach of the Grindr radius. Boredom and restlessness operate in these narratives, but in different ways. For Russell, the coach journey down to London was 'diabolical', in terms of its length and discomfort. Grindr and the mobile phone was used as a ways to occupy the body to shift awareness from this corporeal state. Here, the mobile phone and Grindr are used to mediate embodied moods. This affective shift is made possible through sexualities. Being able to connect and speak to other men who use Grindr can be exciting as it opens up new dialogues and potential encounters in the future.

For Gareth, using Grindr whilst journeying is a way to broaden his potential connections, as he feels that there are the 'same old faces' in Newcastle. For men who use Grindr in Newcastle, the small population of non-heterosexual men – compared to that of larger UK cities such as London and Manchester – can produce a feeling of frustration and boredom. In this sense, Grindr has spatial limits for the potential of erotic, romantic and everyday encounters. Grindr, the GPS system and the mobile phone have a capacity to mediate the frustration and boredom associated with place. For men like Gareth, the journey out of Newcastle has potential to negotiate frustration with Grindr in Newcastle. Grindr can be a source of sexual boredom, whilst its mobility is also a way to negotiate and challenge this. The practices of using Grindr on long journeys highlights how digital technologies are reorientating sexual subjectivities. Grindr becomes a way for sexualities

to emerge whilst journeying – men want to be seen on the screens of other Grindr users. Therefore, men can do ‘passenger’ or ‘driver’, whilst also doing sexualities.

Grindr on the move is a way for bodies, sexualities and sexual practices to be managed. Grindr assemblages (mobiles, apps, trains and cars) are shaped by the moods that bring them into working arrangements in ways that produce men’s experiences of journeys. At the same time, moods also shape how these assemblages are managed and negotiated. Sexual identities, bodies and practices work to (re)produce how these assemblages are experienced and shifted. Grindr users do not always feel comfortable using Grindr on the move. Therefore, the spaces of journeys and mobilities - as well as homes and work - constitute gender, sexualities and bodies differently (Noble and Poynting, 2010; Wilson, 2011). This highlights how men who use Grindr experience sexual citizenship in Newcastle. Mobiles phones and their digital screens are shaping the ways men who use Grindr experience everyday spaces. Therefore, screens become central in the ways sexual and gendered identities are embodied, felt and negotiated. Through notions of assemblage, I highlight how binaries of online/offline and bodies/technologies are unstable. However, at the same time experiences of public space come to be felt through binaries of public/private.

3.8 Conclusions

Moods, and their sensations, emotions and affects, are being managed, negotiated and mediated through Grindr. Grindr is being integrated into the moods of the people who use it. Paying attention to the moods that prompt men to use Grindr highlights how sexualities and masculinities emerge through mediated Grindr assemblages. I argue that the ways Grindr mediates moods, emotion, sensations and affects is unevenly experienced. In other words, Grindr has spatial limits. The spatial limits emerge as men sometimes want/do not

want to be seen on the screens of other Grindr users. At the same time, men do not always want feel comfortable in being recognised – both digitally and materially – as a Grindr user. By way of conclusion, I want to highlight the three key points to this chapter that exemplify how technologies are reorientating embodied experiences of gender and sexualities.

First, Grindr on mobile phones is being integrated into emotional management and negotiation. Grindr is becoming so everyday and routine that it takes the form of habit in certain spaces. Moods (and their emotions, sensations and affects), such as boredom and horniness, are attempted to be controlled, managed and mediated through Grindr, and this assembles Grindr (phones, bodies, pictures, words and place) into working arrangements. Through these arrangements, sexuality and masculinities emerge. For example, men argue that they use Grindr as a result of ‘boring places’, rather than sexual desire, enabling them to remain in control of bodies and emotions. Ideas of emotional and bodily control constructs masculinities, however contradictions emerge when men feel excited through potential encounters. Therefore, gender and sexualities come to be done through mediated assemblage in ways that can bring identities into conflict.

Second, I have highlighted how Grindr becomes meaningful in the lives of its users. For men who use Grindr identities are being constituted through the app. Even though Grindr can be conflated as a remedy of boredom, the visceral excitement and arousal that men experience from potential encounters, demonstrates its importance to sexual identities. Not only has it become central in mediating boredom, horniness, habits and journeys, it also shapes how masculinities and sexualities are felt, constructed and experienced. Men who use Grindr are being reorientated in the places that they use it. However, there are moments when Grindr is not able to easily fit into the lives of its users – this brings me to my final point.

Third, the extent that Grindr can be used to manage corporeal experiences has spatial limits. Although men who use Grindr access the app across multiple places, it is often the presence of other bodies that inhibit the app from becoming seamlessly integrated into everyday lives. Only certain spaces have affordances for Grindr to become mundane, even when the mobile phone is entangled in everyday habitual practices. I have highlighted how the presence of other people in particular places can cause men to feel uncomfortable in being recognised as a Grindr user. Grindr has yet to become seamless across everyday geographies, as sexual practices associated with using Grindr do not neatly map onto other identities, such as professional, familial and citizenship. The constant emergence and negotiation of identities can disorientate the men that use Grindr. The emotional work and negotiation that is involved in using Grindr in public highlights how men come to feel shame. Shame emerges at the potential of being recognised as a Grindr user. However, shame is not always experienced in the same way. The feeling of shame is dependent on the bodies and places Grindr user are with and in. Therefore, the ways Grindr has the capacity to mediate shame is enhanced or diminished depending on the material context. Mediated assemblages come to constitute identities through multiple emotional and affective experiences. Although this challenges offline/online and bodies/technologies dichotomies, it also (re)makes notions of the 'good' sexual citizens and (re)maps geographies of morality. Therefore, notions of public/private and gay/straight come to be reimagined through Grindr assemblages.

Paying attention to the ways men who use Grindr learn how to 'do' technologies to manage and negotiate mood, sensations, emotions and affect can reveal how genders and sexualities emerge across everyday spaces and journeys. This approach has enabled a deeper understanding of the relationship between bodies and technologies, and how they can (re)make, (re)map or disrupt ideas of sexual citizenship and moral geographies.

Sexual citizenship works to shape how comfortable Grindr users feel about where they can enact their sexualities. This can work to reinforce the spatial and bodily boundaries of public/private and gay/straight. In the following chapter, I move to thinking about Grindr as a digital space. In particular, I explore how constructing desirable Grindr profiles requires multiple skills and embodied knowledge that are entangled in online/offline Grindr assemblages.

Chapter Four: ‘Meat Market’: Multisensory Politics of the Grindr Grid.

4.1 Introduction

Josh: I think any dating profile sort of thing is a place for advertising, it’s selling yourself essentially, you obviously, you’re using that profile with an aim in mind, so it’s a market, it’s a meat market essentially. You do have to advertise yourself to a certain extent, you do have to convince someone like that you are what they want and what they desire. So yeah, like Grindr is a place like that, I truly believe that. (Josh, 23, white British).

Constructing Grindr profiles is a multisensory process that is entangled in the flesh and materiality of bodies and spaces. In this chapter, I explore how regulatory processes – that shape men’s material bodies, identities and practices – arrange how men gaze and produce Grindr profiles. I take a multisensory approach to the visual to explore how profiles are more than digital visual objects. They are looked at and constructed through a myriad of sensory experiences and movements. For example, touch, taste, light, proximities and distances. I argue that men are constantly negotiating regulatory discourses – that shape understandings of age, gender, sexuality, race and body size and shape – through their skins, flesh, distances and proximities in Grindr profiles. Therefore, men have to continually learn how to produce ‘desirable’ profiles as a way to ‘sell’ themselves.

In chapter three, I explored Grindr as a technology and screen and how it has the capacity to mediate the ways users emotionally experience gender and sexuality. In this chapter, I focus on Grindr as a digital space to highlight two relational productions of embodied masculinities on Grindr profiles – hypersexualised and lifestyle masculinities. Although these are not the only masculinities that occupy the Grindr grid, they were the most commonly embodied by participants. Hypersexualised masculinities are produced

through photos that focus on bodies and exposed flesh and skin. In these pictures the context of the image is blurred or the body takes up all space obscuring the background. It is the absence of a visible context and place that gives rise to the hypersexualised embodiment. Hypersexualised Grindr users are assumed to be attempting to attract men who are interested in fleeting sexual encounters. Conversely, lifestyle masculinities are produced through pictures where bodies are given some context (e.g. a beach, a bar, or music event). These places have significance to the image as they work to produce specific performances of gender. These two productions of embodied masculinities are not mutually exclusive – those men who construct a lifestyle masculinity can still be sexualised and vice versa. However, ‘lifestyle’ highlights how men who use Grindr attempt to construct a profile that encapsulates broader practices (e.g. leisure, tourism, or work). The Grindr grid is the first visual(s) that users are presented with when they open the app (see figure 1.2). The grid is a list of users that are geographically further away as the user scrolls down. If you have the free version of the app you will see 100 men, if you pay for the app you will see 300 men (see section 1.1 for introduction to Grindr).

I take a multisensory approach to understand the visual and digital as part of assemblages of senses, bodies and spaces (Pink, 2011; Pink, 2012; Kinsley, 2014; Rose, 2016). To be clear, this is not a visual analysis. Instead, I analyse the embodied experience, motivations and feelings that shape how people construct profiles and also how they look at/through them. Grindr profiles – as visual and digital objects – do not exist independently of everyday lives. Instead, profiles are entangled in the multiple places and objects that bodies are relationally located in and with as they produce and look at them. I use ideas of assemblage (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) alongside work on visibility to understand Grindr profiles as part of wider networks, arrangements, bodies and spaces that are constantly being (re)worked. This enables an exploration of the

multiple practices, emotions and bodily senses that produce visual artefacts, and the ways that they are looked at. I also highlight how particular men have to negotiate regulatory discourses as a way to construct ‘desirable’ profiles to men in Newcastle.

I begin by reviewing literature on the visual in geography. I then move to work that explored men’s online dating profiles, arguing they often taking a one dimension approach. Five empirical sections follow. First, I highlight how hypersexual masculinities emerge across the grid. I argue that the production of hypersexual masculinities are not always intentional, but profiles gain these meaning in the Grindr grid space. Second, I highlight how lifestyle masculinities emerge when users give greater context to images. I argue that the construction of profiles is an ongoing process that is done as users move through multiple spaces in their everyday lives. Third, I move my attention to looking at the Grindr grid. I highlight how particular men (older and non-white) are often constructed as undesirable to certain men in Newcastle – this is not necessarily unique to Newcastle, but is entangled in the sexual politics of the city (see chapter one). However, proximity and distance can often (re)shape how men look at Grindr profiles. Forth, I explore how particular phrases on profiles can regulate masculinities – in particular ‘camp’ men – and have emotional and visceral impact on bodies. Fifth, I explore how men over 35 and Asian men have to learn particular skill sets to construct their profiles as a way to negotiate marginalising discourses that construct their bodies as ‘undesirable’. Finally, to conclude I highlight how a multisensory approach to Grindr profiles enhances understandings of the ways men experience and negotiate the Grindr grid.

4.2 Multisensory visuals

Geography as a discipline has predominantly been concerned with the visual (Gregory, 1994; Rodaway, 1994; Driver, 2003; Rose, 2003b; Thornes, 2004). Rose (2003b, p. 214) states, ‘geography is unique in the social sciences in the way it has relied

and continues to rely on certain kinds of visualities and visual images to construct its knowledges'. The ways people experience the world through gaze/ing – where seeing is understood as an epistemological knowing – was/is a focus of much geographical research (Dixon and Straughan, 2010). However, certain visual approaches are concerned with more than just seeing. Using the example of visual slides in the teaching and dissemination of geographical knowledge, Rose (2003b) argues that the visibility of the slides and screens performatively place the presenter as a producer of knowledge. The slides, images, lights and audience are carefully positioned to enable power to emerge. Appreciating the ways visual objects gain meaning through their situatedness can reveal the ways power is relationally experienced and produced. There is a complex politics to visual objects, media and artefacts (Tolia-Kelly, 2012). Rose' (2003a; 2004) work with mothers and family photographs in the home explores how photographs are not simply documentation of the past. For these mothers, photographs are embedded in complex emotional experiences and personal homemaking practices. For example, the grouping together of people in photographs and looking at these photographs is shaped by a feeling of togetherness. Photographs are a way of performing togetherness when families can sometimes geographically distant.

With the development of the digital technologies, visual practices, experiences and images are more than just representations of power, place and space (Bissell, 2009; Rose, 2016). For Rose (2016, p. 374), 'cultural meanings are no longer represented by cultural objects, but are produced at multiple sites and interfaces, between hardware, software and humans'. The screens (interfaces) that imagery is 'shown' on is made possible by the hardware and software possibilities (and agencies), and they interpreted by the located bodies that consume them. These experiences can also reorientate and reconfigure how we experience the place and spaces we are 'in' (Longhurst, 2017; Pink *et*

al., 2017). Therefore, to more fully understand what we see on screens requires an appreciation of the multiple assemblages that produce them. Pink (2012) draws on Massey (2005) when thinking about space, place and the visuality of the internet. Pink (2012, p. 120) understands the internet as a relational space that can be ‘interwoven into particular intensities of place that also involve persons, interactivity, material localities and technologies’. Therefore, visual images are unable to be extracted from place and locality and vice versa. She argues that a visual approach should examine how material and digital practices and localities become entangled in the visual. Online visual images are complexly embedded in a multitude of offline experiences and materialities (Banks, 2001).

Following this line of thought, visual images, the internet and visual practices are not only about seeing and looking. Instead, visual experiences are multisensory (Smith, 2000; Pink, 2011; 2012). A multisensory approach to the visual considers how touch, sounds, smells, tastes and sights are not solitary experiences. Human experiences are multisensory. All of our senses are entangled in the ways bodies feel, experience and perceive the world (Rodaway, 1994; Pink, 2012). Therefore, as bodies engage with technologies they engage in multisensory experience. At the same time, as we produce digital images/objects we engage in multisensory practices. Images are produced, experienced and consumed through movements (Pinney, 2008). Images ‘are not static, and do not stand for static surfaces but always represent environments they were part of’ (Pink, 2011, p. 9). In this sense, images are taken through bodily movements (physical act to taking a picture). Additionally, images can also become meaningful to future movements. Pinney (2008) argues that some images become entangled with consumers’ potential futures. The advancement of digital technologies has produced different ways of movement and visuality. For example Google Street View enables users to move through

streets as though they were walking through them. This interface gives users the ability to familiarise themselves with places through a digital experience of moving through them (Pink, 2011). Therefore, certain images can create an affective and imaginative ideas of future movements and corporeal relationships. In this sense, digital imagery reorientates how bodies experience movement through places. Location-based media and images – Grindr profiles – can enable people to experience places *differently*. The geographic situatedness of images can shape how we understand proximity and distance, and therefore our sensory experiences.

Touch is one sense that is intertwined with looking/seeing. I use ideas offered by Price (2013) who argues that the eyes act as organs of touch. For Price, the eyes can approximate touch in a way that can bring bodies closer, or keep them at a distance. In this sense, looking and touching is shaped by proximity and distance, and how we understand the spaces between ourselves and other bodies, objects and places. Grindr is a location-based dating app. As men browse through the grid, they often think about touching the fleshy bodies beyond the screen. Therefore, as users look at screens, they are involved in a multisensory practice. Thinking about the materiality of the visual and the digital is a way for feminist geographers to examine the power relations that co-produce online spaces (Morrow *et al.*, 2015). By focusing on the eyes as organs of touch, I suggest that looking, or being looked at, is shaped by regulatory discourses and practices. Through interviews and participant research diaries, I explore how the material regulations of masculinities (re)produce pictures, images and profiles. Therefore, I pay attention to the ways interactions of online and offline enable gendered and sexual power relations to emerge. I contribute to work on multisensory visibility by understanding how masculinities are produced in digital spaces through the ways they are regulated in offline

ones. In the next section, I explore work that focuses on men's bodies in online spaces, arguing that there needs to be greater appreciation of the ways online/offline co-mingle.

4.3 Visualising men's bodies

The construction of men's dating profiles is entangled with corporeal, material and discursive ideas of masculinities. In previous research, dating sites such as Gaydar (Payne, 2007; Mowlabocus, 2010a), Rate (Siibak, 2010), and match.com (Walker and Eller, 2016) have been given scholarly attention. Payne's (2007) analysis of Australian Gaydar profiles highlights how masculinity is a 'commodity' that aims to attract a particular 'consumer'. Gaydar provides the 'straight acting' category for its users to identify with. It enables users to construct a 'manly' form of masculinity, simultaneously being used to find other 'straight acting' men. Alongside this label, users also use phrases such as 'similar blokes', 'sporty lad', 'just normal blokes', to emphasise their 'manliness'. Payne (2007, p. 537) argues...

...straight-acting subjects continue to produce themselves as remarkable for their very unremarkableness, as spectacles of the unspectacular, demanding and confounding recognisability'.

In other words, the uniqueness and desire around 'straight acting' comes from 'passing' as, or being seen as, a 'normal' man. It is this 'spectacle of the unspectacular' that enables straight acting masculinities to be produced as a desirable commodity. These labels are arguable a way for men to 'sell' their bodies. It is also entangled with buying, in that men wish to 'buy' other men's bodies (Mowlabocus, 2010a). This desirability can enable this form of masculinity to be sexualised in a non-heterosexual context, as Payne (2007, p. 533) argues...

...the possibility of passing here becomes a kind of fetish - a visible objectification of certain bodily stylisations or at least the idea of how these may appear and function and favourably be recognised.

Straight acting, then, is not just a re-appropriation of masculinity, but a spectacular fetish of embodied gender that becomes yearned for. This desirability of straight acting men may seek to performatively stabilise the dominance associated with heterosexual performances of masculinities (Butler, 1997; 2004).

At the same time, particular bodies of men can become recognised as normal, whilst non-straight acting men are relationally constructed as an 'other' (Connell, 1995; Payne, 2007). Payne (2007) questions the disruptive ability of the label of straight acting. It could have queer potential by re-appropriating straight-ness from the bodies of heterosexual men, however the label may seek to 'straighten' gayness (ibid). As compulsory heterosexuality seeks to construct heterosexuality as unrecognisable, then straight acting becomes closer to being unmarked (Butler, 2004). Clarkson's (2005) work on straightacting.com argues that the men who use the website wish to heighten the visibility of 'manly' gay men in a way that places importance on masculine ideals. This can further reify 'manliness' as the 'natural' gender performance of men.

Analysis of 315 gay men's profiles on the dating website match.com highlighted that users wished to stabilise hierarchies of gender and sexuality (Walker and Eller, 2016). Gay men who used match.com would use text in their profiles that highlight that they desired men who could pass as straight. Walker and Eller (2016) suggest that these profile described desirable men as being those who could place themselves in multiple contexts and spaces in ways that do not unsettle hegemonic masculinities. Drawing on the concept of 'masculine capital', Walker and Eller (2016) argue that it is increasingly important for gay men to promote themselves as 'manly' men, in comparison to

heterosexual men, as gay men are usually already considered to be non-manly. They argue that gay men feel as though they need to claim and embody manly masculinities, whereas heterosexual men are usually already considered manly. Therefore, advertising 'straightness' is way to embody masculine capital that may otherwise be considered 'missing'.

The words and categories used on dating sites can provide insights into the understandings of the relationships between masculinities, sexualities and desire. However, photographs also matter. Mowlabocus (2010b) argues that the ways that gay men present themselves in online dating profiles is shaped by pornography. Through analysis of Gaydar profiles, Mowlabocus (2010a; 2010b) highlights how the positioning of bodies, the body parts that can be seen and the amount of clothing the body is wearing is rooted in gay porn. He argues that the commodification of bodies (e.g. body size, shape, muscularity, skin tone, age, and the sexual practices, sex positions, and fetishes that bodies engage in) in – carefully crafted – pictures seek to sell a sexualised product. For Mowlabocus (2010a; 2010b) this is one way gay men become recognised as successful online bodies and identities. It is through discourses of pornography that digital embodiment comes to matter. This work has partly shaped the ways I understand the hypersexualised masculinities across Grindr –thinking about the parts of bodies that can and cannot be seen. However, sexualised bodies may also be shaped by the ways models are depicted in broader media platforms (Bordo, 2000; Siibak, 2010). Furthermore, I argue this is not the only way bodies come to matter online for men who use Grindr in Newcastle. Discourses around leisure, lifestyle and everyday spaces also work through images to produce digitally mediated embodied masculinities.

These studies I have cited in this section rely on discursive and content analysis of websites, profiles and images to argue that embodying particular forms of masculinity

appears to carry certain capital across the sites. This work does little in the way of understanding the lived experiences of the men in these studies. I use multisensory approaches to the digital and visual as a way to explore the complexity of producing a looking at profiles. Therefore, I contribute a more corporeal approach to the ways discourses of gender and sexuality shape how online spaces are produced and consumed. This enables a more thorough examination of the heteronormative politics that shape the ways gay men who use Grindr understand embodied masculinities. This provides a critical intervention around the ways technology, embodiment, gender and sexuality work together to (re)produce experiences of online interactions. The following section draws on empirical research. I explore how hypersexual masculinities emerge on Grindr as a response to regulatory practices and geographic places in men's material lives.

4.4 'Sex sells': hypersexualised masculinities.

In this section, I draw on empirical research to highlight how hypersexual masculinities are assembled in Grindr profiles. I highlight how this masculinity is made up of pictures, words, categories, skins, places and localities that are made meaningful through desire, memories and practices. I explore how this form of masculinity is entangled in these online and offline practices and how it becomes meaningful in these assemblages. By paying attention to masculinity as emerging, I examine how hypersexual bodies become 'normalised' for men who use Grindr. Some Grindr users chose to show different parts of their unclothed bodies in their profile pictures. Only certain body parts are able to be exposed in profile pictures as Grindr have 'profile guidelines' that restrict complete nudity. Therefore, users are unable to use naked pictures, or pictures that highlight the shape of genitals through clothing. All pictures are 'screened' by Grindr before they can be seen by other users. These neoliberal ways of producing sexualities are part of Grindr

profile assemblages. The degree of skin exposure of participants varied, and included, but was not exclusive to, shirtless men, and men in underwear and unbuttoned clothes, with pictures sometimes focusing on particular parts of the body, not always all of the body.

In the following quote, a participant describes his exposed body in his profile picture and how and why he chose it:

Joe: it's a picture of my body with my shirt open, the reason I picked it is cos I was sat own on the couch and I was eating ice cream and I was like I should really start my diet now, this was a couple of weeks back, and I went, 'how bad am I actually?'. And I went to the mirror, unbuttoned my shirt, took a photo and I actually quite liked the outcome of it

Carl: Is there any reason you chose to have your shirt open in the picture?

Joe: I feel it just starts a lot more conversation with people, showing a bit of flesh.

Sex sells, and if you've got to sell yourself on these apps, that's the way to do it (Joe, 24, white British).

Joe is attempting to increase interest in his profile by using images of his skin and flesh, as he has come to learn that bodies that reveal more skin are more desirable across the grid. In this example Joe's body becomes 'dismantled' and one 'part' – his torso – is the main feature of his digital body (Mowlabocus, 2010a). This part of his body is used as something to be consumed, and he is doing so in a way that he thinks can demand the 'gaze' of others in the 'competitive' grid. The ways men look through Grindr is multisensory. Looking is something that we do with our eyes, but we also 'touch' with them (Marks, 2000; Price, 2013). Grindr seeks to put people 'in touch', both through conversation but also through material touching of skin. Grindr is centred on location and proximity, showing users within a localised, geographic radius. Men are often use Grindr to meet and touch in the flesh. By showing the skin, men who use Grindr are attempting to create a desire to be touched by users on 'the other side' of the screen. Youth, whiteness, and body size and shape all work together to give exposed body parts erotic

meaning on Grindr. Therefore, hypersexual masculinities are enabled to emerge in Grindr assemblages as bodies and skin become sites of potential touch.

In an image of a torso with no background or recognisable geographical context, the exposed skin becomes the site of importance. As offline places and contexts are not visible, the body is the site through which gendered and sexualised discourses are embodied, not through objects, places or 'things'. By removing other embodied dimensions of the self (for example, the face) and focusing on other body parts the construction of gender and sexuality is partial, giving rise to the hypersexualised idea of a profile image. This production of hypersexualised masculinity is used by men to market themselves as sexualised bodies in the hopes of being touched.

Joe understands his skin as a way to 'sell' his body. However, taking the photograph was not a sexual practice. The act of eating and tasting ice cream produced a feeling of unhappiness around his body size and shape, and lead him to photographically document his body. Feminist geographers have highlighted how food and eating are visceral practices that are saturated with spatial power relations (Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy, 2008; Longhurst *et al.*, 2009). The taste of sweet food prompted Joe to question the ways he regulates his body size and shape. The motivations that produced the picture are shaped by the regulation of masculinities, especially eating and exercising practices. However, when the image is uploaded into Grindr's profile space(s) it becomes culturally recognised as erotic. Therefore, the ways masculinities are embodied in the digital do not neatly map onto material identities. Instead, they take on new meanings that are produced by the instabilities of online and offline dichotomies. This is one way bodies become digital.

Although the skin and flesh can become sexualised, the motivations for exposing/hiding body parts is not always as simple. Skin has different meanings for

different participants. Exposing the skin and torso - and leaving out the face – is also a strategy to construct a Grindr identity that is incoherent with offline ones. Ralph talks about why he uses pictures of his torsos and not face:

Ralph: so it's a picture of my torso ... My torso is my body. My body is what I'm living in. It's as much as what I'm living in as my face is, so for me there's nothing wrong with having that on there, you know. I don't like the idea of being recognised in public and approached by people I have chosen not to speak to or mix with on Grindr (Ralph, 22, Mixed Raced)

In his picture, Ralph's torso is toned and lean, with his abdominal muscles clearly visible. His body also 'takes up' all the space in the image. Ralph specifically highlights how the exposure of his skin is not done so to be read as hypersexual. Furthermore, there is a level of privilege that men have in exposing their chests in different spaces, in relation to women (Grosz, 1994). Here, Ralph feels he has the 'right' to expose his skin on Grindr. The skin becomes a way he can produce a digital body that is rooted in his corporeality, simultaneously masking his face so other Grindr users do not recognise him in offline space. This was important for Ralph as he worked in a retail store in Newcastle city centre, therefore he did not want other Grindr users to be able to address him whilst working. Therefore, the production of this partial digital body is a way to prevent online and offline identities from being coherent. For Ralph, he does not want to be read as a hypersexualised body in his offline working spaces. In this sense, the exposure of skin is a way to de-sexualise identities. As erotic Grindr practices do not necessarily map neatly onto working masculinities – especially those that are produced through neoliberal ideas of professionalism – they are attempted to be kept distinct and separate.

The separation of professional identities and sexual practices is also done by not using a picture. The next two examples are from participants who did not use a photograph on their profile as they wanted to 'protect' their identities for professional

reasons. However, these men still wanted to be read as hypersexualised bodies. In digital spaces, embodied identities are not just mediated by images, they also materialise through words and categories (Roth, 2014). These quotes illustrate the ways that users attempt to portray a hypersexualised version of themselves through the use of words only:

Tom: Just like a ‘Hepburn fun³’ profile, you know, let people know where I was, it was a bit of fun, just started chatting, then I found as you started to talk to people, your likes and what you wanted to use it for changed, so it didn’t just become about meeting people for sex, it became about other things, and I, embarrassingly, found out different thing about my preferences and what I enjoyed (Tom, 44, white British).

Carl: you mentioned that you have in your profile that you’re a bottom, is that right?
Rupert: yeah ... I think I put it there because if I am looking for a hook up it gets it out in the open straight away, rather than going round the houses talking about various positions, it’s written in white letters and you don’t have to go around that ... It’s something like ‘looking for a selfish top’, but it’s purely, that’s the element of looking for a hook up (Rupert, 37, white British).

The use of phrases such as ‘Hepburn fun’, ‘bottom’ and ‘looking for a selfish top’ are ways that sexualised versions of masculinities can be assembled online. Both participants are aware that the use of such language produces a sexualised profile that seeks to attract other men looking for similar ‘things’. Such sexualised words and phrases are also used to create more efficient interactions. Both participants speak about wanting to make other users aware of what they are ‘looking for’ to prevent wasting their time. In Tom’s case, it is about highlighting that he is looking for fun, but also his geographical location – making this explicit highlights to other men where they may need to travel to. In this sense, Tom’s profile is *placed*. By this, I mean the hypersexual digital identity is

³ ‘Fun’ is regularly used on Grindr to indicate that a person is looking for an offline sexual encounter, usually only for one time.

assembled through geographic places.

In Rupert's case, he is being explicit about his preferred sexual position and the type of sex he desires. Later in his interview, Rupert speaks about why he feels comfortable using this form of language on Grindr:

Rupert: I think people perceive other apps as frigid versions of Grindr, so almost, implying Grindr is there for hook ups. I think it's perceived as that.

Carl: does that influence how you act on Grindr?

Rupert: oh yes, I would never walk up to someone in a club or a bar and say 'are you a selfish top' whereas on Grindr you haven't got that physical connection with someone, and you're assuming everyone is there for the same reason, so it's less of an issue. I mean some of the things I say on Grindr I would never say to someone's face (Rupert, 37, white British)

Rupert is speaking interchangeably about his profile and the conversations he has with others, but he is highlighting how Grindr enables him to use such phrases on his profile and in conversations. He is making it clear that he views Grindr as a more sexualised platform than other digital and offline spaces. Therefore, this particular digital space works to co-produce hypersexualised masculinities as such behaviour becomes accepted, even potentially normative. For both Rupert and Tom, the organic and inorganic co-mingle to allow particular desires to be expressed that do not neatly map onto other parts of their identities. Assemblages of phone, bodies, words and locations that are brought into arrangement by desire and pleasures, providing space for sexualities to be felt, experienced and lived out.

The use of language and pictures to produce hypersexual profiles is both intentional and accidental. When photographs are taken or when they are uploaded, they are not always intended to be/come hypersexual. On the other hand, excluding photographs and using words can be attempts to produce hypersexual profiles. When pictures and words are assembled through Grindr profiles they take on meanings. These

meanings are learned over time as men use Grindr, who then reinforce and contest these meanings. Therefore, Grindr profiles are assembled through memories, desires, objects, pleasures and shared understandings, giving rise to particular ways of doing masculinity and sexuality that are produce/d by the places Grindr users are in. Therefore, the ways of doing sexuality and gender on Grindr become specific to that assemblage.

4.5 ‘I’m someone who likes to go out in nature’: lifestyle masculinities.

As I argued in the previous section, regulatory practices and discourses assemble hypersexual masculinities on the Grindr grid. In this section, I highlight how regulations also assemble lifestyle masculinities, in relation to hypersexual ones. I develop this here to argue that lifestyle masculinities can (re)produce regulations on the Grindr grid, as users seek to regulate other men’s gender performances. Furthermore, paying attention to the material practices that work to assemble these profiles reveals how lifestyle masculinities do not always exist independently of hypersexual ones. Lifestyle masculinities are assembled through pictures and words where bodies and identities are given increased ‘context’ (for example, the places that pictures are situated and leisure activities that are enjoyed). These places and activities have significance to profiles as they work to produce specific performances of gender.

The way bodies become meaningful in situ is central to these profile images. Images of muscular and toned bodies are often used in marketing campaigns and have become a desirable form of embodied youthful masculinity. In this example, the front of the body is shown, from head to toe, in a particular place. In his interview Axel discussed how he chose to use a particular picture of himself from a holiday that showcased his ‘good body’:

Axel: I was very horny when I was travelling Asia so I had sex with a lot of people and met up with a lot of people... I got back to Newcastle in September and I was kind still in this holiday mode, uni hadn't really started properly, I was talking to a lot of guys.

Carl: why did you chose that picture of yourself?

Axel: I just back from holiday [travelling Asia], and I had a picture of me in the beach and stuff and people were like 'ooh, nice beach' ... well I mean, I knew it was a nice picture, I looked nice on the beach, having a great time, also, I knew my body was good so I was just like why not ... yeah no, I was just aware that I looked good... (Axel, 21, white British, undergraduate student).

Later in the interview Axel described what he thought of as a 'good body':

...like a holiday body, like what you want when you're on holiday, like triangle shaped, great arms, not hairy, just like, yeah.

Axel defines a muscular body as one that is hierarchically 'better' than a body that is not. The features of a 'good body' conform to contemporary ideas of desirable western masculine embodiment (Tanner *et al.*, 2013). Bodies of men that are lean and muscular and have little or no chest hair dominate media and advertising culture, (Alexander, 2003). Axel's ideas of 'looking good' are clearly enmeshed in this. He has chosen to use his size and shape to 'sell' his profile. In this sense, his visible muscular torso becomes an embodied symbol of achievement of desirable youthful masculinity (Yea, 2015). Axel also gives his body context as he suggests that his 'good body' is a 'holiday body'. This constructs his sized and 'haired' body as one that has spatial and temporal specificity. Through regulating his body shape and size, Axel has achieved what he defines as a 'holiday body', meaning his masculinity is 'in place'.

The spatial dimensions of the picture matter in digitally mediated masculinities. In this example, the participant is also advertising the idea that he is having a 'great time', constructing a profile that highlights his ability to have fun, be active and have a happy

lifestyle, alongside his body size, shape and body hair. There are also class dimensions being assembled as the picture can reflect Axel's geographical mobility – being able to travel to 'exotic' locations in South East Asia. Although the body can be seen from head to toe, it is the exposed 'part' that Axel puts more emphasis upon. This spatial situatedness, the exposed skin, and its muscularity all work together to (re)produce a form of lifestyle masculinity. As the exposed body can be spatially recognised, it gives a broader context to gendered and sexual identities, and therefore can be understood as a more 'complete' picture of embodied selves.

His interview also highlights how he was 'horny' when he put his profile picture up on Grindr, suggesting that his motivations were also shaped by an embodied intensity of eroticism. Being aware that he looks good suggests that his exposed flesh is used as a tactic. Axel wishes to use his body to foster a desire touch in other men who use Grindr. Therefore, this lifestyle masculinity is assembled through desire, pleasure and embodied sexualities. The selection of pictures is shaped by the ways bodies feel, and wish to be connect with other bodies.

Men do not only select pictures that they have on their devices, they also take particular pictures when 'living' out their lifestyles. The following quote is from Lewis who discusses when he takes pictures for Grindr:

Lewis: if I'm out and about and I'm going somewhere interesting it will be like a shot [of his face] with something in the background ... if I've gone for a walk and I think it's quite scenic, so I'm like 'yeah'. I'm someone who likes to go out in nature, go for hikes, or bike rides or things like that ... I've done the odd 'stuck in traffic' like photo in my car, sort of thing. I was planning on taking a photo this week anyway, why not do it when I'm stuck in traffic. The lighting's good compared to when I remember to do it at 10 o'clock at night or something. Yeah, like I probably try to take photos when there's outside lighting, like it might be like it's a brick wall or something like that (Lewis, 26, gay, white British).

As Lewis highlights, men who use Grindr take picture for their profiles in multiple locations. When Grindr users are engaging in particular leisure practices – that constitute gender identities - they sometimes think about taking pictures that they can use on their profiles. For Lewis, this involves taking pictures of himself when he is out walking, hiking or cycling. These activities, and the pictures of them, symbolise forms of masculinity that are sometimes entangled with the outdoors (Cloke, 2005). He also takes pictures in his car to make ‘better use’ of time and of lighting. Grindr users take pictures in moments of waiting and stillness. Digital technologies are often used to reorientate bodies when they are bored, waiting and still (Vincent and Fortunati, 2014 see also chapter three). Here, photography for Grindr is mediating waiting. Assembling and maintaining Grindr profiles is a continual practice that users engage with across multiple spaces. Walking, hiking, cycling, waiting in a traffic jam – and the multisensory experience – are becoming increasingly entangled in the digital practices of Grindr. In this sense, constructing a Grindr profile is not only done when users open/access the app. Instead, this process is becoming embedded in everyday practices that requires careful consideration of gendered performances. What constitutes ‘good’ performances of rugged masculinities is being learned to be a successful Grindr profile.

In this diary extract, Lewis speaks about the ways he uses language, and stylisations of his face/head alongside these pictures of him in different places in order to deter ‘camp’ men from speaking to him. This is also use to simultaneously attract ‘manly’ men:

... On my profile text I generally do make an effort to say things like “I like manly men” and “not into camp”. Because it’s true, it’s not my thing, I’m not really attracted to ‘fem’ boys ... generally I prefer nice strong jawlines, good stubble or a beard, not too well kept ... I try to portray myself that way too. I don’t make too much effort preening wise anyway and especially not if I’m taking a photo of myself.

I want to attract more rugged men, so my hair can be a mess and I often don't bother keeping my beard very tidy (I think I look a bit too camp if I over trim and tidy anyway) (Lewis, 26, gay, white British).

For Lewis, certain forms of embodied regulation are interwoven with both femininity and vanity, and these are traits that he does not find attractive. He draws on discourses that normalise women's investment in vanity, rendering men's vanity abject (Norman, 2011). However, by stating 'everyone wants to look good' he is suggesting that there are certain embodied regulating practices that he actively engages in to produce a specific style – a style that appears unregulated. It is the style and the characteristics associated with being 'too perfect' and non-rugged that he finds a turn off. Although he suggests it is not necessarily only due to the associations with femininity, he frequently returns to ideas that preening is something that women did/do and he 'doesn't fancy girls'. Despite arguing that it is about style and being 'too perfect', vanity is also entangled with 'bad' embodied performances of masculinity and femininity.

Analysis of gay men's dating profiles on the site match.com shows that gay men have more to gain from establishing themselves as masculine as they have traditionally been associated with being non-masculine (Walker and Eller, 2016). Walker and Eller (2016) argue that gay men who wish to find other men who have the same claims to masculine capital do not tend to seek to disrupt masculinities placed in patriarchal hierarchies. Lewis' lived experience provides more empirical support for Walker and Eller's (2016) analysis of dating profiles, as Lewis uses specific language in order to attract particular men. However, the work involving match.com does not explore the ways pictures can be intertwined within these linguistic forms of performance and regulation. In the case of Lewis, language is used to describe the type of man he is looking for, in collaboration with embodied characteristics of 'rugged' manliness (Payne,

2007; Walker and Eller, 2016). Building on this work, language can act as a reflection of the parts of the body that are the focus of images, and the ways those parts are regulated and stylised. Furthermore, combining lifestyle masculinities alongside effeminophobic language is a strategy used to attract particular users, enabling the consumption of their bodies. Effeminophobia often emerges in reactions to men who do not perform ideal ‘manly’ masculinities. It works to regulate men who may perform and embody traits associated with femininities (Pascoe, 2005; Richardson, 2009). Richardson (2009) argues that effeminophobia is often conflated with homophobia when recognising forms of gendered regulation that some men are subject to. For men who use Grindr, the production, regulation and consumption of bodies is not a simple transaction, but involves power dynamics that are embedded in discourses that shape gender, sexualities and bodies.

Lifestyle masculinities emerge when men who use Grindr seek to assemble a digital body that highlights particular dimension of their spatial lives. Embodied regulatory practices that can shape men’s material bodies – for example, size and shape and performance of ‘manliness’ – work through the productions of masculinities in the Grindr grid. The ways that profiles are constructed are also becoming increasingly embedded into everyday leisure practices. Doing Grindr is not simply performed when users open the app. Instead, men who use Grindr engage in Grindr practices when they occupy multiple different spaces and engage in non-sexual activities. Moving through different offline spaces – and the movements of taking pictures – can be part of Grindr profile practices. Lifestyle masculinities in profiles are an assemblage of bodies, senses, and places that brought into arrangement by a desire to be attractive men on the screen. Therefore, this is not a solitary process. Instead, it is done in relation with Grindr users on the ‘other side’ of the screen. In the next section, I explore the practice of looking at

Grindr profiles to understand how these assemblages work for men on the other side of the screen.

4.6 ‘a picture that you see’: complicating desire

The production of masculinities and digital bodies in and across Grindr is a relational process that involves men on the other side of the screen. Digital bodies on the Grindr grid are looked at by other men who decide if they will speak, or respond, to particular users. The ways these decisions are made are shaped by the ways Grindr users understand men, masculinity, sexuality and desire. In this section, I explore how desire shapes how men who use Grindr look at profiles. Men who use Grindr are often looking for men who fit into ‘lifestyles’ and/or someone they find sexually attractive. However, the idea that Grindr users are always looking for the most desirable qualities is complicated by proximity and distance. In other words, qualities that are deemed most desirable are sometimes ‘sacrificed’ if they see a profile that is geographically close to their own on the grid. Therefore, I argue that looking on the Grindr grid involves a negotiation of masculinity, sexuality and desire that is (re)shaped by proximity and distance.

In the following two examples, Nathaniel and Marcus speak about not wanting to speak to Asian men (Nathaniel) and men over 38 years old (Marcus):

Nathaniel: ethnicity matters, I’m going to sound horribly racist, but that matters ... I’m just not attracted to certain ethnic groups, I know that sounds awful.

Carl: any groups in particular?

Nathaniel: none that I feel like I could mention [Nathaniel glances sideways to a table of young South East Asian men and women].

Carl: So, do you usually speak to white people?

Nathaniel: probably, maybe not all white people, I find like say European people more attractive, probably because they are darker skinned, darker hair, and I like that.

Certain ethnicities I find attractive, but others. I’m not too fussed, like I’d still

obviously speak to them, but in terms of going on a date or take things further, I don't think I would want too (Nathaniel, 22, white British).

Marcus: I would prioritise people kind of ages range like probably 21, 22 up to about 38 something like that, so age is important to me ... 38 just because, I don't know, partly it's socially, I wouldn't want to date someone who is more, a closer age to my parents than to me. And also I think when you kind over your 40s I think it's kind of rare for me to find that person attractive, so generally kind of 35, 38 I would say (Marcus, 25, white British).

Nathaniel was part of a minority of participants who openly expressed a disinterest around particular races. He clarifies that he usually does not actively speak with Grindr users that he can recognise as Asian. For Nathaniel, this is about not wanting to go on dates or develop relationships with Asian men. Here, discourses that shape Asian men as 'less' desirable bodies are at play (Caluya, 2008). Like many participants under the age of 30, Marcus has restrictions around age. Marcus has a desire to find and interact with men closer to his age. Ageism is very prevalent amongst gay men, with younger bodies being the most desirable (Casey, 2007). Discourses that would construct older bodies as unattractive shapes how men on Grindr are looked at. Marcus highlights how a user closer to his parent's age is unattractive socially, understanding them to be out of his aged 'lifestyle'.

For Nathaniel and Marcus, the desire to *not* touch particular bodies shapes how they look through Grindr. For example, Nathaniel would not want to take 'things' further and Marcus would unlikely find someone in their 40s attractive. The ways men who use Grindr look at profiles and make decisions is shaped by their desire to 'move' encounters in offline spaces – for example, bars, cafes, homes, and bedrooms. Therefore, looking is always being shaped by multiple spaces, not just the space of Grindr or the space that material bodies and phones are located and assembled in. In this sense, looking at screens

is multisensory – it involves an imagination of touches, sounds and smells of encountered bodies. In chapter five, I discuss the visceral imaginations of embodied encounters and in chapter six I explore the haptic geographies of offline Grindr encounters.

The imagination of touch is at work when men look through Grindr. In the next example, Zack is talking about how Grindr prompts users to make judgements about embodied masculinities based on the picture that can be seen on the grid and in the profile. In his interview, he reflects on the extent that visual profiles can fully ‘represent’ this:

Zack: but on Grindr you’re purely judging somebody on a picture that you see and you’re suddenly making a snap shot decision are ‘they camp or not, am I going to message or not’. But I suppose in reality you don’t know if they are feminine in their voice, their physique, the way they move, the colour of their hair, if they have their nails manicured, you know (Zack, 32, British Pakistani).

The process of scrolling and looking through the Grindr grid involves thinking about what can be seen in the pictures. For Zack, he is making judgements based on the ways he understands what it means to be manly. He highlights that there are certain characteristics that Grindr is unable to communicate through the visual screen. Sounds and movements are unable to be seen or heard, and body shape and size and body parts (for example, hands) can be ‘left out’ of pictures. Therefore, men who use Grindr have to make snap judgements on what skin and flesh is visible. This involves thinking about ‘other’ non-human elements to think if it is ‘worth’ the time.

Fleshy bodies and identity positions do not fully shape how desire is experienced. There are multiple elements that assemble desire when men look through the Grindr grid. The proximity of a user can (re)shape how men look through profiles – reorientating desire. The quotes from Toby and Joe highlight how blank profiles, that are proximate to themselves, create a sense of curiosity:

Toby: I think, i'm curious to see who's close by, curious to see who's new ... I find sometimes the people behind the blank profile can be quite normal, just like anyone else with a photo (Toby, 23, white British)

Joe: I would prefer them to have a picture at least, but as I say I still chat to blank profiles, but I wouldn't approach them unless they were the closest person [to me]. And this is the weird thing, cos sometimes some blank profiles come between me and my flatmate [the profile is geographically situated between his and his housemates on the grid – also a Grindr user – when they are both using it at home], when we're like literally rooms apart, and it's like who are these [people]. And it's because they're so close I ask 'hi, who are you?' Just out of curiosity, see who they are, if they're a neighbour or anything, just for general chit chat. But other times if they've got a profile picture... again I can't really put my finger on it, just who catches my eye, but I can't really say what that it, because it changes, if someone catches my eye, they catch me eye (Joe, 24, white British).

The proximity and distance of profiles provokes intrigue in the bodies of some Grindr users. The physical closeness and lack of visibility produces curiosity. Curiosity can often lead people to investigate things, places, objects and bodies that they are unfamiliar with (Phillips, 2016). Curiosity is not simply an internal bodily feeling, but it emerges through our engagement with spaces, bodies and objects (Ahmed, 2000; Phillips, 2016). Bodies, objects and things can also become unfamiliar when people encounter them in places that they feel they do not belong (Ahmed, 2000). Unfamiliarity can become problematic in these instances, but also be about a curiosity about what is unknown (Jackson *et al.*, 2017). Curiosities can enable bodies and places – that are unfamiliar or different – to be encountered and may have transformative potential as they make us think and experience in different ways (see Phillips and Evans, 2016 for example). For men who use Grindr there is a desire to 'know' who is unfamiliar in the places (for example, homes and local streets) that they are familiar with. Something unfamiliar on Grindr, then, sparks interest that can lead to conversations.

At the same time, there is also sense that these men wish to keep these blank profiles at a distance. Proximity and distance become complicated by digital technologies and online space (Urry, 2002). For example, keeping in touch with someone far away or being able to see picture of faraway places on screens that are close to bodies. Whilst Toby and Joe are curious, they also wish to find out who these people are without encountering their material bodies. Therefore, they attempt to keep them at a distance and control how they encounter – and investigate – these Grindr profiles (see chapter five for discussions on control, bodies and screen and public/private space). Looking through Grindr is not simply guided by erotic, romantic and sexual desires. Instead, multiple forms of affective desires – that constantly emerge in and between bodies, spaces and technologies – shape how Grindr users look. Looking through Grindr is not simple. The affective energies that shapes looking are unstable and are not always neatly identified. As Joe says, ‘I can’t really put my finger on it’.

Joe and Toby say that they would not necessarily meet people who are close by – it was only curiosity. This is not the case of all participants. In this next example, I highlight how proximity (re)works desire for bodies that are sometimes deemed undesirable. If a user appears to be a short walk or drive away, particular ‘desired’ characteristics (for example, age and body size and shape) are not always foregrounded. In this sense, convenience, proximity and time work together shape how men on Grindr look when particular bodily intensities emerge. For example, James says:

James: Occasionally, about a month ago, I slipped out about half 11, the guy was just around the corner, I went to his, sorted him out. But yeah, it depends on the guy and the situation ... The thing is, I’m not really into older guys, couple of years older, but you tend to find the older guys, are the most, you know how I said most of time you’re not gonna meet guys, you’re just gonna flirt with them, well the older guys they just want it, genuinely. So this guy was 34/35 (James, 26, white British).

James highlights how these interactions are context dependent. Multiple factors are considered when deciding if a conversation will ‘move’ into offline space. Time, bodies, touch, distance, proximity and sexual arousal all work to shape how Grindr users choose profiles to interact with. In this example, it is more than relational masculinities that shape offline sexual interactions - proximity, distance and time shape desire. For James, the closeness of this user was central to seeing his profile whilst he was using Grindr as night in his home. In addition, James has come to learn that older men on Grindr ‘want it’. Therefore, he feels that older men will be more willing to meet. If the interactions are understood to be ‘worth’ men’s time and effort, then they are more likely to move into offline spaces. In this sense, peoples ‘types’ can often become less important if other men are ‘close by’ and willing to meet offline. In these instances, looking through Grindr involves a negotiation of time, distance, proximity, skin and flesh that is complicated by, and complicates, desire. In other words, the desire to be sexually satisfied (re)works what constitutes attractive Grindr users. At the same time, what constitutes an attractive Grindr user (re)works how desire is experienced by men. Thinking about the different ways that men look through Grindr – and the affective capacities of this practice – reveals moment where dominant gendered discourses are challenged and subverted (Brown, 2008; Caluya, 2008).

In this section, I have highlighted how looking through Grindr is guided by multiple feelings, desires and affects. Looking is not always a simple practice, but it involves a negotiation of bodies, skin, pictures, and words. Therefore, looking is about the potential of future movements (Pinney, 2008; Pink, 2011). This negotiation is shaped by discursive understandings of gender, sexuality, race and age alongside proximity and distance that shape, and are shaped, by desire. In the following section, I highlight how looking can be an emotional and visceral practice that can regulate Grindr users.

4.7 ‘being camp can fucking suck sometimes’: shame and masculinities

In the previous sections, I explored how material regulation of masculinities and sexualities shapes gazing and constructing Grindr profiles. In this section, I highlight how peoples Grindr profiles can regulate other men’s gender performances. I specifically focus on the regulation of ‘camp’ men, through phrases such as ‘no camp, no fem’. This regulation produces particular reactions in other men who use Grindr. Not many men I interviewed understood themselves to be camp, effeminate or non-masculine. The participants that did experienced visceral responses towards such profiles. Analysis of these responses revealed that men experienced shame towards their embodied gender due to regulations enacted by other users:

Carl: why don’t you like seeing straight acting?

Jamie: it’s such a level of bullshit I can’t quite comprehend, cos it’s also when they say, that camp-phobia thing of ‘not camp, I don’t want anyone camp’, it’s like, I don’t understand their issue with people who are, maybe I’m just taking a bit personally coz I know that I’m camp anyway, I’ve come to terms with and it’s fine, but I get that you’re into a certain type of personality, camp isn’t just one stereotype of, if someone’s camp it’s just a tiny part of their being... And I don’t know anyone who is ‘straight acting’, that says ‘you know what I really want to be camp?’, it always seems to be like a superior thing, whereas there are lots of camp people that I know that, you just think, ‘I’m sick of being camp, I’d much rather be able to walk down the road and be unblockable as far as homo is concerned’. I don’t know where I was going with that, basically being camp can fucking suck sometimes, and straight acting men don’t have to deal with this shit, so maybe it’s just my own personal loathing for the straight acting man (Jamie, 21, white British).

Jamie has a very visceral reaction to the phrases ‘straight acting’ and ‘not into camp’. He responds with a mix of anger, frustration, loathing, sadness and shame. Shame is an embodied emotion that leads to particular physiological responses (e.g. blushing and sweating), at the same time it is saturated with social, political and cultural meaning

(Probyn, 2005). Munt (1998) argues that shame and pride are contingent on one another, and Probyn (2000) claims that shame comes into being as a consequence of pride. Shame and pride have a long history in queer and LGBT politics (Munt, 1998; Johnston, 2005; Halperin and Traub, 2009a). Academics in geography and beyond have explored shame to understand how non-heterosexual bodies mobilise pride (Munt, 1998; Johnston, 2005; Halperin and Traub, 2009b). Within spaces, movements and feelings of LGBT and queer 'pride', certain bodies are not always enabled to feel proud, but come to feel shame. For example, non-white, working class or disabled gay men (Moon, 2009).

Jamie's feelings of anger, sadness and shame come into being when he is confronted with phrases such as 'not into camp'. The way bodies experience shame is not a spatially even experience – it is produced and felt as we move through different places at different times (Probyn, 2000; Waitt and Warren, 2008; Waitt and Clifton, 2013).

Although Jamie had 'dealt' with being camp, as he moves through the Grindr grid, particular online bodies and profiles illicit this reaction. The digital spaces that mediate bodies can have viscerally affect bodies. It is through his gender performance that Jamie comes to feel this. Work by Waitt and Clifton (2013; 2015) with men who bodyboard and men who play football have highlighted that men can come to feel shame when they do not achieve expected performances of masculinity in their respective sporting contexts. Although there are no 'expected' performances of masculinity on Grindr, camp forms of masculinity become shamed due to broader heteronormative discourses that celebrate 'manly' men (Butler, 1990; Connell, 1995). Jamie's shame also manifests itself through a frustration towards 'straight acting' men, as he wishes that he could not be identified as gay as he moves through different spaces. As Probyn (2004, p. 345) has argued shame can be 'the body calling out its hopes and discomfort because it feels out of place. This shame is the body saying that it cannot fit in although it desperately wants to'. Following

this idea, the shame that Jamie feels is relational to the desire to be non-camp and to not be easily read as gay. These dimensions of shame work their way through Grindr, across screens and in and through bodies, producing regulations on gendered bodies that create a sense of being ‘out of place’.

Productions and regulations of masculinities on Grindr are entangled in the politics of shame. Exploring how bodies feel and respond to shame has revealed how technologies and bodies are entangled in emotional and visceral politics. The screen that mediates the words/images result in viscerally embodied emotions, highlighting the impact of digital space to the everyday lives of gay men. These emotions and affects shape the ways Grindr users work to assemble their profiles and sexual identities as they have to learn to negotiate marginalising discourses. In the next section, I highlight how ‘older’ and non-white men have to negotiate their skins when they attempt to construct desirable Grindr profiles.

4.8 ‘that’s not my selling point: negotiating skin

Men who use Grindr learn ways to try to be desirable on the grid. This involves carefully negotiating their bodies – particularly skin – to ‘select’ their most ‘desirable’ traits. In this section, I highlight how ‘marginalised’ bodies on Grindr have to learn strategies to subvert oppressive discourses. I explore how age and race have to be negotiated in profiles to produce desirable digital bodies in a way that enables hypersexual masculinity to emerge. I argue that different men have to learn different skill sets to be able to be more comfortable using Grindr.

The seven participants I spoke to that were over the age of 35 often spoke about being too ‘old’ in ‘gay years’. This would prompt them to use strategies to resist ageist discourses. One strategy was to leave the ‘age’ category blank, whilst also using pictures

of their exposed torsos. Age is not the only aspect of identity that people sometimes chose not to display publicly, but it was one that people chose not to disclose to have more desire across the grid. Gareth and John talk about not using age and putting a shirtless picture on their profile. Gareth is speaking about changing his picture after a friend had advised him that he would get more men interested in him:

Gareth: So I put my topless picture on, like on an evening, woke up the next day, loads of messages, standard. Got me tits out [out] for the lads like. And I don't have me age on there, as you probably noticed, again cos age is, I'm dead in gay years, and it is, kind of, it's quite sad that people look at the number and they write you off. And I've chatted to guys ... we've talked about meeting up, we've liked the interaction, we exchanged pictures, we like what we see, 'oh and by the way, how old are you?' 'I'm 42', 'oh, okay, sorry a bit old for me.' (Gareth, 42, white British, A&E nurse/actor)

John: People don't declare their age, I didn't put my age, because it's a taboo in the gay world. So at first very discreet, very limited, no photograph, then I changed the photograph, then I put a more risqué photograph on which got a lot more responses, which obviously tells you a lot about what it's for, so it does change, but as and when, as and when.

Carl: what did you change your photo from and to?

John: well it was from nothing to a picture of my torso from my chin down to about here [hands are placed beneath his chin to about his waistline] (John, 50, white British, special needs support).

Ageist discourses can construct 'older' gay men as 'dead in gay year'. Gareth and John are seeking to reduce the stigma attached to their aged body. Ageism works throughout particular commercialised gay and queer spaces in a way that makes 'older' bodies feel unwelcome, unwanted and undesirable (Binnie and Skeggs, 2004; Casey, 2007). Casey (2007) points to the ways that the 'gay scene' in Newcastle is unwelcome to 'older' bodies through its commercialisation and focus on youth and 'younger' bodies – they become the 'queer unwanted'. The otherness that is attached to 'older' gay men's bodies

is not exclusive to spaces of the night-time economy, but seeps into digital technologies to regulate sexual and gendered identities (Downing, 2013).

I argue that the option to ‘hide’ the numerical value of age is used as a form of resistance to the ageist discourses that celebrate ‘young’ bodies. For those men that may be deemed ‘too old’ for non-heterosexual dating apps, temporarily removing barriers of ‘otherness’ can also be achieved by focusing on the skin. Gareth chose to use a picture of his shirtless body in a de-contextualised surrounding, as an attempt to centre his fleshy materiality over numerical age. Despite being policed by normative ideas of gender and age, individuals have the agency to manage and negotiate these power dynamics in and through place and time (Tarrant 2014). Research with men in the USA and Finland has highlighted how middle-aged men engage in embodied practices such as physical exercise and controlled diets (Ojala *et al.*, 2016) and cosmetic surgery (Kinnunen, 2010), as a means to ‘slow down’ or resist bodily ageing processes to appear younger.

By showing flesh, Gareth and John attempt to draw more attention to unclothed skin, (re)producing a sexualised body, one that could be more ‘touchable’ than a body that is identifiable through age. Dimensions of lifestyle masculinities (age) come to be dropped here. Pictures that reflect a part of men’s lifestyles may also give an indication of age, therefore they also come to be ‘left out’ of pictures. Digital spaces have the ability to enable men to (re)make and play with their ageing sexualities and masculinities (Frohlick and Migliardi, 2011), in a way that reduces attention on ageing lifestyles, emphasising sexualities. Creating such ambivalence around age can seek to undermine ageist discourses as pictures of exposed body parts attempt to shift importance of quantitative age. At the same time, as Gareth highlights, the importance of numerical age is foregrounded by other Grindr users in conversations. Therefore, subversions may only be temporary as other users may come to replace the importance of numerical age. Here, age

is reassembled through conversations, and becomes stuck to the bodies of ‘older’ men who use Grindr.

Although, these strategies may seek to challenge everyday ageism, they can simultaneously reinforce the value of youth and young bodies in contemporary western societies (Kinnunen, 2010; Ojala *et al.*, 2016). Regulatory practices that shape Newcastle’s ‘gay scene’ are (re)produced on Grindr, shaping the ways ‘older’ men construct their digital bodies. These strategies may undermine, but do not necessarily destabilise, ageism. The (re)construction of material bodies – digital and fleshy – through the ideologies of age can seek to stabilise the desirability society places on youthfulness (Kinnunen, 2010). Older bodies must find ways to negotiate the ageism that works through the Grindr, (re)making their sexualities to avoid being the ‘queer unwanted’ (Casey, 2007). Therefore, the ways we (re)make bodies digital is constantly being learned as we negotiate embodied regulations.

Learning to negotiate marginalising discourses also has to be practiced by some non-white participants. Queer urban spaces often come to be dominated by white bodies, excluding non-white others (Caluya, 2008; Ruez, 2016). Newcastle is a predominantly ‘white’ city, with gay and queer spaces also being dominated by white bodies (Casey, 2007). Alex, who does not have a picture, talks about how he attempts to negotiate being an Asian man on Grindr:

Alex: I mean on Grindr people tend to show what’s their strength, what’s their selling point, something like that. For example if you have a fit body you will show your body, if you have a good looking face you will show your face. Yeah, I mean I don’t need to sell my Asian things because people don’t think that it’s interesting. It’s just race, I’m Asian, if you like that’s okay, if you don’t that’s okay...

Carl: what is your selling point?

Alex: my selling point is, I think in Newcastle, because I live in city centre, it's easier for people to, it's easier to meet people in city centre, and it's relatively close to the bus station, the main road, and also like I have my own place (Alex, 24, Asian)

Alex is attempting to confuse identities as a way to open up more potential conversations/encounters with other men who use Grindr. By not using a picture, Alex is removing the importance of skin. Ahmed (2002, p. 564) argues that the skin is the 'locus of social differentiation'. Skin – and its varying tones – is also a central marker of race and ethnicity (Jablonski, 2006) where 'power is inscribed as well as resisted' (Price, 2013, p. 579). Swanton (2010) urges geographers to pay attention to what race *does* when bodies, objects and places are encountered. Alex has come to understand what the (in)visibility of his skin on Grindr can 'do'. On Grindr, race has the potential to shape the desire of men on the other side of the screen. Using technology and screens, Alex attempts to reorientate the distance between bodies can be reaffirmed through looking and staring (Price, 2013). Therefore, Alex attempts to resist and negotiate the ways race emerges on/through his skin by not using a picture – something that this technology can enable *temporarily*.

This negotiation also involves foregrounding a 'selling point'. Alex understands his location is what will attract men to his profile. On his profile, he states that he is in the 'city centre' – he tells people in conversations that he has his 'own place'. Alex is attempting to use his location to 'sell' his digital body. In this sense, his profile does not exist independently of Newcastle city centre. Instead, Alex is attempting to *place* his profile in the networks of roads and transport stations. The placing of his profile is used to produce a digital body that other Grindr users can conveniently 'access' offline. It is through these notions of convenience that a hypersexualised profile emerges. Alex is hoping to attract other men through his geographical location, meaning his profile is

assembled through urban infrastructure, desire, bodies and technologies. Alex has learned this negotiation over time.

Learning to negotiate race through Grindr and profiles does not necessarily subvert oppressive discourses. As I mentioned earlier in this section, in conversations, men ask for ‘more details’ about identities. Grindr users ask for pictures of bodies, skin and faces. Both Alex and Ben say that they feel that their Asian bodies sometimes prevents men from continuing conversation with them:

Alex: some people like, some people just ‘hey, sorry not my type’, and I was just showing, not close up picture, like a [frames face]. Maybe he knows that I’m Asian and he doesn’t really interested (Alex, 24, Asian).

Ben: On Grindr, it has occasionally, you’ll have the ‘I’m not into Asian guys’ (Ben, 33, Pacific Islander).

Assembling profiles that subvert race and racism are sometimes only temporary challenges. These examples highlight how categories of race are (re)placed onto bodies and skin. The visibility of skin-on-screens and words in conversations assemble to produce non-white men who use Grindr as undesirable users. Interacting across phones and the physical distance between users enables narratives of race to emerge in the context of sexuality and desire.

Swanton (2010) argues that race and racism emerge, and are made meaningful, through assemblages of materials (bodies, technologies and things) and expressive forces (affects, emotions and ideas). For Swanton (2010, pp. 460-461) race ...

...is best captured by the connective, intense, spatiality of an assemblage ... whose components include skin colour, segregation, religion, colonialism, travel, laws, cultural habits, sexual desire, language, migration, repudiated racial science, and fear. And the inventive, devious nature of race arises as these elements are variously

enrolled in messy, heterogeneous processes of differentiation in a particular encounter.

For men who use Grindr, race emerges, becomes meaningful and is negotiated through assemblages of users, skin, profiles, pictures, words, locations that are brought together through desires that operate in Newcastle. For Alex, his Asian skin has ‘no place’ on Grindr as means to enact non-heterosexuality. Instead, convenience, location and place are brought into working arrangement by desire. Race and racist discourses prompts non-white Grindr users to negotiate their own skin as a way to *feel* their sexualities. In other words, Asian men have to learn strategies to ‘play down’ their racialised bodies that enable them to embody sexual desires in Newcastle.

Hypersexualised masculinities can emerge through resistances to regulatory processes. However, as these examples highlights, subversions may only be temporary as other users may come to (re)place importance on numerical age and racial categories during conversations, further seeking to fix numerical age and race to bodies (Caluya, 2008; Chen, 2015). Therefore, age, race, sexuality and gender must be constantly negotiated through internet dating and hook ups (Frohlick and Migliardi, 2011). Furthermore, ‘older’ and non-white men who use Grindr have to learn different skill sets when they construct profiles as a way to attempt to subvert the racist and ageist discourses. The production of digital masculinities are dependent on the interactions of online/offline space. Online and offline spaces and bodies are folded in, in ways that shapes experiences of gender and sexualities on the Grindr grid – the ways bodies become digital is assembled by offline practices, discourses and embodiments. In the final section, I conclude by highlighting how an embodied and multisensory approach to Grindr profiles enhances understandings of the experiences of digital profiles.

4.9 Conclusions

This chapter has examined how Grindr profiles are entangled with Grindr users' material lives. The practices of constructing and looking at Grindr profiles are shaped by different regulatory discourses that shape men's material lives. In chapter three, I argued that using Grindr – as a digital technology – is shaped by ideas of respectable masculinity and sexual citizenship. In this chapter, I argue that men are constantly negotiating regulatory discourses – that shape understandings of age, gender, sexuality, race and body size and shape – through their skins, bodies, flesh, distances and proximities in Grindr profiles. This negotiation requires specific skills and knowledge that are embedded in the places Grindr is used in (Newcastle). These skills are usually learned over time. In this sense, Grindr profiles are embedded in complex assemblages of online and offline objects, bodies and places that are brought into working arrangements through a desire to touch/be touched. To conclude, I highlight how a multisensory approach to digital and visual profiles enhances understandings of using Grindr.

Exploring the practice of taking and selecting profile pictures demonstrates how men who use Grindr produce two common forms of masculinities - hypersexualised and lifestyle. Hypersexualised masculinities emerge through a focus on the skin, flesh and the location of sexual practices. Lifestyle masculinities are often more spatially 'recognisable' as they are produced through objects, places and practices that attempt to give a 'fuller' understanding of men's lives. Exploring the motivations of taking and selecting pictures highlight how pictures – produced through senses and movements – do not neatly map onto the cultural meaning they are given in digital space. Furthermore, these relational categories are not mutually exclusive – they intertwine, as men negotiate regulation when they construct their profiles. To negotiate regulatory discourses, men who use Grindr have to learn different skill sets when constructing profiles. These skill

sets often depend on the emerging identities that become meaningful in Grindr assemblages. Men who use Grindr think carefully about profiles. Questions around the ways bodies look, what parts of bodies can be seen and the locations of bodies are considered. Men do not necessarily only allow themselves to be passive ‘objects’ of consumption, but also actively produce masculinities that enable them to attract and consume particular men – to touch other men.

Exploring the practice of gazing at the Grindr grid revealed how regulatory discourses shape the ways men look – and imagine the potential of touch. Furthermore, it highlights how some men are viscerally affected by looking. Age, body size and skin are important in the formation of desire and sexualities for men who use Grindr in Newcastle. At the same time, it also highlights how proximity and distance can (re)work embodied desires that can be shaped by regulatory discourses. Here, the potential of future movements and experiences of touching material bodies shapes how men look at profiles. What is convenient can become desirable as users learn that they will not be able to meet all ‘desirable’ men. Therefore, desire is assembled through multiple elements that are not internal to bodies, but work to constitute subjectivities. In this sense, proximities, distances and place are reorientating men who use Grindr. It is through the assembling of online and offline spaces, identities and materialities that bodies and identities are (re)constructed, (re)configured and (re)created. Therefore, instabilities of online/offline dichotomies require men who use Grindr to negotiate power dynamics and learn ways of producing desirable digital bodies in their profiles. In the following chapter, I continue to explore the power dynamics that emerge in Grindr as a digital space. However, I focus on conversation spaces. Continuing with assemblage thinking, I take a visceral geographic approach to explore how bodies *feel* when engaging in erotic Grindr conversations. I do so to reveal how skill sets are required for this practice to be done comfortably. This

enables an understanding of the multiplicities and fragilities of gendered and sexual subjectivities.

Chapter Five: ‘Hey man, how’re you?’: Visceral Geographies, Masculinities and Grindr Conversations.

5.1 Introduction

Grindr is commonly known as an app used to hook up. However, the men who use it do not always meet each other ‘in the flesh’. In this chapter, I explore the sexual and erotic conversations that men have with each other through Grindr. The conversations I am describing usually take when men are alone in their homes. This practice is made up by several elements, including; descriptions of sexual acts, pictures of naked bodies/body parts and semen; solitary masturbation; actual semen; and pre-ejaculate. I argue that for this sexual practice to *become* comfortable, users are required to learn a set of skills and embodied knowledge. However, different people learn different ways of doing Grindr. Learning how to negotiate Grindr can mean learning how to manage, mediate and negotiate bodies, histories, memories, desires and identities. Through this, I highlight how men are being reorientated through Grindr assemblages, revealing how sexual and masculine subjectivities are multiple, unstable and ambiguous. In the previous chapter, I argued that embodied knowledge is required to negotiate the Grindr profile grid. I highlighted how this negotiation is assembled through skins, bodies, flesh, categories, distances and proximities. This chapter explores how assemblages of Grindr conversations – assemblages of phones, bodies, words and pictures – have to be negotiated by the men who use them. I engage with visceral geographies to think through these practices. This approach enables an exploration of spaces inside bodies and how they relate to the spaces that they are always located in, alongside the messy bodily fluids that constitute subjectivities (Probyn, 2000). Therefore, there is an appreciation of the moments when materiality, discourse, and physiology fold into one another in a way that makes social life meaningful. I also build on ideas of desire-as-affect to think about sex

and sexuality as messy, unstable and unpredictable (Lim, 2007; Brown, 2008). I bring together work on viscerality with geographical work on sexuality to enhance understandings of desire, sex and bodies. I highlight how sexuality and masculinity emerge through physiological meanings of arousal and ejaculation. I also expose how semen is assembled in different ways by different men. In Grindr assemblages, semen has multiple meanings that users negotiate in different ways. How men manage conversations, arousal and desire highlights how this practice requires embodied knowledge.

In the previous chapter, I explored the embodied practices of constructing profiles and looking through the Grindr grid. This chapter focuses on the moments when users begin conversations with one another. Grindr users are able to start a private conversation with any other user that they can see in their 'grid'. Although users can chat with as many men as they wish, they can only do so on a one-to-one basis and are unable to have 'group' conversations. To be aroused and to arouse other users, men use descriptions of the sexual and erotic acts that they *could* do to each other. They also provide pictures of their skin, body parts, flesh and bodily fluids. The practice is entangled in the imagination of touch, whilst men touch themselves. I focus on these conversations as it contradicts the dominant narrative that suggests Grindr is predominantly used for offline hook ups. I explore how this practice enables men to consume other men's bodies through pictures and words, but does not allow fleshy material bodies to enter the home. Therefore, I highlight how men attempt to exercise control over 'how much' of other bodies are permitted to enter homes. In this sense, I highlight how public/private dichotomies are attempted to be stabilised, but are simultaneously disrupted.

To do this, I review literature in visceral geographies to highlight how I think about the inside/outside of the body and the relational experiences with space and place.

Following this, I discuss three themes of analysis. Building on ideas of horniness and boredom in chapter three, I explore how these moods prompt men to use Grindr for erotic conversations. I argue that the use of Grindr conversations to mediate different intensities is used to control how ‘much’ of a ‘stranger’s’ body is invited into private spaces – usually the home. The second focuses on the semen, ejaculation and conversations. I think through the interactions of discourses, materiality and physiology to understand how particular versions of masculinity become meaningful and desirable. The fourth section is concerned with conversations that result in disappointment for some users. I argue that to feel comfortable negotiating Grindr conversations, users are required to learn a set of embodied knowledge. To conclude, I highlight how a visceral approach to the digital can enable an understanding of how experiences of online spaces are entangled in the corporeal, but also how this enables gender and sexuality to emerge in different ways.

5.2 Visceral geographies

The visceral has an appreciation of the moments when discourse and materiality combine and co-mingle (Probyn, 2000). There is an appreciation of the inside and the outside of bodies and its location in space (Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy, 2010b). Feminist geographers have paid explicit attention to the visceral in recent years to argue that emotion, bodily sensations and materiality are legitimate sources of knowledge (Colls, 2007; Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy, 2008; Longhurst *et al.*, 2009; Waitt, 2013). Some work on emotion, affect and bodies takes a non-representational perspective (see Thrift, 1996 for example), however some feminist scholars have been critical of this research for taking a masculinist approach to bodies, affect and embodiment (Probyn, 2000; Thien, 2005a) (see section 1.1). Thinking about bodies, and their capacity to affect

and be affected, as pre-cognitive, creates little space for the appreciation of power. The visceral offers a way to understand *both* materiality and discourse, and therefore how affect and emotion are constituted through corporeal bodies, language, and meaning.

Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) ideas around assemblage and affect have been influential in visceral thinking. They suggest bodies, materials, objects, emotions and affects are in constant relations with one another. Bodies and materials assemble into working arrangements through emotions and affects in ways that work to 'keep' assemblages functioning. Probyn's (2000; 2004) work on shame and eating draws on Deleuze and Guattari (1987). I build on Probyn's (2000; 2004) ideas of the visceral. Probyn's (2000) work argues that the visceral is the 'gut' feelings and reactions that people experience in the world around them. Thinking about gut feelings is a way to think about how bodily intensities come into being when interacting with the material and discursive. Embodied subjectivities, for Probyn (2003), also emerge through the visceral, sensual and emotional. Probyn (2000) draws on assemblage thinking (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) to argue that moments of intensities emerge through assemblages of bodies, technologies and objects that are lubricated and assembled by emotions, desires, feelings and affects. These assemblages and the forces between them are shaped by, and shape, spatial, cultural, social and historical contexts. Probyn's work has, therefore, been useful to geographers' thinking about how the visceral comes into being through relations with space and place – visceral experiences are constantly being (re)shaped by and are (re)shaping space.

Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy (2008) were some of the first to bring the visceral into feminist geographies. Drawing on the work of Probyn (2000), Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy (2008) argue that the visceral can enhance understandings of the ways people become 'mobilised' or 'moved' by politics. In this sense, the visceral can open up

understandings of how the sensual and feeling body is shaped by broader socio-political processes. Through research with Slow Food (an international organisation that aims to challenge and resist fast food corporations homogenising foods), they argue that eating food is not a universal practice – food feels differently in different bodies. Eating food is a visceral act where people allow materials to enter the body, where it produces physiological, chemical and biological responses that is experienced through social forces. The way ‘taste’ is understood is produced through discourses of ‘elitism’ - *how* people taste food is often judged by other people. Therefore, the sensory and physiological experience of taste and food is bound up with social and cultural politics of class. Through their work on Slow Food movements, Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy (2010a) argue that ‘visceral imaginaries’ are produced through eating. Visceral imaginaries are concerned with the ways that ideas, materials and processes become meaningful by the ways bodies *feel* about them. Therefore, how we think and feel about food is entangled in visceral politics.

Food and eating is shaped by fields of power that bring shifting positions of class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity and race into being (Probyn, 2000). Exploring the visceral can enable nuanced and embodied understandings of power relations, and how power (re)shapes everyday experiences of the spaces and places that bodies occupy (Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy, 2010b). Longhurst *et al.* (2009, p. 334) suggest that a visceral geographical approach involves an exploration of:

the sensations, moods, and ways of being that emerge from our sensory engagement with the material and discursive environments in which we live. Paying attention to the visceral means paying attention to the senses – sight, sound, touch, smell and taste – which are a mechanism for visceral arousal.

Drawing on these geographic interventions, the visceral enables a deeper understanding

of bodies that incorporates both everyday messy, fleshy, and emotional alongside the discursive, linguistic and symbolic. It enables an exploration of spaces inside bodies and how they relate to the spaces that they are always located in.

Such visceral approaches have been applied to some research on geographies of gender and sexualities. In a recent study of bodily fluids, Waitt (2013) uses an affective lens to study the sweat of 21 young women living in Wollongong, Australia. He argues the embodied and visceral sensation of sweat is not only embedded in gender, but is understood through its spatiality. The affective sensations of smelliness and stickiness have different meanings across space. For example, sweat at university was understood as undesirable, sweat at the gym would be a sign of hard work, whilst sweat in the home can create a sense of intimacy and stabilise ideas of 'house-as-home'. The use of affective geographies (smell and touch in this context) provide greater nuances to the understandings of bodies. Other research explores how the gendered and sexual nature of sweat also play out in night club spaces, with gay men embracing sweat as their half-naked bodies touch across the dance floor, whereas Trans women avoid 'sweaty' areas due to the threat to femininity (Misgav and Johnston, 2014). In this sense, sweat produces different visceral reactions across different gendered subjectivities. Misgav and Johnston (2014) argue that such body fluids do not necessarily render gender subjectivities fluid. Instead, the discourses around them seek to further embed dichotomies of man/women as the policing of sweat is seen as a strategy to conform to dominant notions of masculinities and femininities. Work on the visceral has begun to highlight the corporeal complexities of gender and sexualities – the multiple ways they can be stabilised, subverted and disrupted. In the following section, I explore work that has applied visceral thinking to work on men and masculinities.

5.3 Visceral approaches to men and masculinities

Visceral approaches have been employed in geographies of masculinities to explore the emotional and sensual lives of men. Early work by Longhurst (2004) attempted to use men's bathroom practices to disrupt dominant ideologies of men's 'hard bodies'. By examining the soft, flowing bodily fluids (excrements) that men are often reluctant for others to see or discuss, Longhurst (2004) highlights how men's 'messy' embodied practices are often constructed as a threat to masculine subjectivities. Examining bodily fluids further, Waitt and Stanes (2015) use a visceral lens to explore sweat and masculinities through 17 interviews with men living in Wollongong, Australia during a summer heat wave. They argue that men's visceral responses of shame, pride and disgust to sweat reveals the multiple ways men experience gender. To understand sweat as assembled, Waitt and Stanes (2015) develop a way of thinking about bodies and sweat through the terms; body-we-have; body-we-are; and body-we-do. The body-we-have refers to the scientific ways of knowing bodies (for example, sweat as a response to temperature or food). The body-we-know is the social meaning that bodies take on as they move through space. The body-we-do approach pays attention to the affective dimensions of sweat, and how physiology and meaning are folded in over to assemble sweat. In this sense, the body-we-do pays attention to the visceral responses to sweat (shame, pride and disgust) and this reveals the ways gendered subjectivities are attempted to be fixed, as well as their instabilities.

For example, the men in Waitt and Stanes (2015) research seek to regulate – through deodorant and hair removal – their sweaty bodies in professional, service-sector settings to not smell 'too good'. Shame would often be used to ensure men did not smell 'too good' at work, which worked to uphold 'intimate bonds of mateship between self-identified 'real' men as blokes/mates' (Waitt and Stanes, 2015, p. 36). However, in spaces

of the night-time economy, strong smelling scents were more normalised as they acted as a symbol for the performance of heterosexual masculinities. This research highlights how sweat – and its capacity to affect how men feel – reveals the ambiguities in gender subjectivities. Longhurst (2000; 2004; 2005) argues that exploring the discourses that give meaning to flesh and bodily fluids (both inside and outside the body), can be pivotal in disrupting dominant discursive constructions. In other words, understanding how bodily materiality comes into cultural being can assist further exploring the moments, times and spaces where gender and sexuality come to be enacted, reaffirmed or destabilised.

Evers (2009) autobiographical work around his surfing practices on the Gold coast, Australia, uses a sensual and visceral approach to masculinities. For Evers (2009), masculinities come into being in contradictory, sensual, emotional and embodied ways through surfing. He uses this lens to challenge ideas that men's engagement with surfing is not always about embodying hegemony (although this plays a part), instead arguing that masculinities are lived through affective assemblages with waves, emotion and bodies - there are moments of shame, pride, fear, disgust, uncertainty, irrationality and intimacy that are relationally experienced with other men, objects and nature.

In this chapter, I seek to build on these ideas to think through the ways the visceral, sensual and emotional shape gender and sexual experiences. This involves thinking about how gendered bodies and subjectivities emerge through such intensities and sensual and spatial experiences (Waitt and Warren, 2008). Waitt and Stanes (2015, p. 31) argue that:

...gender subjectivities emerge within material (bodies, objects, things) and expressive (ideas, affects/emotions, desire) forces that fold or assemble bodies within particular contexts. It is therefore possible to think of assembling masculinity within a context of situated body sizes, shapes, phenotypes, gestures, practices, ideas and

desires while also in combination with the sensual responses to the myriad of material objects.

I pay particular attention to how masculinities and sexualities are brought into being relationally through the embodied knowledge of Grindr. Additionally, I highlight how technologies, screens, bodies and digital spaces interact with desire, eroticism and emotion. I build on this work to think through the ways that technologies (phones, screens and cameras) are central in shaping men's visceral experiences of online spaces – how bodies feel as they engage with screens. I use work on the visceral to think through the ways that arousal and semen – as an assemblage – are experienced through the discourses that govern masculinities and sexualities (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Butler, 1990). In the following sections, I engage with these ideas to discuss and explore men's erotic Grindr conversations. The first section addresses the ways boredom and horniness (as discussed in chapter three) enable these erotic conversations to occur.

5.4 'If I'm aroused enough': mediating horniness and boredom

As I argued in chapter three, moods shape the way that men who use Grindr experience their engagement with the app. In this section, I pay attention to the ways the boredom and horniness shape the use of Grindr for erotic conversations. In these conversations descriptions of bodies, images of bodies and body parts are shared whilst the material body is affected and affects. Interviews with the men in this study revealed that many of them engage in sexualised conversations with other men for some form of sexual gratification. These conversations are often used to mediate moods as a way to produce excitement, to masturbate and/or as an alternative form of pornography.

The first quotes are from James and Russell who speak about these types of conversations they have had with men who use Grindr in spaces of the home:

James: It's just stuff 'what you looking for?', 'what you're into?', 'what do you like?', usual stuff and go from there. So if they say 'I like, I really like masculine guys, I'm a really horny bottom', you go from there. I really don't do it that much because dirty talk doesn't really do that much for me, and it's kind of embarrassing, I get really awkward. It's kind of like 'you want me to get balls deep in you blah, blah, blah... balls deep and make you moan' kind of thing, and it goes on until he's thingyed or I've finished.

Carl: when you say you thingyed or finished? Is that after a conversation over Grindr and you have ejaculated?

James: yeah, so it's like I fire up, it's kind of like the foreplay, you build yourself up, getting horny, and you'll be there stroking whilst your chatting to them, the odd picture exchange and stuff, although pictures don't really do it for me... And I finish off, and it's like 'got to go now, going to sleep, sorry', that kind of thing... like you're talking dirty with someone as if you're gonna meet them, but you never get round to it (James, 26, white British).

Carl: is that with pictures, what happens?

Russell: it can and, not necessarily, it usually does, but that's kind of the culture we're in now, its instant gratification, you can find somebody you like the look of, they can take a picture of their dick and you can go from there. Now that I have the app and use the app, if I'm in the bedroom, if I'm, yeah... I think I'm using conversations with people more than I would use, typically pornography, but more often I'm speaking to somebody as I'm jerking off, and that does involve pictures, sometimes even video, sometimes it goes down that route, giving Skype information, so yeah (Russell, 28, white British).

When and where these interactions happen are spatially, temporally and viscerally contingent. The sexualities that emerge in these interactions are entangled in the affective folds of bodies and technologies. Both participants talk about needing to be in a particular 'mood' and space for these different interactions to happen. Moments of intensities urge our bodies to act, interact, move and feel (Thien, 2005a). These moments of intensities come into being through interactions of bodies, objects and materials that (re)produce spaces. The visceral feeling of sexual arousal, and the type of arousal, lead men to open

Grindr and engage in erotic conversations with other users. Horniness brings men to open Grindr and begin conversations with other men in their homes. Rather than seeking out pornography, some participants seek out men to speak with, giving rise to these sexual practices and alternative ways of seeking sexual self-satisfaction.

James and Russell highlight that this sexual practice is enabled by the privacy of the home and bedroom. Heteronormative discourses are fundamental in shaping the spaces and places that people see as acceptable for sexual behaviour. Such discourses (re)produce bedroom spaces as 'normal' for sexual desire to be embodied, performed and acted out (Hubbard, 2012). Therefore, men 'feel' that they must be within such private spaces for these visceral desires to be acted upon. The idea of public/private comes to be (re)worked here. As men who use Grindr engage in this practice they 'bring' parts of other bodies into their home spaces through the screen. This enables greater control over the extent that bodies of 'strangers' can be 'brought' into the home and bedroom. Furthermore, they are only permitted entry up until the moment of ejaculation. In other words, men are able to access images of other men's bodies (parts and their fluids) in the home without compromising a sense of privacy. Therefore, homes are (re)made as private as 'strangers' are only granted partial entry. These participants highlight how this is a fleeting practice that is brought to an end by ejaculation. The release of semen is the moment when the assemblage loses function, falling out of working arrangement (I discuss this further in section 5.5). In other words, sexualities do not need to be mediated by Grindr.

The conversations that occur between men who use Grindr are often descriptions of what they would 'do' to each other if they were in the same offline space. They also use images of their body parts (penis, bottom and chests etc.), and their bodily fluids to help mediate these conversations. As Josh says:

Josh: If I'm thinking like I want to get with this guy I would get aroused, but it's like the whole thing of like thinking well, I'm getting aroused at the prospect of what I would be doing later, rather than the prospect of just chat, like that's kind of not, like I would be excited about the prospect of what would happen later, than the actual chat itself, if that makes sense ... I'm basically getting gratification that I could potentially shag this person. So I'm getting more gratification from that (Josh, 23, white British).

The conversations are focused on what their bodies *could* do to each other – the potential that their bodies have to touch. As Grindr shows men in close geographic proximity⁴, there is a sense that bodies can touch in their locality. Touch and touching is a multisensory experience that is not restricted to the finger tips (Paterson, 2009; Johnston, 2012; Morrison, 2012a). In this context, touch is also experienced through the eyes as they roll over images and imagine the feeling of being touched (Price, 2013). Therefore, the idea that these bodies could touch each other is central to enjoyment (Tziallas, 2015). Touch is one way that bodies come to feel and experience space, objects, environments and bodies. Scholars working on touch have argued that the ways bodies respond to and experience touch(ing) provides knowledge around how people think about the world (Dixon and Straughan, 2010; Johnston, 2012). In this sense, researchers can understand who people do and do not want to touch or be touched by. In these examples, the body is not necessarily being touched by other bodies. Instead, users are thinking about being touched and also touching themselves. This imagined experience of touch, and touching the self, is mediated by images, pictures and words that are constituted by the users in the conversation. This enables horniness to be mediated by technologies.

⁴ The distance that Grindr with display the 100 men is dependent on how many men are using the app in a particular place at a particular time. For example, if there is a greater density of users in a place then the 100 men would be 'closer' then if there was a low density. The men in this study usually spoke about being able to see men one mile away.

The way that intensities are mediated and experienced is different for participants. Arousal can vary between men. In the following two quotes, Ben and Russell talk about how much they can be ‘turned on’:

Ben: But it is very arousing and fun ... but I’ve never jerked off to the conversation of the pictures, anything like that, I think that’s only happened maybe twice, that I was that turned on that I was able to do that, to be honest, it usually extends beyond Grindr and we exchange numbers and we send video of some sort, yeah. I’ll start, but usually I will have to stop the conversation and finish myself with porn or whatever, or meet the guy, and usually I’ll wait to finish, cos if I do then I won’t be interested [laugh] (Ben, 33, Pacific Islander).

Russell: well there’s sex, and there’s intimacy, so if you’re just talking about fucking or sucking cock, that’s one thing, but if you’re talking about massaging or you know, licking, kissing, biting and so on, in an area of your body, there’s definitely more closeness there than thrusting, so, and that, yeah, I definitely have those conversations

Carl: is there a preference?

Russell: again it’s all situational, it’s all about my mood at the time, so if I just want a simulated fuck then that’s where I’d go for it. I prefer to have the more intimate conversations with people who I’ve had them with in the past, you wouldn’t necessarily go into one of those with somebody you just come across. Again, unless they initiated it that way and I was in a certain mood ... it feels good usually, particularly when it leads to climax (Russell, 28, white British).

For Ben, there is only ‘so much’ sexual satisfaction he can gain from the conversations until he turns to other men to meet, or to online pornography. Russell, however, finds the conversations with men to be more ‘satisfying’. For Russell, like many other participants, these conversations have begun to replace traditional pornography. Russell speaks about the types of moods that lead him into different conversations, with different conversations also shaping his mood. For Russell, some of these conversations can be very ‘intimate’ through descriptions of massaging, biting, nibbling and licking the

body. Descriptions of close and intimate forms of touching produce feelings of intimacy and closeness. Bodies, then, do not always need to be close, or even to touch, for such feelings to manifest. Therefore, visceral feelings of intimacy are not fixed to the physical touching of bodies, but transcend multiple geographic locations. Touch, intimacy and visceral arousal emerge through arrangements of screens, technologies, text, pictures and bodies that are held together in bedrooms (Dixon and Straughan, 2010; Longhurst, 2013). Therefore, visceral access to Grindr is enabled by the privacy of the home in a way that can (re)make the boundaries of public/private.

Not all participants suggested that the home or bedroom are the spaces that these conversations and interactions would play out. Additionally, horniness was not the only mood that was mentioned. The following interview quote is from Tom, who speaks about using Grindr in his office:

Tom: There are some days when I can literally be at work and I'll literally just switch it on, and [then] it's three o'clock in the afternoon and I've just spent all day just chatting and going around, so it's not only when you're horny, but bored. Sometimes I'll be chatting to someone, they might be in the local area, they might be wanting some quick fun, so I'll just go 'pop over'. So yeah. And when you mention the environment you're going to be using, a lot of guys get turned on by the idea that you're in an office, and the usual things of, do you have a desk, do you have table, do you have this, do you have that, kind of comes into the equation, although I've not done it a lot, I've only done it a couple of times, (Tom, 44, white British).

Several men in this research spoke about opening Grindr because they were 'bored' (see section 3.4). Boredom prompts Tom to open up Grindr at work to speak to other men. Anderson (2004) highlights that boredom is an embodied emotional state of affective 'in-between-ness'. Boredom is an affective intensity that leads us to seek other emotional states. In this sense, boredom becomes a moment of 'suspension' that can bring bodies, emotions and desires into being. Therefore, men like Tom attempt to move their

affective states into excitement, entertainment, or even risk. For Tom, 'risk' shifts the 'boredom' he experiences at work. Risk and excitement become entangled and emerge through challenges to the spatial and sexual (hetero)normativities that (re)produce work spaces. In this sense, the material contexts that Grindr is assembled in have the capacity to enhance – or diminish – the intensities in ways that are particular to a time or place.

Using Grindr in his private office can (re)shape the space through eroticism, desire and sexuality. The space itself becomes a site for erotic pleasure. Tom uses the objects that are in his office as a way to illicit excitement in other men. Ahmed (2004) argues that emotions emerge through bodies *and* objects. Objects do not necessarily have to be material objects, they can also be in memory or imagination. Longhurst (2013) suggests that the places that are transmitted across screens help to produce feelings of missing and togetherness when parents Skype their children. In my research, it is the descriptions of objects, not the image of them, that become a sites for relational meaning. For men who use Grindr, thoughts of bodies becoming 'entangled' with objects in a professional space are used to produce sexual excitement, desire and arousal. The descriptions of what bodies could do with particular objects can provide a source erotic excitement for men. The potential for touch is important. However, it is not just about touching other bodies, but also touching objects. Objects are able to take on different sexualised meanings (Morrison, 2012a). For example, sinks in public bathrooms can be understood for hygiene purposes, but also become a site of eroticism for men who cruise. Objects themselves are ways for 'normative moral codes' to be challenged and resisted in visceral and affective moments (Brown, 2008, p. 929). As objects take on different meanings, so can the places they are in. Therefore, binaries of public/private and work/leisure can become disrupted as they are viscerally imagined through erotic intensity.

Work spaces can be done differently when bodies use Grindr. Assembling sexualities in this way at work undermines capitalist and neoliberal constructions of normative work spaces. Boredom enables a queering of sexual and spatial normativities when men use Grindr. At the same time, there remains a level of control over ‘how much’ of bodies are invited in. Furthermore, there are gendered discourses around professionalism, working life and class that work through this narrative. For men, working lives and spaces can be central in the construction of masculinities through performances of sexualities (usually heterosexual) (McDowell and Court, 1994; Warren, 2015). Here, middle class notions of professionalism shape the erotic discourses, with spaces of work becoming sites where masculine sexualities can be assembled. Therefore, although sexual normativities can be subverted, discourses that celebrate middle class, professional masculinities emerge.

Paying attention to bodily intensities - sensations, affects and emotions – highlights why and where these conversations occur and the ways they are bound up in material spaces. Bodily sensations of horniness and boredom are central in men’s motivations to open Grindr and seek erotic conversations. In this sense, bodily intensities are giving rise to alternative sexual practices in and across internet dating apps, and through multiple offline spaces. Here, these sexual practices have highlighted how desire and arousal (re)produce the multiple ways that the spatial understandings of gender and sexuality are attempted to be fixed, but also disrupted.

5.5 ‘you’re going to swallow my load later’’: doing semen

Erotic Grindr conversations are often a way to viscerally excite the inside/outside of the body. Men often engage in erotic Grindr conversations to become aroused, orgasm and feel sexually ‘satisfied’. In this section, I explore the production and release of semen

through Grindr conversations. I think about the internal bodily processes that produce semen, and how it takes on different meanings inside and outside of bodies. Doing so, I bring geographical studies of gender and sexuality in conversations with ideas of physiological bodies. From physiological and scientific perspectives, semen release is made possible by the ejaculation reflex (Thomas, 1983). This ejaculation reflex is part of a network of nerves and muscles that work together to drive semen out of the penis through the urethra (Marberger, 1974; Thomas, 1983). Genital and/or cerebral stimulation initiates internal bodily reactions that cause ejaculation (Thomas, 1983; SØNksen and Ohl, 2002). The brain, spinal cord, the peripheral nerves and the sympathetic and parasympathetic autonomic nervous systems, are stimulated and then work together to enable the body to ejaculate (Siroky, 1988; SØNksen and Ohl, 2002). During ejaculation the prostatic musculature contracts and produces a fluid in the urethra. Sperm is then added to this fluid from the ampulla. Following this, semen is released from the seminal vesicles. This creates a 'pressure' that can be felt in and through the body (Marberger, 1974; SØNksen and Ohl, 2002). These scientific epistemological understandings of semen defines a body-we-have, that is objective and measurable (Waitt and Stanes, 2015).

The ways that we understand semen is not simply about how it is produced through networks of nerves, muscles and contractions. Semen also 'takes on' social and cultural understandings, becomes normative in certain contexts and places and produces gendered and sexualised bodies (Moore, 2008). For example, semen, ejaculate and 'cum' can be very erotic during sexual encounters, being used in erotic play and symbolising sexual satisfaction and 'completion' (Lee, 2014). At the same time, semen has different meanings when it is released from different bodies. Due to the associations of gay men with HIV/AIDS, semen can become a 'risky' sexual fluid that produces moral panic. In

comparison, for straight men it may be a risk of pregnancy (Haig, 2006). Furthermore, if men are unable to become erect to produce semen, or have low sperm counts, then semen becomes symbolic of ‘dysfunction’ and a source of anxiety for men (SØNksen and Ohl, 2002; Del Casino and Brooks, 2014). Semen is entangled in understandings of masculinities and men’s bodies. Drawing on Waitt and Stanes (2015) framework, these understandings enable social sciences to think about the body-we-are – how bodies gain the meanings of what they ‘are’. Bodies-we-do refers to the affective and emotional relations between semen, bodies and space. Instead of thinking about semen – and its production – as a biological process or only meaningful through culture, I understand semen as a:

... personal visceral reminder of the ambiguities of our bodies that may open up fertile ground for questioning the historical and cultural context within which we live and rework subjectivities. Such thinking alerts us to appeals for a located, fragile, vital, multiple and immanent subjectivity, with the potential for differentiation. Here, gender is assembled out of elements of the physiological, social, embodied, discursive, material and spatial (Waitt and Stanes, 2015, p. 32).

Bodies-we-do thinks about the embodied intensities that we experience when semen is in, out and on the body, and how semen can alert people to instabilities of bodily boundaries. I pay attention to the ways that semen takes on meaning through the affective relationships with bodies and places and the ways this can assemble ideas of masculinity and sexuality for men who use Grindr. Therefore, I explore how men who use Grindr learn to be affected and affect other bodies when semen and sex are experienced physiologically.

The erotic conversations that men who use Grindr have with each other work to bring their sexual bodies into the social. The following quote from Russell highlights how

these conversations enable him to ejaculate and that he often send pictures of the semen to other Grindr users:

Carl: once you have climaxed, what happens then?

Russell: more often than not I'll carry on the conversation, but sometimes, I'll show them the end result...

Carl: that being?

Russell: the semen, [it] seems to be more gratifying than the thing itself [the conversation] to some people (Russell, 28, white British).

The bodily intensity of the conversations and masturbation – as genital and cerebral stimulation – enable Russell to ejaculate. The pictures, words, phone, and touch of himself enabled his nerves and muscles to contract in a way that produces semen. This ejaculation then takes on further sexual meaning (Moore, 2008). Men who use Grindr often send pictures of their semen as a way to share their sexual satisfaction and climax, but also as a way to excite the bodies of other men. Photographing ejaculated semen is a regular practice that is learned amongst Grindr users.

The types of words and pictures that are used in Grindr conversations can have different capacities to affect the erotic intensities in men's bodies. Discursive ideas of masculinity work through these capacities. Ben speaks about a particular interaction where the person was being very assertive and dominant with his language:

Ben: like he was in bed, all he showed was his cock hard, and yeah, that particular guy, it was just a lot of shots of his cock hard, shots of him cumming, and just talking back and forth, what we'd do to each other. This guy seemed very kind of assertive in what he was looking for and what he wanted, I found that *really* hot and it turned it me on ... he told me he wanted me to swallow his load, not in a way of do you swallow, [or] I would like you swallow it, it was 'you're going to swallow my load later', it was very dominant, especially considering [that] he didn't ask if that was something I was willing to do, you know what I mean? (Ben, 33, Pacific Islander).

The assertive, domineering and demanding framing of this conversation was central in shaping his visceral responses. Dominance, assertiveness and aggression are characteristics that men can seek to perform in order to embody strength and power over women and other men (Messerschmidt, 1999; McDowell, 2003). These gendered politics are often present in pornography, with some men adopting dominant positions, displaying control and power over other bodies (Lee, 2014). Mowlabocus' (2010a) work on Gaydar argues that gay men construct online identities, in part, through pornographic depictions of sub-cultures of gay men (e.g. bears and twinks). Mowlabocus' (2010a) conceptualisation of gay men's online identities is only used to think through the discursive analysis of profile pictures and bodily representation and does not consider the ways men can be viscerally affected. In spite of this, it does provide useful tools to think about the ways men who use Grindr tell their stories. The conversations that some men are engaging in in and across Grindr are framed in a pornographic way that almost follow a performative script. Many men reported having similar conversations with other men that were accompanied by similar pictures of different unclothed parts of the skin and flesh. These scripts that men engage in are viscerally affective.

As Ben goes on to say, the way that masculine dominance is expressed provokes such visceral and physiological excitement and arousal:

Not asking me, what I'm into, it was more 'this is what I'm going to do', it was quite hot. And it turned me on so much that later when I went to the gym, when I was changing I realised I had, basically a lot of pre-cum in my underwear from just our conversation, so I sent him a picture of that (Ben, 33, Pacific Islander).

Another participant, Adam, says:

I think more often than not it is the more masculine words, dude, bro that kind of language that I would find more erotically exciting (Adam, 34, white British).

Both participants highlight how more ‘masculine’ language is more erotically exciting when they engage in these conversations. These ways of speaking through Grindr evoke a shared understanding of masculinity. I argue that these masculinities become meaningful through, what Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy (2010a) term, visceral imaginaries. Visceral imaginaries are concerned with the ways that ideas, materials and processes become meaningful by the ways bodies *feel* about them. Therefore, adopting a visceral imaginaries approach considers how internal body sensation shapes how people make sense of their social lives. Words and attitudes that are associated with ‘manliness’, ‘straightness’ and ‘blokey’ performances of masculinities offer a heightened visceral arousal for these participants. The visceral arousal that occurs is felt as sexual arousal. The sexual arousal that emerges through Grindr assemblages helps users make sense of their sexual attraction towards particular forms of embodied masculinities. For Ben, the dominant ways of interacting ‘turned him on so much’ that he produced some semen without touching his own body. Adam states that the words that are constructed as manly are more exciting than those that are constructed as not manly, stating that it’s a ‘psychological thing’. Words and phrases that he deems as less manly are found distracting and off putting when engaging in these conversations as they suggest a certain level of intimacy and over familiarity. Adam states that those forms of affectionate terms are only appropriate ‘for someone you have known for a while’, and therefore become ‘off putting’.

The visceral responses to conversations over Grindr enable men to place value on dominant ideas of what it means to be a man. Ben’s story about ‘pre-cum’ explicitly draw attention to this. From a scientific perspective, pre-cum – or pre-ejaculate – is a fluid that is produced through sexual excitement by the Cowper glands. In the sciences, it is understood as a fluid that helps lubricate the penis during sexual intercourse (Chughtai *et*

al., 2005; Chudnovsky and Niederberger, 2007). Thinking about the body-we-have and the body-we-are, pre-cum becomes symbolic of sexual arousal through medicinal discourses. In other words, things that ‘turn on’ male bodies ‘will’ enable the production of pre-ejaculate. However, thinking about bodies-we-do highlights a different story. The production of pre-ejaculate is made possible by the affective capacities of Grindr assemblages. Therefore, the constitution of desirable masculinities online are made meaningful by sensations felt ‘inside’ the body. Pre-cum takes on different meanings when it is outside of the body and ‘stuck’ to clothing. Ben shares the picture to provide confirmation that their conversation was ‘sexy’. Through this practice, the images of pre-cum become part of erotic play in these conversations – becoming symbolic of more than just arousal. Therefore, there is a sharing of the visceral imaginary of masculinities and sexualities. Furthermore, it is entangled in place as the picture of the pre-cum is located at the gym – challenging the spatial boundaries associated with Grindr (see chapter three). As these ideas of masculinity, sexuality and place are shared through conversations, they become increasingly meaningful to users as they learn what embodiments have greater capacity to affect and be affected. Bodies-we-do highlights how Grindr practices come to be learned through physiological processes that produce sensations and become viscerally imagined and felt. These visceral imaginations can work to construct different ways of speaking on Grindr as undesirable.

Several participants constructed particular forms of writing and language as too intimate and over-familiar. As Chris and Russell state:

Chris: I mean, you can kind of gage if people are [masculine], like I’m massively put off if people put kisses on messages, I don’t, know you, I don’t like that. I mean some the things they can put like, ‘hey’ with multiple x’s it’s like, avoid you, things like that, emoji’s with hearts in them. I just think that, not over, I’d say over familiarity, but then I’d send a picture in my underwear, so that kind of does

contradict slightly, but that idea of ‘I don’t know you’. Yeah, that whole kisses thing on messages, like I don’t know somebody, why would I do that? But then if I met them, I’d kiss them in person, but don’t put a kiss on the message, weird (Chris, 31, white British).

Russell: It might catch me off guard, if somebody used ‘Hey honey, sweetie’ that sort of thing, and if it carried on in frequency I might do something about it, but you know if it’s a one off I wouldn’t be bothered by it... I wouldn’t feel uncomfortable doing that back it’s just intimacy too soon into a conversation, that kind of intimacy, that kind of language is reserved for someone you have known for a while, not someone you have met on a dating app (Russell, 28, white British).

Adam: maybe it’s a physiological thing, but I like to be more intimate with people I can be more friendly with, so it kind of goes into that, if they’re being overtly intimate and using more gentler language, like babe, that kind of thing, I’m not saying all the time, but more often than not, it’s more kind of, it can be off putting (Adam, 34, white British).

In these quotes, Chris, Russell and Adam highlight how particular ways of speaking are thought of as too intimate. In this sense, they do not align with learned visceral imaginaries of masculinity. Chris suggests that the use of ‘x’ and certain emoji’s (for example, heart symbols and women) are over-familiar, where Russell highlights the words that are reserved for ‘long term’ and more familiar relationships.

The inability for intimacies to have an erotic arousal on the body is sometimes contradicted in their narratives. In a previous interview quote (see 4.4), Russell mentions that he is sometimes ‘in the mood’ for intimate conversations that are based around nibbling, biting and kissing. This form of intimacy becomes acceptable when the moments of intensities urge him to seek intimate conversations. He does mention that he would not always engage in those conversations with a ‘new’ man on Grindr, however this is dependent on the situation and the person. Chris recognises his contradiction. He suggests that sending pictures of himself in his underwear is also a form over familiarity.

These examples highlight how particular forms of intimacies and familiarities come to be normalised through Grindr. For example, pictures of naked skin, bodily fluids and underwear are becoming common – and normalised – intimate practices of sharing. On the other hand, language such as ‘babe’, kisses (xx), and emoji’s are outside of the boundaries of accepted intimacy and sharing. It is sexually explicit intimacies that become more exciting for men who use Grindr. Through this, men who use Grindr learn how to ‘do’ these conversations in specific ways and particular performances of gender and sexualities are shared, legitimised and (re)produced.

So far, I have highlighted how semen is made meaningful in Grindr assemblages through visceral imaginaries of gender, sexuality and Grindr. Here, I highlight what pictures of ejaculation can mean for other Grindr users. The following account is from Tom, who is in a non-monogamous relationship with another man. Tom speaks about seeing these pictures and/or knowing that other men have produced semen on the ‘other side’ of the screen:

Tom: I think it can be quite exciting if you’re having that type of conversation with someone and they’re telling you what they’re doing to themselves, and you know you’ve kind of got them to completion, one for a better word, you know the fact that someone, you’ve done that to someone without them meeting you, seeing you, purely from what you’ve said to them is quite an accomplishment. And I kind of store things like that in my little wank bank ... I think some conversations can be really exciting, depending on what the conversation is or where it’s going, you can get really turned on or really horny from a conversation with someone (Tom, 44, white British).

Tom highlights how the ability to make someone ejaculate on the ‘other side’ of the screen is viscerally arousing. Sexually exciting other men through words and descriptions of what they could do to one another is erotic for Tom. Being told and seeing the semen of other Grindr users offers confirmation of men’s sexualities. For Tom, seeing

and/or 'knowing' other Grindr users have ejaculated reveals how he viscerally imagines semen – as a confirmation of his sexuality and an ending to a conversation. By enabling ejaculation, Tom feels like he has completed a sexual 'goal' that works to reaffirm his self-sexual attractiveness. The visceral arousal from these conversations are made possible as Tom is excited that he sexually satisfied someone through 'completion'. Therefore, semen is assembled through visceral imaginations and becomes a way for sexualities to be confirmed and (re)made.

Whilst semen is assembled with multiple meanings of sexuality, these have to be negotiated. Tom speaks about how he manages this practice with his feelings of morality that emerge through his relationships:

Tom: the strange thing is it doesn't feel like you're involved in it cos you're not touching them and you aren't doing anything to them, you're just words and a screen, but you can get turned on by knowing what they're doing, and what you're saying to them. I think it's more about what you're saying to them, what you'd do, or what you want them to do to you, rather than what you'd do to yourself. I never enter into a conversation with someone and have a wank, I've never done that.

Carl: you've never done that?

Tom: no, I'm much more into them doing that, and a little part of me feels like I'm not cheating, because I'm not touching them, I'm not with them, I'm not there. So you can easily close that conversation down and go to the next one and you don't feel that much of a slut really (Tom, 44, white British).

Tom's narrative give insights into the moral geographies that produce understandings of Grindr and relationships. Tom is in a non-monogamous relationship, however there is a strong sense of what forms of touch are right and wrong. By not 'touching' men in the flesh, and not touching himself in the moment of the conversations, Tom understands himself as not 'cheating'. There are places on the body that are constructed as highly eroticised and private (for example, genital areas). For Tom, these places are understood as inappropriate to touch in the context of his relationship. The

material, geographical and temporal separation between him and other men highlights how he draws imagined boundaries around monogamy. In this instance, the material touching of fleshy bodies – both self and other – in the same place at the same time operates as a marker for monogamy. Using Grindr to have these conversations, Tom has controlled the extent that he invites bodies into his home and work spaces – (re)drawing the boundaries of public/private around sex and sexuality. Tom is erotically excited by the idea that he sexually satisfies other men, however he simultaneously seeks to construct himself in relation to promiscuity and non-normative sexualities. By materially not touching, Tom constructs himself as a ‘faithful’, non-promiscuous and respectable man. The confirmation of sexualities that can be enabled through Grindr work in conflict with bodily boundaries that construct notions of respectable and faithful masculinities. In this sense, whilst performing sexuality in Grindr assemblages, Tom attempts to stabilise his masculine and sexual identities through meanings of touch.

Tom attempts to play with the boundaries of touch in this practice. The visceral imaginary that is assembled in Grindr enables him to live out particular fantasies. Tom feels pleasure from the imagination of men’s bodies and semen. In this sense, Tom is able to experience alternative encounters whilst still being able to confirm aspects of his non-monogamous relationship. By keeping a physical distance between bodies-we-have – or ‘real life’ bodies – the boundaries of monogamy are redrawn through understandings of touch and morality. At the same time, as I discuss in chapter six, Tom does meet Grindr users in ‘the flesh’. Touching can come to be considered right and/or wrong. Moralities of touch come to be mediated by Grindr assemblages. Therefore, promiscuity, monogamy and sexuality come to be reimagined through proximity, separation and screens. These contradictory ways that gender and sexuality become meaningful are enabled through assemblages of bodies, technologies, digital spaces, words, pictures and touch. As online

spaces can create feelings of disembodiment (Parr, 2002; van Doorn, 2011), they can complicate the ways monogamy, touching and desire become meaningful. This enables an understanding of ways men think about touch – as right or wrong – when sex and sexualities are becoming increasingly mediated and enacted through technologies. Thinking about touch – as material, multisensory and viscerally imagined – enables an understanding of the multiple and contradictory ways that gendered and sexual subjectivities are (re)formed, (re)made and (re)produced.

Desire, for many people, is understood as an internal physiological ‘intensity’ that they do not control (Lim, 2007). In this section, I have highlighted how the discursive, performative and linguistic constructions of masculinities emerge through digital spaces and shape bodily sensations (Longhurst *et al.*, 2009). Physiological bodies – bodies-we-have – are being affected by these discourses. It is through these physiological responses to gendered identities that men who use Grindr often ground their attraction to particular types of bodies. In this section, paying attention to the visceral body – bodies-we-do – has enabled an understanding of how erotic Grindr conversations are made meaningful to the users. Through shared visceral imaginaries, particular masculinities enable a heightened embodied sexual arousal, therefore they become sexually desirable. At the same time, masculinities and sexualities have to be negotiated in, through and on the body as men who use Grindr engage in conversations. Bodily sensations are internal to the body, however bodies are not bounded entities – their boundaries are porous, blurred and unstable (Grosz, 1994; Probyn, 2000; Longhurst, 2004). Therefore, embodied desires, arousal and excitement are constantly being (re)made through relational experiences of gender and sexuality across different contexts and spaces. A bodies-we-do approach reveals how masculinity attempts to be stabilised through desire, sexuality and touch. Therefore, there are learned conventional ways of doing masculinity on Grindr that are

legitimised through visceral feelings. At the same time, it also reveals the multiplicities and contradictions in masculine subjectivities that are folded into bodies, phones, words and screens. In the following section, I explore how Grindr conversations are not always mutually experienced, leading to different visceral responses of Grindr assemblages.

5.7 ‘At least say bye’: (re)orientating masculinities.

The erotic conversations that men engage in are not always mutually experienced. Some of the participants spoke about feeling frustrated, angry and disappointed when the conversations did not materialise into offline hook ups or they were not allowed to ‘finish’. Paying attention to these visceral experiences reveals that users have particular hopes for Grindr. Often these hopes are not met. Therefore, Grindr users have to negotiate feeling ‘let down’. Exploring this, I argue that there is an embodied skill set being learned by men who use Grindr.

The following quotes highlight how some conversations lead to abrupt endings, being ignored or even blocked. Russell is speaking about a particular instance of arranging to meet someone, whereas Tom refers to the anger he experiences through men who disappear:

Russell: he lives just up the hill from where I was [his previous home], and he was like ‘yeah, you wanna come round for a fuck?’ And at that particular instance I was like ‘yeah sure, why not?’, found out his address, told me where he was, what time to be there, and I said ‘on my way’ and then blocked me. I was thinking why go to that much trouble? have that conversation, and did you just spurt and think ‘well, now I’ve done it’. I think if he had said something to me, rather than cut it off at that point, it would have been nicer, so yeah, it does happen, it affects me in different ways.

Carl: what are these different ways?

Russell: it makes me question what I was projecting as myself. At the time you’re always thinking, ‘it’s not the individual you’re speaking with’, ‘am I as attractive as I

think I might be'. It definitely affects me that way, rather than 'well he obviously didn't fancy me'. It's kind of like, it does, it gives you a step back, a pause for thought ... I momentarily get frustrated, but after a while it's just one of them things. Then just, either close down the app and do something else, or try to pick conversation with somebody else.

Carl: how long is a while?

Russell: oh like an hour, cos you do feel a bit daft, being this hung up on somebody you've never really met, but again you, I can't help it. But it doesn't last long. Being able to close down the app is helpful

Tom: the fact that I'm very domineering, I like to be the one in control, I like to be the alpha, I'm not just talking sexually, I like to feel that I'm leading that Grindr conversation, if someone disappears I'm kind of like, really angry sometimes, maybe that's not manly, maybe that's arrogant, or stroppy (Tom, 44, white British).

Russell and Tom are emotionally affected by encounters with other men who use Grindr. They are particularly referring to the common practice of 'men who disappear'. This is when profiles and conversation feeds disappear from Grindr without any warning. When men disappear Grindr hopes are not fulfilled.

As I discussed earlier in this chapter, arousal, excitement and ejaculation is experienced through the imagination of potential touch. In these examples, visceral excitement can be experienced through the promise of touch. However, when the promise of touch is 'taken away', bodies are left 'unsatisfied'. The disappearance of profiles and unfulfilled promises can lead to frustration and anger in men who use Grindr. Frustration and anger come to be felt by Russell as he feels like he has been 'used' by another man for their sexual pleasures. This leads him to question his attractiveness, the construction of his digital self and the identity of the other person. On the other hand, Tom experiences anger as he feels like he loses the control he established through dominance. Previous research has highlighted that men seek approval through relational interactions with other men, which enables their masculine identities to be (re)affirmed and legitimated (Connell,

1993; Schippers, 2007). Russell questions his self-worth and identity constructions and Tom loses a masculine sense of control.

Through the ‘spatial imperative of subjectivity’, Probyn (2003, p. 298) reminds us that subjectivities come into being through the spatial and the sensual – ‘in space, we orient ourselves and are oriented’. In these examples, masculine subjectivities are disrupted. There are strategies that men use to negotiate this ‘blow’ to their masculinities. Here, I am particularly referring to Russell. Being able to close the app and leave digital space allows an emotional, material and affective separation. By removing the sight of Grindr from the screen, using a different app or disengaging from mobile technology, men move through different spaces – this can be online or offline. Drawing on Probyn’s (2003) idea of the ‘spatial imperative of subjectivity’, subjectivities are constantly being (re)shaped in relation to space. In this sense, the fracturing of masculine subjectivities in digital space is attempted to be reaffirmed by moving through other offline and online spaces. As Russell highlights, he can move to a different private conversation space, to a different app or close his phone, all while moving through everyday offline spaces (the street, the home, the bedroom). Here, spatial and sensual subjectivities are being (re)made as men negotiate their visceral experiences. (Probyn, 2003; Waitt and Warren, 2008). As Grindr assemblages stop functioning, users attempt to reorientate themselves through other digital, bodily and spatial practices.

Both Russell and Tom mention that they would feel less emotionally disrupted if ‘disappearing men’ would say goodbye or give a reason. Tom states:

Tom: I think there should be that respect of, at least say ‘bye’, if they’re bored of a conversation at least say ‘bye’. So that annoys me sometimes, cos I’m quite polite, you know, my first message is always ‘hi, hey, how’re you?’, it’s not ‘get your cock out’, which comes from some guys, or ‘what you up too now? I’m home alone’,

‘that’s nice for you, enjoy, sit and watch loose women with your pants on’ (Tom, 44, white British).

For Tom, there is a level of respectability that is missing in men that ‘disappear’. In his interview, Tom constructs disappearing men in relation to himself. Ideas of class and age shape how Tom understands respectable Grindr performances. He understands his Grindr practices to be respectful as he uses traditional greetings rather than opening up with erotic or sexually explicit messages – even if erotic conversations are his intentions. Tom is attempting to reaffirm his masculine subjectivity, by engaging in discourses that would suggest ‘respectable’ men are hierarchically superior to those that are unrespectable (Skeggs, 1997; McDowell, 2003). These participants highlight how they have certain expectation around being ‘good Grindr citizens’.

This idea of respectable and polite Grindr practices – or good Grindr citizens – is bound up with understandings of how bodies ‘should’ do sex and sexuality. The visceral experiences of frustration and anger emerge as these men as not ‘allowed’ to ‘finish’ by the people they are talking with. Frustration and anger highlight that men who use Grindr have particular bodily attachments to ways of doing sex. For these users, they feel that both bodies should orgasm for sex to have a ‘proper’ ending, where semen is assembled through visceral imaginations as a symbol of ‘completion’. In this sense, Grindr conversations are more comfortable when they are framed by similar texts and images that are shaped by particular identity performances – for example, respectability, class and age. Frustrations emerge when practices challenge the learned conventional ways of doing Grindr. Different users have different ways of doing Grindr. Conversations become more comfortable for those men who use it in similar ways. Whilst in section 5.5 I highlighted how masculinities and sexualities can be confirmed through Grindr

conversation, here I highlight disruption. In this sense, masculinities and sexualities are rendered unstable and fragile through Grindr.

Some men in this study were aware of this practice. They have learned to recognise how disappearing men interact across Grindr. The following two quotes highlight how some men who use Grindr have learned ‘skill sets’ to negotiate men who disappear:

Joel: probably yeah, I think at home [Ireland], like it would have had a success rate of actually meeting up and then I think as well, yeah, like more often you would actually meet them, whereas here, there’s a lot of like sort of time wasting (Joel, 20, white Irish).

Zack: I don’t store pictures of people and I don’t keep asking for more and more face pics and more and more cock pics, because I think my ideology is that if you fancy somebody you make do with what you get, whether it’s 2 inches or 6 inches, it doesn’t really matter, so I don’t really go into all of the... I’m more of a person if they wanted to meet up, ‘yes when? Now? Shall we go?’ As opposed to ‘what are we gonna do, what you gonna wear? Are you top or bottom? Are you gonna do this?’ When they start going down that road, I think quite realistically they are just getting off on it, and this is their way of getting their rocks off, and towards the end of the conversation they will just disappear or just not meet up. And all this you just kind of learn by using Grindr (Zack, 32, British Pakistani).

Participants spoke about fleeting and fractured encounters as a normative practice, suggesting that, in Newcastle in particular, men seemed to meet in offline spaces less frequently. Some men have come to recognise when conversations are heading in that direction. Particular sentences and phrases can alert men to this practice – for example, ‘what are you into?’ and ‘do you have any more pics?’. These phrases provide users with gut feeling that some users are ‘time wasters’ – only intend to chat and never meet. This gut feeling is a visceral way of knowing and enables some Grindr users to manage fleeting conversations. The repetition and recognition of this behaviour has enabled men

to become less emotionally disrupted by men who disappear. Some men are learning how to become comfortable using Grindr.

Although these conversations can be recognised by some men who use Grindr, they can still leave users feeling frustrated. Sometimes men are not looking for fleeting erotic encounters – in the form of masturbation or hook ups. If these men recognise the erotic ‘signs’ in conversations they can come to feel ‘used’ by other Grindr users. Next, I focus on a conversation with Ben that explored how he feels when men attempt to engage him in erotic conversations:

Ben: I can kind of tell where it’s going, if it’s going towards the date side, like if it’s someone I want to be friends with, or I want to go on date with, it is talking about daily activity, what you did today, blah, blah, blah, more personal kind of stuff, ‘how long have you lived in the UK? life story, middle child, when’s your birthday?, what’s your horoscope?’ stupid crap like that. Hopefully it’s engaging and it’s more interesting than generic conversation, those are the conversations I’m going for at the moment. Often, it has gone towards more a sexual thing, pretty much ‘oh I like your pic, it’s very revealing’, that crap. It goes on to more like ‘what you looking for? Do you have any more photos?’ There’s no personal, you can just tell like from both ends you really don’t care who that person is anymore, I think, I mean it’s quite disappointing if I see someone on there, especially if they have an interesting profile and I think they’re attractive, and it goes towards that route, it’s really disappointing for me, when I can already tell that I’m not a person to them anymore, I’m just a potential lay or wank, especially if their profile seems like they’re looking for something more.

Although Ben does engage in erotic conversations over Grindr, at the time of the interview he wanted conversations to focus around ‘lifestyles’ (see chapter four for more detail). For him, these conversations are more meaningful and lead to dating and more long term interactions. Ben becomes disappointed if the men he is attracted to begin to move towards the erotic conversations. This feeling of disappointment comes into being

as he starts to question how people read his profile and body. He feels he is stripped of his identity when erotic potentials are foregrounded.

The feeling of disappointment is heightened when he thinks a person's profile is indicating they are looking for something 'more'. Ben is referring to men who construct 'lifestyle masculinities' in their profiles. Lifestyle masculinities are produced through pictures where bodies are given more context (e.g. a beach, a bar, music event) and descriptions of work and leisure practices that men engage in. The men in these profiles are usually understood to be looking for 'more' than fleeting erotic encounters, and wish to find men who 'fit' into their lifestyles (see section 4.5 for discussion). However, as I argued in chapter four, this form of masculinity does not mean the users do not desire erotic encounters – desire is more messy and unstable (Lim, 2007). Roth (2014) has argued that the categories, menus, and limited characters that social networking and dating apps provide do not allow complex, messy and ever changing social identities to be (re)presented in online spaces. If a Grindr user's main aim is to date, they may be 'forced' into constructing a lifestyle masculinity, therefore disabling the production of a sexualised digital self.

Conversation spaces can allow for multiple identities to be performed and embodied as there are no word limits and multiple pictures can be exchanged. If men using Grindr experience horniness or boredom, the chat spaces can become a way for these moments of intensities to be acted upon. Masculinities can be both lifestyle and hypersexual and men can be simultaneously looking for sex, eroticism, dates, boyfriends and friends. How bodily attachments to particular ways of doing sex, sexuality and gender become shared through Grindr do not necessarily allow for the complexities and messiness of desire. For men like Ben this can lead to feelings of disappointment and frustration.

One participant, James, mentioned that he was sometimes a man who disappears. In his interview he talks about ejaculating through conversations and then closing the app:

James: like you're talking dirty with someone as if you're gonna meet them, but you never get round to it, but it's just that thrill of getting to it, and then you just do your own business and that's it you're done. It is shit and I hate when people do it to me, but I think everyone does it (James, 26, white British).

James has also come to learn ways to interact with and negotiate Grindr. His narrative highlights how this practice becomes common amongst men who use Grindr. Being able to negotiate Grindr and to interact with the users requires a set of embodied knowledge that are learned over time. This knowledge is embedded in the bodily attachments to particular ways of doing sex, sexuality and gender. In this sense, desires are attempted to be stabilised through the ways that gender and sexualities are articulated through Grindr. Therefore, using Grindr *becomes* more comfortable, convenient and desirable when knowledge and skills are learned and enacted.

The skills that men learn are also shaped by emerging identity positions. In chapter four, I explore how age and race shaped how some 'older' and non-white men construct profile pictures. This also works through conversations for non-white men who use Grindr. The following quotes are from Ben and Alex. They discuss the ways their Asian bodies shape the ways people speak with them through Grindr. Alex specifically talks about how he negotiates this:

Ben: On Grindr it has occasionally, you'll have the 'I'm not into Asian guys', or the guys that specifically talk to you because you are Asian, thankfully it's not as prevalent as it used to be... No one likes to be written off for something that doesn't really matter, and no one likes to be objectified and made into a fetish, you know what I mean. I wouldn't say so much anymore, but then again who knows, I don't make the first move a lot, so who knows there's probably a lot of guys on there who haven't spoke to me because they're not into Asians.

Alex: sometimes they ask about your body picture, I mean yeah I send them, but without my face, it's just from neck to down ... usually I show a little bit far picture, just to keep them, and if they ask more I will give my face.

Ben highlights how different constructions of his Asian body do not make Grindr conversations feel good. Alex talks about the ways that he attempts to send pictures where he looks 'less' Asian – so they are far away or he crops out his face. In section 4.8, I highlight how Asian men negotiate Grindr by 'selling' their profiles in different ways, for example, through proximities and distances. Here, Alex explains that he has learned to slowly show people in Newcastle that he is Asian as a way to continue erotic conversations. Race is an event that is made meaningful in particular assemblages (Swanton, 2010). Race emerges in these moments in Grindr conversations through bodies and screens and the histories, memories and desires that assemble them. In this sense, race, skin, body parts and screens have to be negotiated. Learning to negotiate Grindr can mean learning how to manage, mediate and negotiate one's own body, histories, memories, desires and identities. This negotiation has been learned through visceral responses – frustration, anger and sadness – to Grindr assemblages. Therefore, racial identities are performed, learned and negotiated through the visceral and can seek to stabilise whiteness and the desirability of white bodies (Slocum, 2008; Joshi-McCutcheon-Sweet, 2015)

Using Grindr *becomes* more comfortable, convenient and desirable when knowledge and skills are learned and enacted. This is not to say that users are either comfortable/uncomfortable. There are multiple ways that bodies feel as they use Grindr. Feelings shift and change as men speak to different Grindr users in different places. Embodied knowledge becomes viscerally legitimised in and through Grindr – as men recognise particular practices through gut feelings, or they engage in particular practices

because of gut feelings. As these practices are shared amongst men who use Grindr in Newcastle they can reorientate users to particular ways of doing Grindr. Through reorientation, bodily attachments to gender and sexuality become legitimised as ‘normative’ way of doing Grindr. For some users this can lead to an understanding that there are ‘good Grindr citizens’. However, there are multiple ways of doing Grindr, that are assembled through bodies, identities, histories, memories, desires, time and space. As I have highlighted in this section, the ways Grindr users learn to engage in these conversations can seek to stabilise particular – gender, sexual, racial and class – identities, but at the same time, reveal their multiplicities, subversions and ambiguities. In the following section, I conclude this chapter by highlighting how a visceral approach to the digital can complicate understandings of gender, sexuality, public/private and online/offline.

5.8 Conclusions

In this chapter, I have explored the visceral experiences of erotic and sexual conversations that men who use Grindr have with one another. In chapter three, I highlighted the moods that prompt men to open Grindr. Chapter four examined the multiple and multisensory ways that men construct and look at profiles. In this chapter, I explore the ways erotic conversations through Grindr are used to mediate particular moods. I have taken a visceral approach to this sexual practice to understand how Grindr conversations are assembled (bodies, phones, words and pictures) through affective desire, and how gender and sexualities emerge through this assemblage. I also used this approach to illustrate how Grindr conversations are kept in working arrangements until moments of ejaculation. When this moment occurs, these assemblages begin to shift and may fall out of working arrangements as they can lose their function. The ways these arrangements shift can have different visceral impacts for different men. For example,

one man ejaculating – ‘finishing’ – means the assemblage can lose the erotic potential for another user. I have also highlighted how discourses of masculinities are shaping, and being shaped by, visceral imaginaries. In particular, how ‘manly’ or ‘straight’ ways of speaking can produce heightened eroticism in and through men’s bodies. It also highlights how gay men make sense of their desires - desire is understood to be an internal bodily force that cannot be controlled, therefore justifying their attractions (Lim, 2007). In this sense, particular ways of doing masculinity are shared and celebrated through Grindr practices – and ways of performing masculinities and bodies through the screen come to be learned. Through multiple reorientations, I argue that these practices have to be learned by different Grindr users so they can navigate conversations comfortably. However, there are multiple ways to do Grindr conversations – different people learn different ways of doing Grindr. Learning how to negotiate Grindr can mean learning how to manage, mediate and negotiate bodies, histories, memories, desires and identities.

Paying attention to intensities of horniness and boredom revealed why (sexual gratification) and where (bedrooms and offices) men engage in these erotic Grindr conversations. Men who use Grindr often understand semen and ejaculation as central to their Grindr practices. As I have highlighted, semen becomes symbolic of erotic play and arousal, as well as the end of sexual encounters. Therefore, semen comes to be made meaningful in different ways through Grindr user’s visceral imaginaries of sex and sexuality. This is often dependent on the context that it is produced through. Furthermore, thinking about the visceral highlights the frustration and anger that men who use Grindr experience if they are not well rehearsed in Grindr practices. Therefore, some users are becoming comfortable, or reorientated, with Grindr as they learn skill sets that enable them to negotiate the sexual politics Grindr. Through the sharing of these practices, ways

of doing Grindr become legitimised and reproduced amongst the users. Being comfortable using Grindr does not necessarily infer a binary relationship of comfortable/uncomfortable. There are multiple ways to feel comfortable that are shaped by bodies, identities and subjectivities that are constituted through space and time.

Overall, a visceral approach to Grindr conversations enables an understanding of the multiple bodies, objects and spaces that are involved in shaping gender and sexuality and the ways they are made meaningful through memories, knowledge and desire. In the following chapter, I focus on the Grindr encounters in offline spaces – bars, cafes, street and homes – and how these encounters are (re)shaped through meanings and feelings of touch. I explore what happens when assemblages of Grindr conversations (phones, bodies, words and pictures) shift to form offline Grindr encounters and how this enables masculinities and sexualities to emerge differently.

Chapter Six: Anticipating Touch: Haptic Geographies of Grindr Encounters.

6.1 Introduction

When men who use Grindr meet one another, whether it be for sex or for dates, it can be a sensuous experience. Their bodies kiss, lick, bite, see, listen, smell and touch, all of which produce visceral, affective and emotional reactions. Work in haptic geographies explores the touch as a multisensory experience (Paterson, 2009; Dixon and Straughan, 2010).

Taking a haptic approach understands touch as more-than-tactile skin encounters. Instead, touch is experienced through our sensory engagement with place. Johnston (2012) has argued that geographies of sexualities have often jettisoned touch and haptic experiences from their studies, in favour of representation, discourses and language. For Johnston (2012), haptic geographies can provide alternative ways of conceptualising sexual lives, extending understandings of embodied, emotional and subjective experiences. At the same time, Brown (2008) and Binnie (2004) also remind geographers to pay more attention to touchy and feely sex rather than focusing solely on sexual identities.

In this chapter, I engage with haptic geographies to explore the mundane, sensuous and erotic encounters between men who use Grindr. Interacting with both digital and fleshy bodies requires Grindr users to negotiate their offline encounters. The unstable dichotomies of online/offline – and their constant interactions – shift the ways men experience bodies. In other words, when moving between online and offline spaces different ‘parts’ of bodies come to matter. Masculinities and sexualities are constantly (re)emerging through men’s voices, movements, size, skins, smells and bodies as men who use Grindr move between online and offline spaces. The negotiation of *different* bodies and materialities can often throw users into ‘disorientation’. In her work on Skype, Longhurst (2017) argues that people are still learning how to interact with digital screens

and technologies. Drawing on ideas of ‘disorientation’ offered by Ahmed’s (2006) queer phenomenology, Longhurst (2017) argues some bodies are disorientated by Skype as they do not know how to perform for the camera/screen, or when and where to use them. However, as we learn to use them, we can become ‘reorientated’ by technologies and screens. I pay attention to the disorientations that emerge when Grindr users meet offline. I argue that these disorientations exposes how men are still learning how to ‘do’ Grindr encounters – exposing the multiplicities and fragilities in the ways men learn Grindr practices and gendered and sexual subjectivities. How bodies come to matter across online and offline spaces can rupture, stabilise and reorientate dominant understandings of masculinities and sexualities.

Where chapter three thinks of Grindr as a technology and screen, and chapters four and five think about Grindr as a digital space, this chapter focuses on the encounters that have been facilitated and mediated by Grindr. In chapter five, I explored the erotic conversations that men have through Grindr. I highlighted that these create erotic excitement through visceral imaginations of gender, sexualities and touch. In this chapter, I explore the offline encounters that can materialise through Grindr conversations. These offline interactions are usually shaped by anticipation. Men who use Grindr are expecting a variety of different bodies and scenarios to play out. At the same time, they are also anticipating the unexpected. The Grindr assemblage of phone, body, text, picture (as explored in chapter five), shifts as Grindr users move into offline spaces. In chapter five, I argued that different men have to learn different skills to comfortably negotiate Grindr conversations. In this chapter, I explore how men negotiate anticipation when they meet other users in the flesh, highlighting the moments when negotiations are still being learned. Therefore, I draw attention to the disorientations that emerge in offline encounters. By doing so, I argue that men are still learning how to ‘do’ Grindr encounter.

I explore the identities, emotions, and affects that emerge when sexual and romantic interactions have been formed in digital space and then move into offline spaces. In other words, what parts of bodies come to matter when Grindr assemblages are reassembled in and between (un)familiar places and bodies when men who use Grindr meet.

I review literature on haptic geographies to highlight how touch is more-than-tactile skin encounters – touch is experienced through multiple sensory engagements. Furthermore, I review the limited literature on touch in geographies of sexualities to argue that haptic approaches can provide insights on gender, sexualities and embodiment. Four empirical sections follow. The first places sound as the focus. I explore how the sound of the voice becomes central in shaping touch when men who use Grindr meet in public spaces. I argue that discourses that (re)produce categories of masculinities shape haptic geographies of public spaces. The second section moves into home spaces and explores how practices of hosting and guesting emerge when men who use Grindr ‘hook up’. I argue that the homemaking practices that are performed and materialised when hosting hook ups are shaped by the instability of online/offline dichotomies that shift how masculinities and sexualities are spatially (re)produced. In the third section, I examine how unfulfilled anticipation can cause men to feel disorientated (Ahmed, 2006), leading to careful negotiation that bring hook ups to an end. Therefore, men find ways to do their gendered and sexualised identities differently. The fourth empirical section focuses on the embodied politics of touch. I highlight the ways touch still occurs when expectations are not met, arguing that masculine power dynamics and heteronormative discourses shape how touching is legitimised and practiced. Finally, I conclude this chapter by highlighting three key points. First, I draw attention to the ways men are still ‘learning’ how to *do* Grindr. Second, I highlight the ways men think about masculinities and sexualities in and through public/private and online/offline spaces. Third, I demonstrate how men who use

Grindr understand relational masculinities through multisensory experiences – smells, sounds, sight and cutaneous touch – of bodies and places.

6.1 Haptic geographies

Touch creates a space in which sexualities can be explored in each affectual and emotional encounter. Body to body touch is ... an intimate sensual encounter which is always situated somewhere. Place is crucial in the ways in which bodies may, or may not touch' (Johnston, 2012, p. 8).

In his book 'Sensuous Geographies: Body, Sense and Place', Rodaway (1994) argues for the importance of haptic geographies. For Rodaway (1994), touching is central to human experiences. We feel the world through our skin, we use many metaphors to talk about touch (for example, keeping in touch and rubbing up the wrong way), and touch has the capacity to be highly emotive (for example love, lust, disgust and hate). Following the work of Montagu (1971) and Gibson (1983), Rodaway (1994) argues for the use of the term haptic, and draws on ideas of the 'haptic system'. Haptic refers to touching that is done with all of the skin, not limited to the fingers (Montagu, 1971). The haptic system is used to speak about the receptor cells and muscles in and on the body. Interactions between the skin and environment can arouse receptors, with bodies feeling space, objects and other bodies (Gibson, 1983). Rodaway (1994) uses haptic to think about touching as an active sense that shapes peoples engagements with place. He also highlights how this thinking can move beyond inside/outside bodily dichotomies, by understanding touch as an active phenomena that goes beyond touch on the skin.

When discussing geographies of touching and intimate moments of the erotic, it raises questions of embodiment, especially skin. Physiologically, the skin is the largest organ of the human body, containing and protecting organs, bones, flesh and blood (Barnard and Li, 2017). In the social sciences, however, the skin is more than a container

or a surface that inscribes inner truths (Ahmed and Stacey, 2001). Ahmed and Stacey (2001) argue that thinking through the skin involves decentring ‘the body’s’ privileged position in feminist thought. Thinking about the skin involves thinking about bodies as partial and fragmented. By doing so, Ahmed and Stacey (2001) argue that we can examine the constructed boundaries that often mark bodies, whilst exploring the formations of the inside/outside dualisms. The skin is not a fixed entity, it is tactile, in that it is entangled in haptic experiences, practices and knowledge (Paterson, 2009; Dixon and Straughan, 2010). As Price (2013, p. 581) argues, the ‘skin is an intimate contact zone’, where geographies are felt and experienced. In this sense, the skin is a site of intimate encounters that is saturated with embodied politics of age, race, class, gender and sexuality. The skin becomes important when thinking about erotic touch, as we touch, taste and see the skin. However, touch is not reducible to tactile skin encounters alone – it involves multiple senses in and through bodies (Paterson, 2009).

The body and skin is the initial site that the world is experienced and felt (Longhurst *et al.*, 2008). By focusing on haptic geographies, we shift the value that is placed on the visual (Paterson, 2009). Some recent work around touch engages with more-than-representational ideas, and develop notions of intercorporeality offered by Merleau-Ponty (1962). For Merleau-Ponty (1962) touch not a singular event, but involves multiple encounters with human and non-human bodies that are more-than-tactile. Touching the skin is not an isolated event or moment, it leads to a multitude of relational sensations from the arousal of networks of nerves, pain receptors, flesh and emotions, desires and affects (Paterson, 2009). The ‘haptic’ refers to the bodily sensations that we often find difficult to articulate – how the body responds to the touch of objects, materials, things, technologies and bodies. It is through the interactions with these ‘stimuli’ that bodies can be affected (Paterson, 2005). Paterson (2009, p. 768) uses the

term ‘somatic sensations’ to bring attention to the ways ‘immediate bodily experience combines other sensations distributed throughout the body, felt as muscular tensions, movements and balance, along with sensitivity to temperature and pain’ In this sense, haptic experiences are about our location, awareness and movement in and through places (Straughan, 2012). The skin, then, is not at the centre of haptic geographies, however it is the site where sex and eroticism play out, and is therefore entangled in haptic experiences.

Johnston (2012) highlights how a haptic approach can also understand the meanings – that are always spatially produced – that are attached to touch, therefore enabling an understanding of how touching comes to be organised by place. Dixon and Straughan (2010) argue that touch - who we want/do not want to be touched by and who we want/do not want to touch – can tell geographers how we think about ‘other’ bodies and identities. Therefore, touch can be embedded in processes of ‘othering’. In other words, attention to touch reveals how marginalising and oppressive discourses to construct desired/undesired others. In this sense, touch is not only something we do with the hand, but something we do with the eyes (see section 5.5 also). A haptic approach, then, pays attention to the ‘embodied experiences of touching and feeling, conjunctions of sensation and emotion’ that shapes our understanding of, and connects us to, place (Paterson, 2009, p. 766).

When conceptualising the skin, Ahmed and Stacey (2001) draw on Marks’ (2000) idea of ‘haptic visuality’ to highlight how touching is enacted with the eyes. In this sense, ‘the eyes themselves function like organs of touch’ (Marks, 2000, p. 2) that move over objects, bodies and things. For geographers, touching with the eyes can ‘approximate touch’ (Price, 2013). Price (2013) suggests that racialised bodies come to feel hyper-vulnerable and hyper-visible when confronted with racist gazes. Staring can highlight when bodies do not want to be touched and can make bodies feel ‘untouchable’. Paterson

(2006) has argued that physical touching can occur over a multitude of geographic spaces, and is not necessarily about proximity – ‘haptic technologies’ (for example, a vibrating game console handset and visuals on a screen) have the ability to recreate sensuous bodily experiences. The ability to hold technologies in the hands (for example, a mobile phone) can reproduce a sense of proximity that transgresses fixed ideas of geographic space and time. At the same time, technologies can also reproduce a sense of distance as people can come to be reminded of distances if they miss people and places, or at times of emotional distress. Longhurst (2017) has argued that Skype can put people ‘in touch’, therefore forms of touching occur across distances, emotions and screens. In other work, Longhurst (2016) argues that mothers feel closer to their children who live away from home if they can easily access communication technologies (for example, laptops and mobile phones). Desires that shape the relations between touch and bodies, objects and things operates at multiple levels and scales.

Developing a haptic geography of touch, Obrador-Pons (2007) draws on ethnographic research with users of a nudist beach in Menorca. Through participant observation and 55 semi-structured interviews with nudists, Obrador-Pons (2007) argues that nudism is about the haptic arousal of the sand, sun and sea on the skin. Here, the assemblage of bodies and the environment are a source of visceral arousal. He challenges the idea that the naked body is symbolic of sex and eroticism, as nudism is more about avoiding gazes and ‘non-seeing’ than being a spectacle of sexuality. This approach - that centres bodily sensations over discursive ideas - seeks to shift knowledge produced through representation, towards embodied feelings and affect. Therefore, understanding nudism as more-than-representational. However, as Johnston (2012) argues, there is at risk of romanticising nudism. She argues that attention should still be paid to the sexual dimensions of unclothed bodies, as they are always located in spaces where gendered and

sexualised power relations emerge. Johnston (2012) highlights the importance of the appreciation of gendered and sexualised power relations when thinking through haptic geographies to be able to understand the embodied politics of touch.

Little work in haptic geographies has been applied to studies of gender and sexualities. I use haptic geographies to think through the ways bodies experience a desire to touch. I explore how men who use Grindr feel their way through encounters when they meet other Grindr users in offline places – bars, pubs and homes. As to not reduce haptic geographies to touch alone, I draw attention to the ways sounds, sights and smells produce an awareness and a reshaping of locations and bodies. I use these haptic geographies to highlight how desire, eroticism and touch are reorientated as men who use Grindr move through and between online and offline spaces. This enables me to highlight the instability and complexities of online/offline dualisms.

6.2 Sexy haptic geographies

Haptic geographies remains relatively ‘untouched’ in geographies of gender and sexualities, however touch itself has featured in some of this work. Geographers have highlighted how touch is saturated in socio-political power relations, shaping claims to sexual citizenships (Johnston and Valentine, 1995; Binnie, 2004; Hubbard, 2013; Prior *et al.*, 2013). Heteronormative discourses are fundamental in shaping the bodies that are enabled to touch, and the types of touch that are enabled, in and across place (Hubbard, 2013). Geographers have interrogated the ‘closet’ as a space that manifests itself materially. Multiple political and practical acts shape everyday spaces that can permit or exclude non-heterosexual expression from occurring (Brown, 2000). Non-heterosexual touching (for example, holding hands or kissing) in public is often policed in both subtle and explicit ways, through stares, homophobic violence or legislations, whilst culturally

normative touching between a man and a woman is usually celebrated (Valentine, 1996). Hubbard (2013) uses a multi-scalar approach to highlight how equalities legislation that disables decimation towards non-heterosexual touching does not play out at the local level. He uses the example of the removal of two men from a public house in London, UK, for kissing, to highlight the entanglements of touching, law, scale and sexual politics.

Heteronormative discourses also enshrine ideas of where and why sex should occur. Sex is constructed as an act of biological reproduction that should be shared between two monogamous bodies of oppositional genders, that celebrates 'love' (Hubbard, 2012). Furthermore, sex has a (hetero)normative spatiality, in that sex is expected to occur in particular private spaces, for example, the home and the bedroom. Sex and sexual encounters that challenge such normative discourses becomes entwined with notions of abnormality, (im)morality, and public safety (Bell, 2006). Sex and sexualities that do not conform to normative regimes can create 'moral' panic, and therefore are attempted to be removed from public spaces, (re)creating landscapes of immorality and morality (Bell, 1995a; Hubbard, 2012; Valentine *et al.*, 2013). For example, the redevelopment and policing of gay cruising areas in Newcastle.

On a more intimate scale, some work exists exploring the geographies of erotic touching. Brown (2008) employs an autoethnographic and non-representational approach to homoerotic public cruising practices. Brown (2008) highlights how sensual experiences of smells, air temperature, sinks, toilets, trees, and gazes of others are mechanisms for visceral and embodied arousal. He highlights how these experiences can render gender, sexual, racial and aged identity categories unstable as bodies are mobilised through their sensual awareness of bodies and place. In this sense, the identity of cruiser does not neatly map onto more traditional identity categories. Other autoethnographic work by Caluya (2008), in Sydney's commercial gay scene, highlights how assemblages

of music, bodies and lights in nightclub spaces can bring bodies physically closer together. He argues that these assemblages affectively challenge identity categories that seek to separate racialised bodies. However, he goes on to highlight how bodies still become reducible to race in moments of intensities through words and language. Caluya (2008) is careful not to romanticise the disruptive potential of touch, highlighting how power relations must not be jettisoned in favour of non-representations. Although work by Caluya (2008) and Brown (2008) are not labelled haptic, they provide useful tools in thinking about how bodies in place are mobilised by haptic experiences.

Johnston's (2012) work engages with haptic geographies to examine the role of touch for drag queens in Hamilton, Aotearoa New Zealand. Her work argues that the 'touching' of drag queens is a way for heterosexual men and women to attempt to reaffirm their sexed bodies in spaces and places that present a threat to natural notions of masculinities and femininities. She argues that thinking about how bodies want to be touched, or how they do not want to be touched, and *why*, can assist in disrupting gendered and sexual binaries. Morrison's work (2012a) with 14 women in heterosexual relationships in Hamilton, Aotearoa New Zealand, extends haptic geographies of gender and sexualities to the home. Her work explores how touching in the home produces heterosexuality, arguing the home is a key site for heterosexual touch. She argues that the importance of touch for heterosexual couples goes beyond the bedroom, and includes kitchens, living rooms and laundry rooms, with household objects becoming entangled in sex, sexualities, eroticism and touch (Morrison, 2013). Touching, in and through these spaces, brings sexualised bodies into being, shaping haptic geographies of the home. When discussing sex, touch and haptic geographies, she argues:

Despite this growing interest in the haptic, sensuous and emotive experiences of bodies and place, geographers have had little to say about the everyday realities of

gendered and sexed bodies and sexualised touch. Most work on touch even that which discusses its intimate character ... does not look at the ordinary practices and processes of embodied sexual experience. Sex itself is a series of touches, feelings and embodied sensations (Morrison, 2012a, p. 11).

Morrison (2012) urges geographers to pay attention to sexual acts, as these involve multiple forms of touch. In this chapter, I build on this work to explore the gendered, sexualised, spatial and embodied politics of touch. I explore how the discourses that shape understandings of masculinities and sexualities are entangled in haptic experiences of offline Grindr encounters. Paying attention to haptic geographies highlights how desire to, and for, touch is reorientated in and across the digital and offline spaces. Examining this also enables an understanding of the instability of online/offline dualisms. In the following four sections draw on empirical research. The first explores how the sound on men's voices disorientates Grindr users when they meet in public, shifting the desire to touch.

6.3 Touched by sound: voices, masculinities and public spaces.

Thinking about sound as a mechanism for visceral arousal means thinking about how the sensuous body is embedded in social, cultural and spatial relationships (Duffy and Waitt, 2013, p. 468)

This section explores the ways masculinities and sexualities emerge when men who use Grindr meet in public spaces. The public spaces I refer to are the bars, pubs, coffee shops and streets that men meet in for dates or friendships. Participants highlight how voices (sounds) came to matter when Grindr users met for the first time. The pitch, tone and depth of sounds have visceral affects on bodies, mobilising particular responses. Listening to the sounds of voices shapes how men who use Grindr think about touch. In other words, their desire to be touched is reorientated as their encounters move through

online and offline spaces. By engaging with feminist calls to pay attention to the power dynamics that shape emotion and affect (Thien, 2005a), I argue that voices can reaffirm bodily boundaries and can render identity categories stable.

The following quote is from Joe, who speaks about meeting up with another Grindr user a couple of days before they were going to go on a date:

Joe: recently I was speaking to this guy who, I thought he would be geeky, bit reserved, but not that camp, and I met up with him and was totally camp, not gonna lie.

Carl: why didn't you think he would be? And what made him camp?

Joe: I don't think it was what he was saying over text, I think it was his mannerisms and his voice, it was his total tone of voice and mannerisms, and you can't tell that by text and you can't tell that by photos.

C: how was his tone of voice?

Joe: camp, it was, I can't explain it ... you can't hear someone's tone on voice on instant message. The stuff he was saying wasn't camp at all, it was his tone, like high, and his mannerisms, and you can't tell that by message ... I met him and found that out and went 'bye'.

Carl: so you didn't find him attractive?

Joe: no, not at all.

Carl: and you didn't go on a date?

Joe: I was meant to be meeting up with him for a date, but I was around town when he was finishing work, so I met up with him when he finished work, and I kind of cancelled the date ... I just walked him to his bus stop and just let him go.

This example highlights how the sound of the voice can (re)shape attractiveness between bodies. Joe was attracted to this person when they communicated across Grindr as the words he used were not 'camp'. By this, he means he did not use words like 'babe', was not overly emotive and was direct in his responses. Joe highlights that you are unable to 'hear' someone through Grindr. Therefore, voice, sounds and movements do not always immediately 'matter' when interacting online. Bodies are never fully complete, and are always in processes of becoming (Nast and Pile, 2005). In this sense, as bodies move

across online and offline spaces they are reorientated, emerging in different ways. Once Joe and the other Grindr user met in offline space voice, movements and touch came to matter. For Joe, the date became 'de-masculinised'. The 'campness' of this users' voice reorientated Joe. He was no longer attracted to this user, therefore Joe cancelled the date, no longer wanting to be touched.

Other users spoke about going on a date with men who have high pitched voices, and how they felt during the encounter. The following quote is from Rupert who discusses this:

Rupert: as soon as he spoke, that was quite off putting

Carl: what was off putting?

Rupert: it was the tone of his voice, it was very high pitched, it was almost bordering shrieky, he said petal at the end of every sentence, at one point we were sat at the bar and I was looking around to make sure no one was listening to our conversation, I was embarrassed to be seen with him, which I know is an awful thing to say, cos he was probably a really nice guy, but wasn't the type of guy I would be interested in, that's probably the worst experience I've had ... I never saw him again.

Rupert was embarrassed to be seen and *heard* with his date, labelling it the worst Grindr experience he has had. Nancy (2007) has argued that listening is about the understanding of sound. Hearing, on the other hand, is the physiological, chemical and biological experiences that arouses ear drums and transmits signals to the brain. The ways bodies 'listen' is shaped by, and shapes, the emotional, bodily, and psychological. In this sense, exploring how bodies listen can highlight the emotional and visceral responses to sound, and the ways sounds become culturally comprehensible through discursive power relations (Duffy *et al.*, 2016). Embodied visceral responses are also always spatially located and contingent, as bodies are always situated in place and subject to the power dynamics that produce space (Longhurst *et al.*, 2009). Therefore, the ways bodies viscerally experience sounds can provide insights to how people make sense of place

(Duffy and Waite, 2013; Duffy *et al.*, 2016). Rupert viscerally experiences embarrassment upon listening to the ‘shrieky’ tone of his date’s voice. As sound travels through and between spaces and bodies it has the capacity to affect (Gallagher, 2016). Rupert is aware that other people in the bar have the potential to hear the ‘shrieky-ness’ of his date’s voice. Therefore, he becomes concerned about the judgements other people may have about his gendered and sexualised body. The embarrassment he experiences, then, is shaped by the presence of other bodies, and their capacities to listen.

In this context, a shrieky, high pitched or softly spoken voice is often not considered a ‘good’ embodiment of masculinity, or of a potential boyfriend or partner. Such voices are constructed relationally with those that are deeper, maybe rougher, and are considered manly (Heasley, 2005). ‘Good’ forms of masculinity are bound up with what a ‘good’ boyfriend is. In the case of Rupert, a non-masculine voice enabled embarrassment to emerge. Probyn (2005) highlights that embarrassment is not necessarily the same emotion as shame, but they are interconnected as they do not enable feelings of pride. For many men in this study, being able to ‘pass’ as straight was important for constructions of masculinity. Not being visibly, or vocally, ‘gay’ symbolised ‘good’ embodied masculinities in public spaces. However, ‘passing’ is a way for non-heterosexual men and women to avoid homophobic abuse and violence (Leary, 1999). Passing as straight is not always simply about avoiding direct homophobia and violence. Not being read as ‘gay’ can provide enhanced claims to normative cultural capital – being told ‘you don’t seem gay’ can be used as a compliment in everyday conversations in the west. Issues of passing and masculinity manifest in the lives of non-heterosexual people, shaping how some gay men wish to perform and embody gender (Mark, 2004; Payne, 2007; Owens, 2017). The risk of another person listening to conversations between Rupert and his date can, therefore, be understood as a threat to public performances of

masculinity. Probyn (2004, p. 345) argues that shame is ‘the body saying that it cannot fit in although it desperately wants to’, whilst Waitt and Clifton (2013; 2015) argue that men’s bodies can come to feel shame if they are unable to embody qualities of hegemony. The embarrassment Rupert experiences emerges as he begins to feel ‘out of place’ with his date – he feels they do not fit in a non-gay pub in Newcastle city centre. The feeling of embarrassment is his body experiencing a desire to ‘fit in’ and to go unnoticed. Rupert himself does not consider his own voice ‘less-masculine’. However, for others to listen to a conversation between him and his date in a pub would, in his opinion, not enable him to achieve more ‘straight’ performances of masculinities. This leads to feelings of embarrassment. This shapes his desire to not be touched. Therefore, his bodily barriers become re-affirmed, redrawing the barriers around desirable embodied masculinities.

Paying attention to the visceral experience of sound here has highlighted how Rupert, and other participants, make sense of public spaces. As men’s bodies move away from digital spaces and into public ones, different dimensions of embodiment come to matter. When bodies meet offline, voices become central to understandings of masculinities and desirability. The ability for other bodies to listen to, and be affected by, voices shapes how bodies viscerally experience sound. Therefore, for men who use Grindr, public spaces are understood as places where masculinities must be more carefully policed. Forms of gendered embodiment that can be understood as non-manly are more carefully scrutinised. Such policing can performatively render the categories of gay/straight more stable and fixed in public places (Butler, 1990). This visceral experience of sound, then, does not mobilise bodies to break down bodily barriers, but reinforces the boundaries between self and other.

Both Rupert and Joe’s experiences of men’s voices highlight that non-masculine voices are often constructed as undesirable, unattractive or unsexy. In these examples, the

ways that Grindr users are desired is reshaped through place as the presence of other bodies in public shifts how bodies are sensuously understood. When the participants in this study agreed to meet other users in offline places, they have usually established some form of attraction in and through the digital. However, when voices are listened too, this attraction is shifted. For Rupert and Joe, the initial desire that emerged through the Grindr grid and online conversations became reorientated upon listening to voices. The visceral experience of embarrassment and un-attraction that emerge through these public spaces is shaped by gendered and sexualised power dynamics. Embarrassment and shame are being shaped by heteronormative discourses that can result in the stabilising of discursive categories (Butler, 1990; Longhurst *et al.*, 2009). The ways discourses emerge between online and offline spaces can (re)produce bodies and places that can then reorientate desire.

So far, I have highlighted how the reconfiguration of desire produces unsexy and untouchable bodies. The next example demonstrates the ways desire shifts to produce sexy bodies. Here, Jack speaks about a Grindr user he was meeting as a friend:

Jack: There was a guy I was talking to, and like I don't have an issue with feminine people, and we were meeting up as friends, and I would never meet up with someone who I perceived as overly affectionately feminine or even overly masculine for that matter, if it's to the point where they are trying to prove a point that that's just off putting. But he just seemed like a really cool guy, same sense of humour, same sort of outlook kind of thing and I thought we could meet up for a drink and have a chat. He said to me 'oh, I'm not the manliest of people, and I'm not the most feminine either'. When I met him, his voice was a lot deeper than I thought it would have been, and a lot more manly, and it sort of shocked me a little bit, like 'oh, I didn't think you were going to sound like that', and it almost instantaneously made him more attractive. Although we met up as friends it made me look at him in a different way sort of thing, as like 'now that I know you sound like that you've become more appealing on a non-friendship sort of level'.

Carl: what happened?

Jack: Nothing happened, then, but like, you know, something did later.

For Jack, hearing a deeper and more ‘manly’ voice enabled feelings of attraction to emerge. The online encounter created a feeling of friendship – the assemblage of bodies, picture, text, and phone that produces online conversation spaces (see chapter five) shaped how Jack anticipated the offline encounter. Jack was expecting ‘not the manliest of people’ due to the conversation – for Jack, the manliest person would be ‘too muscular’ or embody the characteristics associated with ‘lads’ and ‘lad culture’ (see McDowell, 2002; Phipps *et al.*, 2017 for examples). Jack could listen to this user in offline space, challenging his anticipations. In this instance, listening enabled for sexual and romantic desire to emerge through the body - the deeper tone of voice mobilised sexual bodies into erotic encounters. The visceral experience of sound produced a haptic desire to be touched. As I argued earlier in this section, visceral experiences of sound is produced through normative understandings of masculinities. Desire becomes reorientated through the discourses that construct gendered and sexualised categories of man/woman and gay/straight.

‘The body’s capacity to sense sounds opens up the in-between-ness of sensing and making sense. In this way, bodily judgements of sounds may give rise to moments of heightened intensities that allow people to distinguish between inner and outer selves, individual and group, us and them, here and elsewhere. Sounds may cohere subjectivities, places and a sense of “togetherness”. At the same time, the same sounds may provoke a sense of alienation because they are felt and understood as disruptive or harmful and so categorised as undesirable or noise’ (Waitt *et al.*, 2014, p. 287).

Waitt *et al.* (2014) highlight how sounds can challenge but also stabilise otherness. In this section, I have argued that listening to voices can reaffirm bodily boundaries, but also mobilise bodies into eroticism. However, in public spaces (bars and streets) the

negotiation of self/other emerges through dominant discursive understandings of masculinities. The assemblage of bodies, voices, and words in encounters works to (re)produce spatial experiences of embodiment. Such experiences shape, whilst being shaped by, the discourses that (re)produce normative categories of gender and sexuality. In this section, I have focused on the haptic geographies of public spaces, particularly how touch is shaped by sounds. The following section highlights the haptic geographies of Grindr encounters in home spaces, particularly focusing on the role that touch plays when men who use Grindr are hosting and guesting. `

6.4 ‘Can you accom?’: hosting, guesting and touching.

When men who use Grindr speak to one another to organise a hook up, they use phrases such ‘can you accom?’ or ‘I can accom’. This is short hand for ‘accommodate’, referring to the ability for men to host Grindr hook ups. This section explores hosting and guesting practices that emerge when Grindr users enter each other’s homes for sexual encounters. I examine the ways the anticipation of sex, eroticism and touch, shapes hosting and guesting practices. I highlight the ways that time, sleep, convenience and homemaking practices shape the expectations around hook ups for men who use Grindr. Haptic geographies are used to think about home and hospitality to understand how touching can mobilise, stabilise and challenge bodily and spatial practices. I argue that hosting and guesting are spatially intertwined with masculinities and sexualities, shaping how men learn how to ‘do’ hosting and guesting. A focus on touch enables an understanding of the ways sexual and gendered politics shape Grindr users geographies of the home. When speaking about hosting, I am referring to the individual men who ‘accom’, and their homes that they use for this. Guesting refers to the men who enter the homes of Grindr hosts. I am not referring to formal hospitality practices, but to the expectations that

emerge when Grindr users enter each other's homes.

In his review of hospitality studies, Bell (2009b see for in-depth review), highlights how definitions of 'hospitality' often reduces it to the provision of accommodation, food and drink, and can fix roles of 'host' and 'guest' to monetary transactions. Bell (2009) argues that a spatial view of hospitalities may render these categories more unstable and seek to understand how hospitalities are 'felt' and 'done'. Hosts and guests are multi-scalar, with hosts being homes, villages or cities, and guests being singular bodies or wider groups. Bell (2009) argues that to avoid host and guest from becoming fixed roles, we should speak of 'hosting' and 'guesting', highlighting how these roles are not identities but are *done*. Therefore, these roles are performative, embodied and practiced. In this sense, hosting and guesting are constantly being learned and (re)produced.

The first example I draw on is from Josh. Josh talks about being 'unable' to host when he lived with friends. Some of my participants lived with housemates, and some with parents. He specifically mentions how sound travels through the house and was concerned about being heard with another Grindr user:

Josh: see my previous flat when I lived in Heaton, I would only ever do it at home when I knew that nobody was in the house, just because it was like two of my best friends living there and I just thought it would be like weird, like having someone round whilst they're in, and it was a much smaller flat as well so every room is right next to one another, so you can hear everything. But then like I had no problems going off somewhere, gallivanting around Heaton somewhere ... I mean to be fair I've only got with like two people since I moved to Jesmond, to be fair. I was that drunk I probably didn't have that sense of shame or whatever, so I was 'yeah come round'. (Josh, 32, white British).

In her work with heterosexual couples, Morrison (2012a) highlights how house sharing can inhibit sexual touching as the sounds of sex and touch (for example, the hitting and

pressing of bodies together and sounds of beds moving) are not confined to the private space of the bedroom. Sounds are not restricted in the same way sights are. Therefore, 'privately situated acts of touch leak into the shared spaces of home and invade the sound space of others' (Morrison, 2012a, p. 16). In the case of Josh, the fear of this hearing prevents him from being a 'host'. He will only be a host if he will not be heard, or he chooses to be a guest in other people's homes. Homes and living situations shape how Grindr users can enact their sexualities through technologies, as there a sense of shame in being 'heard' having erotic encounters with men from Grindr. Therefore, the sounds made by touching bodies, house sharing, technologies and shame work to regulate sexualities (Probyn, 2004; Morrison, 2012a). Josh highlights that he has not met many men since moving from Heaton to Jesmond. However, he does say that the two encounters have been motivated by alcohol (see chapter three for more discussion on Grindr, alcohol and horniness). The shame in being heard by his housemates is lessened because he has reduced inhibitions. In this sense, shame has less 'power' to regulate bodies. Doing hosting and guesting is dependent on the materiality of homes, sharing of homes and the multisensory and visceral experience of touch. When people are hosts and guests, they experience anticipations around touch.

The second example I draw upon is from Jamie. He talks about frustrations that emerge when he enters another Grindr user's home when his expectations are not met. Jamie speaks about being in the home of a Grindr user after a date in Newcastle city centre, where they had 'two or three drinks':

Jamie: we went back to his, he started checking his [work] e-mails, and I was like, 'hi, I'm here, you brought me home', I was so annoyed.

Carl: So, it took a while

Jamie: yeah, I was in his house for a strong [meaning a long time], what, we went back to his at eight o'clock and I went home at two o'clock in the morning (Jamie, 21, white British).

Jamie has certain hosting expectations around erotic touch. Jamie was left feeling annoyed and angered when his host was checking his e-mails. When being invited to another Grindr user's home, particular erotic practices are expected. Therefore, hosting involves attending to guests, in a way that initiates erotic contact. Once men enter the homes of Grindr users, there is an expectation that erotic touching should occur almost immediately, and that men should not be 'left' waiting. There is an assumption that other daily practices – like checking e-mails – should not be done whilst hosting, and that guests should not have to wait to be touched. As Jamie highlights, he was expecting to be touched without having to provide prompts. Therefore, there is a temporal dimension to anticipation and touch. These expectations can lead to experiences of anger (Binnie and Klesse, 2011) – when bodies are yearning to be touched.

Jamie also highlights how he did not stay over, and he left this user's home at two o'clock in the morning. Many participants spoke about not wanting men to stay in their homes, or stay at other users' homes. Interview quotes from Rupert and Tom highlight how men do not 'stay':

Tom: It becomes part of a schedule, I'm not planning on them being there all afternoon or all day

Carl: is it an afternoon or a day thing?

Tom: if my partners been away, they've come around in the evening, but they've never stayed over (Tom, 44, white British).

Rupert: I'm quite happy for someone, this is going to make me sound awful, to meet up with someone, suck them off, then flip me over, fuck me, and as soon as they cum, just leave. That's basically what I'd be looking for in a hook up I'm not really in to this post-coital pillow talk, I find it quite awkward especially when you're just

hooking up with someone, ‘you’ve cum, on you go, see you later mate’. So I do kind of almost make that explicit in my message to someone, but then maybe that’s me being selfish because that’s what I’m wanting ... but I don’t, I don’t script it for them so to speak, so I don’t sit there and tell them, ‘oh when you come in you’ve got to do this, this, this and that’, there’s got to be an element of spontaneity still (Rupert, 37, white British).

Both Rupert and Tom are explicit in highlighting how ‘leaving’ is a central part of Grindr encounters. Providing a place to sleep is not part of hosting practices. Tom – who lives with his non-monogamous partner – sees his encounters as convenient and should not take up substantial parts of his day/night, whilst Rupert finds post-sex conversations awkward. Both participants highlight how their erotic encounters are often only seen as a way to be sexually gratified. As I argued in chapter five, ejaculation is symbolic of the ending of erotic interactions. When Grindr users ‘cum’ in their offline encounters, it can symbolise the ending of hosting duties, and guests are expected to leave soon after.

Rupert states that he makes it explicit that guests are supposed to leave once they have ejaculated. Rupert uses Grindr to find men who he describes as ‘selfish tops’ (see chapter four), this means looking for men who are ‘not dominant, but only interested in being a top’. He makes this explicit in his messages through Grindr, establishing the boundaries of eroticism and touch. Guesting, hosting and eroticisms are emerge through the digital, and are expected to be practiced in the ‘flesh’. Rupert desires some spontaneity within hook ups, as long as the acts stay within the parameters that have been established. These parameters and boundaries are one way that leaving, as part of Grindr experiences, have been learned.

As I have suggested, users are often expected to leave the homes of hosts once sexual encounters come to an end. However, in some cases, ‘endings’ are not as distinct. Josh recounts one experience when he was waiting for a user to leave:

Josh: Basically, a Saturday night, and he'd got a taxi over and had to get a taxi back and obviously Saturday night taxi waiting times, so I basically had to like sort of like chat to him for like an hour before he could get a taxi, which is like the most awkward experience of my life like (Josh, 23, white British).

After having sex with a Grindr user, Josh discusses the awkwardness that he experienced whilst waiting for the other Grindr user's taxi to arrive. Men who use Grindr can often feel uncomfortable if men are unable to leave after ejaculation. Touching beyond 'finishing' can often infer emotional intimacy that is associated with coupledom. Therefore, as a way to prevent any emotional intimacy for occurring, men are assumed to leave upon ejaculation, with 'staying' being outside the boundaries of men's hosting practices. Being uncomfortable highlights how both the host and guest have not learned the skills to negotiate this encounter. In this sense, men do not know to touch and feel their way beyond ejaculation and bodies become disorientated (Ahmed, 2006). Men who use Grindr can be thrown into confusion when expectations are not played out (see also 6.5). These moments of awkwardness and disorientations demonstrate how men do not know how to 'do' their gendered and sexualised identities in this time and space. Therefore, masculinities and sexualities are in constant states of instability.

So far, I have discussed the ways that men negotiate hosting and guesting in relation to convenience, sleep and touch. Here, I move to discuss the material homemaking practices involved in hosting, and how these are tactics to avoid men from staying (and sleeping) in hosts homes after both men have ejaculated. Some men spoke about preparing their home, for example, making sure lubricant and condoms are close by, or visible. In this interview, Tom highlights how he prepares the downstairs of his home:

Tom: If they're coming to me, you know, I'll do the whole porn on the TV, poppers on the side, condoms, lube. It's either in the downstairs of the house, or if the

weathers nice, I'm partial to take them into the back garden, which, it's not overlooked so it's quite private. And for me it's about getting everything prepared, everything ready, so they can be in and out (Tom, 44, white British).

The homemaking practices that Tom engages in are ways to prepare the home for erotic encounters. For men who are hosting, there is an expectation that they provide the condoms and lubricant for sex. In this sense, hosting men who use Grindr does involve providing material 'things' for those guesting (Bell, 2009b; Binnie and Klesse, 2011). Living rooms are often not spaces where such erotic objects are displayed – they are usually reserved for more non-sexual ideas, memories and emotions (Johnston and Valentine, 1995; Pilkey, 2014). The meanings and materialities of spaces are fluid as they are constantly renegotiated (Massey, 1994; Bell and Valentine, 1995a). As Tom uses the downstairs of the house for his hook ups, he prepares the space, rendering the spatial boundaries unstable. Through their visibility and association with sex, objects like condoms and lubricant intersect with non-heterosexual identities and are (re)produced as erotic (Morrison, 2013). The visibility of condoms, poppers, lubricant and the sight and sound of pornography all work to create an erotic atmosphere, facilitating touch. Living spaces momentarily become sites of eroticism, and enable sexual subjectivities to be performed, embodied and materialised. Here, sexual subjectivities are assembled in this space through the ways these home spaces are (re)created for erotic touching (Morrison, 2012a; Gorman-Murray, 2015). Subjectivities are held together in this spatial arrangement by desires until the moment of ejaculation and then they begin to shift and change.

Reshaping the living spaces for eroticism is also produced through ideas of convenience. Although the objects, videos and sounds can create erotic spaces, they are also used to facilitate an efficient hook up. In this sense, it is a way to limit any

conversations and enable erotic touching to begin quickly. Furthermore, the lack of a bed suggests that touching should end when they have ejaculated, as there is less spaces for bodies to lay together. Convenience can therefore be central in (re)producing sexual subjectivities, with homes becoming (re)shaped by the subjective experience.

Homemaking practices, then, are entangled in the sexual subjectivities that emerge in and through Grindr. Such subjectivities also shape how the spaces within homes are selected.

The reasons why Tom uses the downstairs of the house, or the garden, highlights this:

Tom: all the action has always stayed downstairs, I respect us enough not to take it upstairs into the bedroom area, even though he's probably like, and he [partner] knows that was happening ... I have got a partner, I'm happy with that, I've got the emotional stuff that I need, I've got the relationship, for me it's just, we have the sex missing, so if I can find the sex somewhere else, then I will. And it is just sex, there's no emotional connection (Tom, 44, white British).

Tom uses Grindr to find sex. His partner does not have a sex drive that satisfies Tom, therefore they have an agreement that Tom can have sex with other men.

Emotionally, however, Tom suggests they have a happy relationship. When Tom is hosting other Grindr users he does not take them to the bedroom where he and his partner sleep. The ways touching between partners in the home is experienced is spatially contingent (Morrison, 2012a). The bedroom is understood as a space of emotional touch and intimacy in their relationship, meaning Grindr hook ups are unable to occur there.

The preparation of the downstairs living spaces and the reservation of the bedroom maps emotions, intimacies and touching through the home. The ways Tom uses home spaces for touching different bodies may challenge the ways living spaces are used, but simultaneously keeps the spatial boundaries of the bedroom intact. As particular home spaces become synonymous with partnership, notions of respectable masculinities emerge (Skeggs, 1997; McDowell, 2003). Tom suggests that he respects their relationship to not

move ‘other’ men’s bodies into the bedroom. Therefore, masculinities come to be formed through respectability. Reserving the bedroom enables Tom to stabilise masculine and sexualised subjectivities that may be rendered more unstable, multiple and fluid through his non-monogamous practices. Masculinities that are shaped through Grindr can come to be (re)formed through homemaking (Gorman-Murray, 2015).

Through the examples so far, I have highlighted how Grindr users are not usually welcome to stay. However, this is not the case for all participants. The following quote is from Gareth who discusses going into the home of a Grindr user who was 20 years old. Gareth highlights how going to someone’s home does not always involve leaving after ejaculation:

Gareth: he messaged me the night before, and he said he just wanted to spoon, and that’s nice as well, we all like that. And sometimes that’s a preferred option cos it’s intimate, it’s warm, it’s lovely, it’s no effort. And obviously if you’re meeting someone for kind of, for a shag you have to be in the mood, you have to have the energy, you have to make the effort, you’ve got to prepare, so it’s, and sometimes it’s just nice to go to bed with someone, sleep with someone, put your arm around someone, kiss cuddle, whatever, and sometime I prefer that to full sex. Like we didn’t have full sex last night, with this guy, it was primarily massage, and essentially what most people would possibly consider foreplay. I gave him a blow job and rimmed him, but that wasn’t part of the deal. And he was like, ‘I’m not actually bothered about kind of having sex’, he said ‘sometimes I just like to be with someone, be intimate, physically, I really like massage, stroking that kind of thing’. And he was quite receptive as well, so you could tell when you did something he enjoyed, you knew that he was enjoying it, and I like that as well. I’d be very happy to be with someone kind of physically intimate for an hour, 2 hours, just exploring everywhere doing everything, but not having sex (Gareth, 42, white British).

Gareth highlights how Grindr hook ups can allow for multiple forms of intimacies, touching and sleep. Gareth’s narrative challenges the idea that sleeping is not enabled when guesting, after ejaculation. He highlights how sex involves preparing the body –

cleaning the inside and outside of the body – and being in the ‘mood’. Hosting or guesting usually involves these embodied practices that, in some cases, men do not wish to do. Gareth highlights how this encounter was not about having ‘sex’ – that he defines as penetrative sexual intercourse. Therefore, sometimes touching is not always focused on eroticism for ejaculation. Both users established the parameters of the encounter through the digital, constructing particular bodily and skin boundaries, whilst blurring others.

Gareth speaks about the multiple forms of touching – holding, stroking and massaging – that move between the erotic, the intimate, the mundane, and being awake and being asleep. These practices are felt on and through the body, being described as ‘lovely’ and ‘warm’. The affective energies in the encounter enable a transgression of some of the parameters set up in the digital. Haptic experiences create visceral and sensual affects in and through the body, opening bodily barriers, enabling a range of intimate and erotic practices. In this sense, touching, eroticism and desire mobilise bodies into different sexual acts (Lim, 2007; Brown, 2008; Caluya, 2008). Men who use Grindr do desire multiple forms of touching. Grindr can enable men, who are unfamiliar with one another, to engage in intimate encounters and acts. In addition, Gareth points out how this user was younger than him. As I highlight in chapter four, men who use Grindr who are over 35 year old are often disabled from being sexy through Grindr. However, in this case bodies across aged identity categories have been brought together through sexy touches.

Sexualised subjectivities that are not focused on ejaculating, or finishing, can emerge in these moments of touching (Thien, 2005b; Morrison, 2012a). For men to be sexually successful and satisfied, there are pressures to achieve ejaculation (Del Casino and Brooks, 2014). In this sense, ejaculation becomes entangled in embodied masculinities. However, this example highlights how Grindr hook ups can also provide intimacies beyond orgasms, and allow cuddling, stroking and sleeping, and therefore

multiple ways for hosting and guesting to be done. The interactions between online and offline spaces that (re)produce masculinities and sexualities can therefore enable the formation of multiple subjectivities. Therefore, identity politics around masculinities, sexualities and age can become a little blurred and unstable, and not necessarily always be reflected in haptic Grindr encounters (Lim, 2007; Brown, 2008; Caluya, 2008). Paying attention to haptic experiences here highlight what bodies have the potential to ‘do’ (Probyn, 2000; Caluya, 2008) as well as the multiplicities, instabilities and ambiguities in masculine and sexual subjectivities.

Gorman-Murray (2015, p. 422) argues that ‘masculine subjectivities are constructed and reconstructed through home and homemaking practices’. The ways men who use Grindr do hosting, guesting and touching – when hooking up with other Grindr users – is entangled in the spatial and sexual politics of the home. The ways the spatial boundaries of the home and bodies are brought into being is shaped by interactions that occur through Grindr, and this enables genders and sexualities to emerge and be embodied, performed and felt in different ways. Therefore, touching is a multisensory, visceral and discursive experience that is shaped by the complex interactions of online and offline spaces. In the next section, I explore how these experiences result in careful negotiations when men are hosting and guesting.

6.5 ‘He was very gropey’: establishing spatial and skin boundaries

Grindr interactions involve a great amount of anticipation that is negotiated in different ways. In this section, I explore the strategies that men use to bring Grindr encounters to an end. I am referring to the tactics that men use to leave the houses of ‘hosts’, or to urge guests to leave their homes. The ending of an encounter usually occurs when participants no longer want to be touched the bodies of other users. I argue that strategies and

practices are being learned by Grindr users to negotiate their expectations. The following two interview quotes are from Zack and Charlie who describe the ways they wish to leave the homes of their hook ups. Both Zack and Charlie are not from Newcastle. Zack had only recently moved to Newcastle at the time of the interview, whereas Charlie had lived there for four years:

Zack: I must have been complete out of mind to meet this guy, and we even set out a scenario to make the situation more hornier. Anyway, so he opened the door, naked and first thing I noticed was his stomach, it was massive, I looked at him and thought ‘okay, it’s definitely you in that picture, [but] the picture is quite old, like four or five years old’. So, I went inside and I thought ‘what can I do to get out of here?’, and I simply made an excuse and I said, ‘oh I left my oven on, I need to go’, and I just left the flat straight away. Now the fact that he didn’t message me after to say, ‘are you okay? what happened? was your oven?’ he must have realised that, you know, that I wasn’t happy with the fact that it was an old picture and that everything that he’d planned was not evidently going to happen (Zack, 32, British Pakistani).

Charlie: I was chatting to a guy at four in the morning and I decided to go and find his house and his photo wasn’t that bad, and I got there and he was a five foot Scottish guy who lived in a flat that looked like something from ‘hoarders buried alive’⁵, just had no carpets, had a sofa with two cushions, how do you lose a cushion from a sofa? And I turned into the, I just pretended to be a bit sick and a bit, that drunk sick thing, and going ‘oh I feel really, I’m just going to go I’m sorry’, and left, yeah, I just didn’t even want to sit down, never mind anything else. (Charlie, 33, white British).

Both Zack and Charlie felt it necessary to create an excuse that would enable them to leave the home of the ‘host’ – a practice many of the participants engaged in. However, they wanted to leave for different reasons. For Zack, it was the sized, shaped and aged body. For Charlie, it was the height of the person and material objects in his home. These

⁵ Charlie is referring to TV shows that present homes of people who are ‘extreme’ hoarders. The title he refers to is not the name of an actual TV show.

bodily and spatial dimensions work to reorientate how touch was anticipated.

Price (2013) has argued that touch can be ‘done’ with the eyes. The eyes have a way of approximating touch and they are used to understand how, or if, we want to touch/be touched. In these examples, the sight of skin, sized and shaped bodies and objects produce a desire to not be touched. The material fleshy-ness of bodies clearly shapes touch for Zack. An erotic situation was discussed through their Grindr conversation prior to the offline encounter. The affective capacity of the phone, bodies, words and pictures shaped the expectations (see chapter five). However, at the ‘fleshy’ hook up, the visibility of the size, shape and aged body reorientated the anticipation. The folds and creases of ‘fat’ or ‘out of shape’ bodies can cause visceral feelings of disgust for some people, and skin is not desired to be touched (Colls, 2007). As Zack’s eyes move over the man’s skin he no longer wishes to touch or be touched. The eyes work to approximate touch and, in this example, works to keep their skins apart (Price, 2013). The intimate space of the skin is therefore not encountered or penetrated, and bodily boundaries are reaffirmed.

It is not only skin that is touched by the eyes. Objects in the home also become important when hooking up. Charlie states that he ‘didn’t even want to sit down, never mind anything else’. Charlie highlights how he does not want to sit in his clothes or expose his skin to the multiple objects he can see – or cannot see – in this other users’ home. The homemaking practices did not meet the expectations that Charlie has of men when they are hosting. It is not only the bodies of Grindr users that shape anticipation and reorientate desire around hook ups, it is also about the spaces that they are situated in. Ahmed (2004) has argued that objects have emotive potentialities in that they become sticky with emotion and have the capacity to affect and be affected. Brown (2008) also argues that the non-human things that are involved in men’s cruising – for example

urinals, sinks, tiles and smells – are just as important as the bodies themselves. In Brown's (2008) work, these non-human dimensions have affective capacities in that they enable men to culturally recognise the sexual and erotic practices that are occurring, and how they are breaking moral codes. Therefore, bodies become intertwined with human and non-human things. In contrast, Morrison's (2012a) work around women's experiences of heterosexual touch in the home highlights how the touch of household objects – such as the uncomfortable feeling of sofa fabric – on the skin do not bring sexualities into being in the same way, but can reaffirm bodily boundaries. The idea of Charlie's skin touching cushions, sofas, and objects reshaped his experience of hooking up, desire and touch. The multisensory experience of 'too many' objects (hoarding) and missing objects (sofas with missing cushions and no carpets), have worked to stabilise bodily boundaries as touching is not initiated. The reorientation of desire in these two examples urged the participants to leave the homes of their hosts. To do this, they created excuses to avoid the awkwardness that can emerge from admitting that they no longer find those bodies attractive. Zack specifically highlights how this has become a normative practice when negotiating anticipations. This is one way that men who use Grindr are learning to perform their gendered and sexualised identities in and through their intimate and erotic encounters.

A different participant, Jon, highlights how he was honest with one of his hook ups that did not 'live up' to his anticipations. Jon is discussing a hook up with a guy who travelled from Norwich to the village just outside of Cambridge where Jon lived at the time. Jon met him nearby and they drove to his house. In Jon's case touching occurred before he decided to end the encounter:

Jon: Number one, it was the smell inside his car, it was like wet dog. That was one thing I didn't like [shakes his head, wrinkles his nose and lowers eye brows]. He was

very gropey and very sort of over the top, which I didn't like. And where I live, I didn't actually live in Cambridge I lived outside of Cambridge, in a very lovely village, but fairly small. So, as we were driving back [to my house] I remember thinking he's really leechy, you know. And we could be easily driving down the street now and see one of my colleagues and I'd have to wave at them, 'hello'. And I don't know, and I was just saying to myself 'this is not gonna happen, this is a no, this is a no, this is a no', and then when we got down to the nitty gritty [undressing, touching, kissing], he's definitely not the person I've seen in the photograph, whether it was when he was younger, whether it was the impression in my mind, either way it wasn't what I expected, you know. And it took all of my, you know, this is ridiculous, but it took all of my strength of character to say 'sorry, but bye, bye'. Because he had come all the way from Norwich, which is like, it was a long journey (Jon, 50, white British).

The smell of the car, the touching that occurred and the difference in the photograph worked to reshape the anticipated hook up. The smell inside the car is the first thing to be mentioned. People have 'bodily ways-of-judging' (Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy, 2008, p. 469), and one of these ways is smell. Rodaway (1994) argues that smells help us make sense of self and other, as it is not only a chemical phenomenon. Smell is rooted in cultural identities, memories and practices, whilst also being tangled up in emotion. Longhurst *et al.* (2008) also argue that smells gives rise to visceral, gut reactions that can inform geographers around how bodies experience place, and other bodies. For Jon, the smell of 'wet dog' does not create an erotic or sexualised atmosphere, instead, from his facial expression, Jon felt disgust. Disgust is a gut response that urges us to repel objects, and we try to prevent them from touching, or moving within, skin boundaries (Douglas, 1966; Probyn, 2000; Ahmed and Stacey, 2001). In this sense, because of his visceral reaction, Jon did not want to be touched.

As well as smell, Jon raises issues of cutaneous touch. Touching in the car journey is depicted as unwanted and understood to be 'out of place'. By this, I mean the sexual touching occurring makes Jon feel uncomfortable as the touches are not in private spaces.

As the two users are travelling through the village, Jon becomes aware that work colleagues may recognise him, and see that he is being touched. Although Jon was 'out' as gay to his colleagues, he wished to keep his Grindr practices separate from his professional life. Furthermore, the type of touching is rendered 'gropey' and 'over the top'. Heteronormative regimes that resign non-heterosexual and erotic touching to private homes spaces are operating here (Valentine, 1996; Brown, 2000). The places where different touches are enabled to be performed and materialised are policed by the potential gaze of others (Bell and Binnie, 2006; Hubbard, 2013). Erotic touching in that time and space, then, is understood as unwanted and 'out of place', highlighting the spatial dimensions of acceptable touch. The hyper-awareness of this tactile encounter creates a discomfort that does not dissolve bodily boundaries. Instead, they are reaffirmed by being touched. This is embedded in, and (re)produces, the spatial boundaries that shape how we understand touch.

The 'risk' of being seen and the visceral disgust experienced due to the smell shapes the ways that touching in the car is understood. Therefore, sight, smell and cutaneous touch constitute the haptic experience (Paterson, 2009). Here, Jon's anticipations of the encounter, and how the other user understands the Grindr encounter, differ. Both men have different expectations and ideas of how hook ups play out. Therefore, both users have learned how to 'do' Grindr hook ups in different ways. Touch and eroticism that comes into being through Grindr is not understood in one way, but has many potentialities that can lead to multiple experiences of sex, eroticism and touch. The haptic experience of undressing and seeing/feeling the aged, fleshy, sized and shaped body was the moment that Jon decided to end the encounter. The sensory experience of smell, touch and sight and the visceral responses assemble to bring the hook up to an end. However, this was a difficult task for Jon. He highlights the emotional work that it took to

be honest with the user, asking him to leave. The uneasiness users feel at confronting their hook ups is a sign that this negotiation is not well rehearsed. This highlights how men are still learning how to 'do' Grindr.

The visceral experience involved in hook ups constantly reshapes and reorientates desire and the erotic atmosphere that was anticipated. As Jon says:

Jon: And it was pretty obvious, I realised that what happened was, the fruity conversations we'd had [on Grindr], the anticipation we had built into the conversations... It was all, like up here somewhere [gestures upwards with hands], but, in reality, it wasn't that (Jon, 50, white British).

This quote reflects how many participants understand certain Grindr hook ups, and how they 'learn' to manage their expectations. The erotic conversations that men have through Grindr (see chapter five) can create anticipation and expectations for offline hook ups. As I argue in chapter five, men who use Grindr discuss how they want their bodies to touch and interact, however in some cases the digital enables them to perform hypersexualised versions of themselves. In this sense, the ways that hook ups are performed and constructed through words, pictures and screens do not always translate to offline encounters. Therefore, desire that comes into being through digital spaces is disorientated and reorientated when bodies meet in the flesh. This reorientation is made possible because the sensory experience between the digital and offline changes. Senses like sound, smell and touch *become* important in the 'flesh', and therefore reassemble Grindr hook ups.

The hook ups can also have wider implications for the ways men who use Grindr understand their sexual identities. Zack goes on to say, how the 'failed' encounter made him question his Grindr practices. Jon goes on to say how he feels a certain level of shame in the hook up:

Zack: Straight after that I thought, ‘what the hell am I doing at two in the morning running around these places in Newcastle, no idea where I am?’, so I just, I’m better off going home, having a wank, going to sleep, it’s a safer option all round. So, I wasn’t online for about two weeks’ cos of that (Zack, 32, British Pakistani).

Jon: Funnily enough I remember, when we got in the house I was living in, my flatmates face, because he kind of looked at me to say ‘who’s that?’ and there was a real ‘that’s the guy I was telling you about’. And I remember almost feeling a sense of shame because I was thinking ‘why am I not being forward with him’ and saying ‘look this is not what I expected?’ you know (Jon, 50, white British).

As many participants discussed, Zack highlights how his experience with one other user caused him to delete the app from his phone for two weeks - a cycle of deleting/downloading that he mentions he engages in. The mobility and times involved in hook ups, unfamiliarities of a place and anticipations shape how sexual practices are understood. These factors made Zack think that he would be better ‘wanking’ alone at home rather than moving around the city to meet other men. Therefore, Grindr hook ups temporarily become undesirable ways to manage relational embodied states such as horniness, arousal and boredom. Grindr hook ups, then, are no longer seen as convenient sexual practices, and men who use it question the legitimacy of their sexualities. For Jon, a sense of shame emerged through the inability to end the hook up when his flatmate saw the other Grindr user. Jon’s shame is experienced as he is subject to the gaze of another person. Although Jon was open about his Grindr practices with his flatmate, he was unable to have pride in this user. Alongside this, Jon was unable to have pride in his ability to be honest. Here, it seems Jon is feeling a lack of courage in his actions, and therefore shame comes into being as he is unable to embody ‘courageous’ masculinities (Waitt and Clifton, 2013). This visceral feeling of shame was central in Jon’s motivations to ask the user to leave. Both of these examples highlight how Grindr hook ups can shape understandings of gendered and sexualised identities and practices. The negotiation of

anticipation can result in men reflecting upon their practices, therefore shaping the ways men 'do' sexuality and gender.

Men are not comfortable in admitting the reasons why they no longer wish to touch the bodies of other men that they meet from Grindr. In this sense, men who use Grindr are learning how to negotiate hook ups that are organised through technologies. When presented with bodies, skins, smells, spaces and objects that are not 'quite right' - they do not fit with what was imagined in the digital – encounters can be thrown into moments of disorientation. Therefore, men who use Grindr are becoming reorientated as they learn to negotiate their encounters. For men who use Grindr, haptic geographies can shape the ways bodily and spatial boundaries are established, reaffirmed and negotiated. The ways materiality shifts between online and offline spaces also (re)produces haptic, visceral and affective geographies of Grindr encounters. As men are reorientated in these erotic encounters, they are sometimes enabled to learn how to 'do' their gendered and sexual identities differently. Next, I explore the moments when touch still occurs, even when bodies are disorientated by their encounters.

6.6 'I just let him suck me off': reorientating touch?

In the previous section, I highlighted how men who use Grindr use particular tactics to bring encounters to an end. In this section, I draw attention to the ways erotic touch still occurs when anticipations are not met. I argue that the ways bodies are enabled to touch, even when expectations are shifted, can subvert but also reinforce dominant notions of masculinities/femininities, therefore simultaneously reinforcing and challenging bodily and spatial boundaries. In the following quote, Tom discusses a Grindr interaction with a user that did not fulfil the expectations formed through their online interactions. Tom started by describing that the Grindr user was much shorter, older, and moved and

sounded more 'feminine' than he presented on Grindr. He goes on to say why he continued to have sex with this person when he came to his home:

Tom: like I normally, I wouldn't fuck someone on the first meet, anything else apart from that. But I normally find if someone comes and they're not what I thought they were I'm more likely to fuck them than I would if they'd just come 'round for a blow job or something

Carl: okay, why is that?

Tom: I think it goes back to that power thing of 'you've misled me, but I'm still gonna have my fun. You want it? I'll go to forth base', because you know you're not going to see them again, you know it's not gonna be, I mean, you don't normally meet people a second or third time anyway, but it's kind of that, 'you've spoke to me, we've chatted, got me horny, got me turned on, you're here now, okay I'll do it anyway'. Rather than having to use the wank bank and do it yourself (Tom, 44, white British).

If Tom feels he has been 'mislead', he feels he loses power and control in an encounter. When expectations are not met, feelings of frustration emerge through the body. This visceral feeling, for Tom, changes the way he anticipates touch. Power dynamics are central to this disorientation. To negotiate feelings of deceit, Tom uses touch to exercise his power over other bodies. In this example, the body of the other users becomes a way to sexually gratify the self. Sex and eroticism are a series of touches, and here Tom mentions touch inside the body. Tom is very clear that the visceral feeling of deceit urges him to go beyond the barrier of the skin and enter the body. There is great significance in getting 'underneath the skin'. Ahmed and Stacey (2001) highlight that the skin acts as a boundary to the internal body, and in this sense, it separates self from other. When passing the border of the skin we enter intimate spaces within the body, potentially collapsing self/other and insdie/outside. In this example, the significance of entering the body is shaped by a feeling of being 'misled'. In this sense, we see how binaries of self/other may still be left intact even when skins and bodies are 'within' one another.

Masculinities emerge here as Tom wishes to re-assert his power through dominance, and ‘meaningless’ sex. The act of sex can be saturated with power relations that produce unstable categories, for example, top/bottom and dominant/submissive (Lee, 2014). In this example, masculinity is exposed as fragile, fractured and incomplete. Tom’s attempt to reshape power relations highlights how his masculine subjectivity must be remade through erotic practices. In other words, as Tom feels he loses power through deceit, sex is used as a tactic to ‘fix’ the fracturing of his gendered subjectivity. Touch and sex can become strategies and tools that are employed to reshape power dynamics, and reconstruct relational masculinities. This is not to say that power dynamics map neatly on to top/bottom roles, but to highlight how such roles can be used by men to attempt to stabilise masculinities.

At the same time, masculinities and power are not the only forces that mobilise this interaction. Tom speaks about how being ‘turned on’ and convenience also enables sex. Moods and their emotions and convenience enable sexualised bodies to emerge in this time and place. Tom highlights this as he discusses the encounter further:

... we were talking in the afternoon, then he was going from shields to town⁶, came to the house, I just thought ‘he wanted fucking’, I bent him over the sofa at home, fucked him, he came, I came, he left, I got the polish and the duster out and cleaned the sofa. And it was just literally, it was like making a cup of tea, it was an activity, it wasn’t a connection, it wasn’t anything else (Tom, 44, white British).

Both desire, arousal and convenience work through this interaction. Being sexually aroused and the convenience of the Grindr user travelling to his house enabled touching to occur. The idea that ‘you’re here now’ highlights how desire, arousal and sex are spatially and temporally contingent. The satisfaction that is desired is an orgasm. Offline

⁶ ‘shields’ is referring to South Shields. The journey to ‘town’ (Newcastle city centre) would involve by-passing Hebburn, where this participant lives.

Grindr encounters become a convenient way for users to achieve an orgasm in ways that can momentarily transgress identity categories. Therefore, Grindr practices and affective desire do not always map neatly onto the ways bodies are comprehended (Lim, 2007; Brown, 2008; Caluya, 2008). As I argue in this chapter, the release of semen can symbolise the ‘end’ of an erotic encounter – here is no different. The release of semen, on or in the body, provides an indication that the encounter must come to an end, and the other user should no longer occupy the home. This further highlights how these interactions are shaped by convenience, as bodies are only necessary until the moment of ejaculation. Therefore, men who use Grindr can become redundant once ejaculation has been achieved. Discursive identity categories that (re)produce bodies can re-emerge in these moments (Caluya, 2008).

As ejaculation can be symbolic of the ending of hook ups, the moment of finishing can often be unevenly experienced. The above quote from Charlie raises how he has learned to manage his expectations:

Charlie: I was chatting to a guy who lived in Cramlington and he was going on about how horny he was. And I drove there, and the drive there took longer than the sex did. So I got there and he’d obviously been far too excited and finished in about five minutes and I was like, ‘wow, okay, this drive took 25 minutes to get here, ‘I’ll be going now, thanks’. I think you learn to manage your expectations (Charlie, 33, white British).

For Charlie, travelling to a person’s house who is unable to sexually fulfil his needs leads to disappointment. As the sex was shorter than the journey, the encounter was not perceived to be worthwhile. Bodies that are in the same space at the same time can become sites of convenience, sites that have the potential to produce an orgasm. However, when bodies are unable to fulfil this potential they become (re)constructed as inconvenient because of the ‘effort’ that may be put into materialising the encounter. For

men to be unable to sexually ‘perform’ can disable claims to masculinities (Del Casino and Brooks, 2014). The geographies of the journey and the sexual encounter shapes the way Charlie understands this ‘failure’. It is through these encounters – when bodies are not convenient – that Charlie learns to manage his expectations of Grindr encounters.

The idea that offline Grindr encounters are convenient often emerged in many of the narratives. The following quote draws on an interview with Joel who discusses a hook up he had with another user that lived close by. What I want to highlight here, is how the sensual experience of touch shifted how Joel experienced the body of a user who did not ‘fulfil’ his expectations:

Joel: So, one night, I was at home in bed, and, we didn’t actually swap any pictures, just cos he lives quite close so it was just a case of ‘come over’... And when he arrived he was a lot skinnier than he looked in his profile and then yeah, he was just camp, talked camp, had the hand gestures and everything, and actually he wouldn’t stop talking as times, and I was like ‘oh shut the fuck up’ he literally talked for ages, and then I like ‘I’m tired now’... So, like I still, well like, I just let him suck me off, but I didn’t do anything to him, which he seemed fine with, so that was that.

Carl: Did you find him attractive?

Joel: not really, no... I mean he started off massaging my legs and that was quite nice, and then. Well he had, like he started sucking me off, and he was good at it, so I wasn’t really attracted to him, but he was giving good head so I wasn’t going to complain too much either ... he seemed to have quite a bit like foot fetish, so he started like massaging them, and then he started kissing them, which might not sound appealing at all, but it actually felt really good. And then I was like I just kind of thought the he was talented orally, so I just turned around and let him suck me off then (Joel, 20, white Irish).

The close proximity of Joel to this other user prompted him to not ask for pictures or engage in much conversation. Not long after the other user came into his home he noticed different aspects of his embodiment – size, voice and movements. These aspects of embodiment shifted the ways Joel engaged in the encounter. By watching and listening to

this user, Joel experiences anger, tiredness, boredom, and then he was not as attracted to his body. However, the movements, sounds and size did not produce affects that urged Joel to stop the encounter completely. The encounter began to shift and change when Joel experienced the touch of the other user on his skin. As their skins rubbed against different body parts the affective energy shifted in and through Joel's body. Here, Joel 'allows' desire to mobilise his body to become interlaced with another. The bodily barriers that may be rendered more stable as a response to 'camp' men, in terms of voice and movements, begin to be disrupted when sensual touching is enacted. As Brown (2008) highlights, the fleshy materiality of bodies can start to confuse discursive identities, as the affective forces involved in fleeting eroticism become central in shaping sexual subjectivities in times and place. For Joel, experiencing the touch of hands, a mouth, a tongue and saliva on his skin created a more erotic moment. It is in this moment that bodily boundaries become disrupted and their bodies interlace.

Bodily desire is not the only force that rendered boundaries unstable. Such desire is shaped by the spatial and temporal dimensions of the encounter. Joel was alone in his bedroom of his shared student house in Newcastle. The user he was talking with was close by and was willing to travel to Joel. Proximity and immobility shaped how desire, sex and touch were understood. At the same time, the home and bedroom can have multiple meanings, but they are often conflated with privacy (Gorman-Murray, 2008a). The bedroom particularly, can be a place where identities, subjectivities and desires can be practiced, performed and embodied (Johnston and Valentine, 1995). For Joel, I argue that the privacy is central in enabling touching to occur. The bedroom can provide a material protection away from the gaze of others, therefore the embodied dimensions that may evoke shame or embarrassment in men, when in public spaces (see 6.3), do not emerge in the same way. In other words, the lack of other bodies does not produce

visceral reactions that cause men to inhibit touching. The privacy provided by the bedroom allows touching to be embraced and continued which, in turn, enables bodily boundaries to be broken. Smith and Winchester (1998) highlight how the private space of the home can enable alternative versions of masculinities to be lived and played out, when public spaces demand hegemonic roles to be upheld. Discursive productions of masculine hierarchies can be rendered unstable through the ways gender and sexualities are embodied in the home.

However, I do not wish to romanticise the disruptive potential of touch. The relationship between bodies, space, touch and power dynamics is complex. As these sexual encounters are often resigned to private spaces of the home, eroticism is enabled by the removal of the gaze of 'other bodies'. Therefore, it could be argued that sexual acts are kept 'in the closet', as the touching is not enabled in public spaces (Brown, 2000; Hubbard, 2013). Heteronormative discourses relegate sexual and erotic acts to the home, whilst non-heterosexual touching is defined as 'out of place' in public spaces. Brown (2000) argues that the 'closet' is materialised through spatial practices. For example, non-heterosexual people may be out in leisure spaces but not in work ones. Although these participants are 'out', erotic touching with men who may be read and heard as 'gay' may be kept 'in' the privacy of the home as to not threaten public masculinities. This, I argue, is one way that men seek to limit the public embarrassment and shame that emerges when being seen and heard with men who are easily understood as 'gay' (see 6.3).

Caluya (2008) highlights how sensuous moments can bring racialised bodies closer together and confuse identity categories. However, he argues that bodies are always reducible to race through other moments, for example talking about racialised categories in conversation. In the case of Joel, although bodies were brought together through the feeling of touch, the narrative was still constructed through fixed notions of

masculine identities. Joel uses dualisms, such as camp/manly, masculine/feminine and man/woman, to describe identities, highlighting their omnipresence. Additionally, Joel states that he ‘let him’ perform oral sex. This suggests that the other Grindr user was given the privilege to touch, lick and kiss his penis, as Joel perceived him to be ‘talented orally’. Here, Joel (re)creates masculine hierarchies of ‘bodies that touch’ – with him being manlier than the other person in this encounter. The performance of masculine/feminine that emerge during sex are manifesting here. Therefore, haptic experiences are understood through unstable power dynamics that are simultaneously disrupted and reinforced.

This is not to say that desire, affect and touch do not have disruptive potential, as traditional identity categories (age, gender, sexualities) may not always neatly map onto Grindr practices. Instead, it highlights the multiplicity and complexity of gendered and sexualised power dynamics that shape experiences of touch, bodies and space. Touch, the proximity of other Grindr users and places of hook ups work together to shape the ways visceral arousal and desire emerge in and through bodies. In this sense, touching and sex are sensual and erotic experiences that are mobilised by desire and convenience. Touch is also saturated with complex power dynamics that have the ability to shape intimate sexual practices. Offline Grindr encounter, then, are assembled and made meaningful through multiple unstable elements that shape how gender, sex and sexuality are felt and experienced. In the following section, I draw together the empirical sections to conclude this chapter.

6.7 Conclusions

Anticipations and expectations of touch are central in shaping the haptic geographies of offline Grindr encounters. A haptic geographies approach has enabled an understanding

of touch as multisensory – involving sounds, smell, sights and cutaneous touch – and the way this works to shape Grindr encounters. In chapter five, I explored the ways Grindr conversations build visceral imaginations of gender, sexuality and touch, arguing that people learn how to practice and negotiate conversations in different ways. For men who use Grindr, the anticipations that emerge through digital profiles and conversations reorientate desires. Although the digital is embodied, there are different ways of doing materiality, and this shifts as we move in and through online and offline spaces. It is these shifts in materiality that disorients Grindr users and reorientates desire. I argue that these disorientations highlight that men are still learning how to do Grindr encounters. These moments highlight how masculinities and sexualities can be reorientated. By way of conclusion, I highlight three points to illustrate how a haptic geography of Grindr encounters provides a richer understanding of embodiment, gender, sexuality and place.

First, by exploring how men who use Grindr engage in hosting and guesting, and how they negotiate their anticipations, demonstrates how men are still ‘learning’ how to *do* Grindr. I have shown that there are multiple ways that Grindr encounters are played out and negotiated. The embodied, visceral, affective and emotional ways that shape the negotiations demonstrates that men who use Grindr are constantly learning how to feel through their encounters. The ways men are learning how to do Grindr highlights how online/offline binaries are complex and unstable in ways that inform sexual and spatial practices. Material practices and sensory experiences are produced through the digital. Haptic geographies highlights how digital (re)productions may not map neatly onto offline encounters, with the interactions of online and offline spaces (re)shaping how Grindr users experience bodies, genders and sexualities. Researching touch as a haptic, visceral and discursive experience is able to expose the instability of online/offline binaries.

Second, I have highlighted how men who use Grindr understand and embody place. Paying attention to eroticism and sex enabled an exploration of ways men think about masculinities and sexualities in and through public and private spaces. For example, a focus on touch when hosting and guesting enables an understanding of the sexual and gendered politics that shape Grindr users' geographies of the home, and also how such politics can be challenged through erotic place making. Thinking through haptic geographies can further interrogate the spatial constructions of homes and public spaces, and how they come to shape the ways we do gender and sexuality (Johnston, 2012).

Third, paying attention to ways men who use Grindr feel has also demonstrated how masculinities and sexualities are (re)shaped by haptic geographies. Men understand relational masculinities through multisensory experiences – smells, sounds, sight and cutaneous touch – of bodies and places. Examining this experience demonstrates how men's bodies can be mobilised by desire, touch and the multiple sexual practices that emerge in Grindr encounters. This highlights contributions to embodied masculinities research. Examining the haptic experiences of men can enable further understanding of men's lives and continue challenging stable notions of masculinities.

Focusing haptic geographies of has enabled an exploration of the ways Grindr encounters are material, fleshy, sensuous and performative. Therefore, in Grindr encounters masculinities and sexualities are assembled through touch, senses, conveniences, screens, technologies and objects that all gain meaning through the public and private spaces they are assembled in. Offline and online interactions are central in shaping these shifting assemblages, therefore constituting how masculinities, sexualities and bodies are lived, felt and experienced.

Chapter Seven: How to Do Grindr: Conclusions

In this thesis, I have explored the embodied experiences of men who use Grindr in Newcastle. I have argued that using Grindr has the capacity to disorientate and reorientate it's users in their everyday spaces and places, shaping the ways men perform and embody gender and sexuality differently. Using Grindr is not a seamless process. Men who use Grindr are constantly learning different ways to 'do' Grindr. There are multiple skills, practices and negotiations that different men are required to learn to make using Grindr more comfortable in different Grindr assemblages. Not all Grindr users are the same. Different men learn/are learning different skills dependent on their embodied identities, practices and experiences. I have taken a corporeal feminist geographic approach to men and Grindr to understand how bodies, technologies and spaces are complexly entangled. I have highlighted how using Grindr is more than visual, discursive and representational. Using Grindr is a material, fleshy, visceral, multisensory and corporeal experience that becomes entangled with technologies and place. Assemblage thinking shaped how I understand the relationships between bodies, objects and places – as working arrangements that are brought together by affective forces that enable gender and sexualities to emerge in and through places, differently. By taking a feminist and queer epistemological approach, I have been sensitive to the ways power, discourse and normativities emerge and become meaningful in these assemblages. In this final chapter, I provide concluding comments that summarise the arguments of this thesis and explore the contributions I make to geographical knowledge. Finally, I highlight three areas for future research to explore the entanglement of bodies, technologies and place and the ways they enable gender and sexualities to emerge differently.

7.1 Summary of thesis

This thesis has explored the digitally mediated everyday lives of men who use Grindr. I have focused on sexual practices as a response to Binnie's (2004, p. 74) critique (introduced in chapter one), who argues that sexualities research...

...has lost a radical cutting edge. It is rare to find much discussion of pervy sex or bodily fluids. Nowadays you would struggle to find much that is challenging within queer theory—or much to make 'straights' squeamish.

In part, I situate my research here. I have aimed to explore the embodied moods, sensations, emotions and affects that are involved in the imagination of sex, masturbation and sexual and erotic encounters with other bodies. I explored how these experiences are being mediated by digital screens that are increasingly shaping everyday lives. At the same time, I have remained sensitive to the ways power relations produce, organise and shape gendered and sexed bodies as sexual lives become mediated.

This PhD draws on interviews with 30 men who use Grindr in Newcastle. The sample of men are relatively young. 20 participants are under 30 years old, seven are between 30 and 39 and four are over 40. Furthermore 25 of the participants were white. Whilst qualitative research does not always seek to be representative of a broader population, the sample discussed does not necessarily 'represent' the experience of all men who use Grindr. I have discussed some of the experiences of those men who are over 35 and those who are non-white explicitly in chapters four and five, however the contributions of the thesis reflect men who are under 30 and are white.

To explore these experiences, I have been guided by three research questions. Here, I provide an 'answer' to these three questions, before summarising each chapter.

1. How does Grindr – as a technology and digital space – become meaningful in the lives of its users?

There are multiple ways that Grindr becomes meaningful in the lives of the men who use it. For example, it gives users a way to occupy themselves when they become bored, it enables people to chat with other users in ways that confirms their sexualities and also facilitates offline encounters. In chapter three, I highlighted how Grindr is used to manage and mediate moods, emotions, sensations and affects – such as relational experiences of boredom and horniness. In chapter five, I explored how Grindr becomes a way for men to sexually arouse their bodies and achieve ejaculation. I also highlight how particular bodily attachments to sex and sexuality can shape how men come to understand other Grindr users – sometimes highlighting how some men think other Grindr users should perform, constructing good/bad Grindr citizens. In chapter six, I explore how Grindr is used to facilitate convenient offline encounters, but can also become inconvenient when anticipations are not met. In chapters five and six, I highlight how Grindr often becomes entangled with convenience. For some users, Grindr is a convenient way to perform and embody sexualities. However, there are moments, encounters and places where Grindr feels less convenient with some participants understanding Grindr as facilitating encounters that are not ‘worthwhile’. Grindr – when assembled through multiple, bodies, objects and places – can acquire multiple and shifting meanings for the lives of the men who use it. These meanings are often dependent on the subjectivities and identities of the users and the times and places they engage with Grindr.

2. How are embodied experiences of gender and sexuality mediated by Grindr?

In this thesis, I explored how embodied experiences of gender and sexualities are becoming increasingly mediated. For example, the ways masculinity is performed, embodied and policed in and across Grindr profiles and online conversation and how screens become extensions of embodied sexual identities and practices. In chapter three, I highlighted how the screen can become an extension of the body in ways that symbolises

sexual practices and identities. I argued that this shapes how people experience sexual citizenship when on public transports. In chapter four, I focused on the ways that sex, sexuality and desire are constituted by images, skin, body parts, words, proximities, distances and localities. I argued that desire is reorientated through these assemblages. In chapter five, I demonstrated how visceral imaginaries of masculinities are assembled through phones, bodies, words and pictures. These elements are held in working arrangements, and given meaning, by affective forces of desire. In chapter six, I foreground the disorientations that emerge as men learn how to do Grindr encounters. Through this, I exposed how online encounters shape how gender and sexualities are learned, embodied and practices in offline spaces and encounter.

3. In what ways do shifting arrangements of bodies and Grindr enable gender and sexualities to emerge differently?

The ways that Grindr is assembled through multiple spatial arrangements enables gender and sexualities to emerge differently. I highlighted this by exposing the ways that masculinities and sexualities are being continually reorientated as men learn to live with digital screens and spaces. I explored how bodies are being reorientated through digital screens in everyday spaces and places in ways that produce different ways of doing gender and sexuality. These ways are still being learned by the men in this study. For example, using Grindr in work, whilst waiting and when moving requires gender and sexualities to be performed and negotiated in response to heteronormative discourses. These negotiations highlight both reproductions and subversions of the normative spatial boundaries of gender and sexualities. When thinking about Grindr as a digital space, gender and sexualities emerge through multiple assemblages of words, pictures, categories, locations and distances that shape how desire is felt and experienced. When men meet for offline encounters, haptic experiences shape how masculinities and

sexualities are understood, felt and negotiated. In some cases, distances, proximities and conveniences become more important for sexualities than normative ideas of masculinities, age and bodies. Through these examples, I highlight how becoming a Grindr user does not always map neatly onto discursive identity categories. Paying attention to the sensory, visceral and haptic dimensions of doing Grindr highlights how bodies, identities and spaces are more-than-representational, discursive and linguistic. This enables an understanding of the messy, multiple and unstable nature of identities – and the ways they are attempted to be organised by normative processes. In this sense, I have highlighted how screens are enabling and shaping how gender and sexualities are emerging differently.

In chapter three, I highlighted how Grindr users do not always feel comfortable using Grindr in public, meaning users learn where and when they can access the app. Therefore, homes, work, waiting and journeys constitute gender, sexualities and bodies in Grindr assemblages, meaning users have to learn how to do places differently. Another example of this is in chapter five, when users learn how to do work or gym spaces differently when they engage in erotic Grindr conversations. In chapter four, I highlighted how some Grindr users are learning ways to construct desirable profiles. The ways that users learn this skill involves a negotiation of gender, sexuality and desire. Finally, in chapter six, I explored how users are learning to negotiate offline Grindr encounters. This highlights how online/offline binaries are complex and unstable in ways that inform sexual and spatial practices. Material practices and sensuous experiences are produced through the digital. Haptic geographies highlights how digital (re)productions may not map neatly onto offline encounters, with the interactions of online and offline spaces (re)shaping how Grindr users experience bodies, genders and sexualities. In this sense, men learn how to do gender and sexualities differently in these unfamiliar spaces and

times. In the rest of this section, I summarise this thesis highlighting the central points of each chapter.

I have explored different – yet connecting – ways of thinking about gender, sexuality, and the digital. Each chapter focused on different material, corporeal and fleshy experience of using the digital, and the ways it enabled gender and sexuality to come into being. The four chapters took different approaches to corporeality - emotional, sensory, visceral and haptic. These approaches overlap in the way they appreciate how bodies *feel* through their sensory relations with place. Therefore, I was able to pay attention to the ways the inside and outside of bodies are entangled in experiences of digital technologies and space. I have been guided by feminist approaches to corporeality (Probyn, 2000; Longhurst, 2004; Probyn, 2004) that align with assemblage thinking (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). Each chapter begins with a short literature review that explores how I build on existing conversations, but also how I contribute to understandings of bodies, the digital and place

Chapter two explored the methodology used in this thesis. I highlighted how it is informed by feminist and queer epistemological approaches. I framed this chapter in debates on reflexivity (England, 1994; Kobayashi, 2003; Sultana, 2015). As a man who uses Grindr, I ‘write in’ my lusty body in hopes of disrupting dominant – and heteronormative – ways of conducting and producing knowledge. I argued that insider/outside positions are complexly interwoven when doing research as an ‘insider’. I paid attention to the ways my sexualities, desire and arousal were assembled in this project in and through encounters with participants and data. Throughout, I highlighted the importance of sharing ‘sexy’ stories that happen in the field.

In chapter three, I explored how the embodied moods, sensations, emotion and affects – that emerge through sensory engagements with places – are mediated by Grindr.

I attended to the ways the bodies *feel* using Grindr in particular places. To do this, I examined how particular moods, states and practices – horniness, boredom, habit and stillness – prompt men to use Grindr in the home, at work and on journeys. I highlighted that the ways that Grindr mediates moods, emotion, sensations and affects is unevenly experienced by men in particular places. For example, using Grindr out of habit or to ‘waste’ time is made possible by private spaces (homes) when men are alone. Whereas in public spaces and when journeying men feel shame at the risk of being recognised as a Grindr user. This shame emerges as some men do not want to be read as hypersexual bodies. Therefore, I argued that using Grindr has spatial limits. These spatial limits emerge as users do not always feel comfortable using Grindr in particular spaces and journeys where ‘other’ bodies are present. Men are learning where they feel comfortable using Grindr. I argued that this (re)maps notions of sexual citizenship – who has a right to enact their sexualities in public spaces? Therefore, Grindr users can only assemble their digitally mediated sexualities in spaces where they are not easily recognised as Grindr users, which (re)maps notions of public/private onto particular sexual practices.

Chapter four took a multisensory approach to constructing and looking at Grindr profiles. Thinking about the multisensory dimensions to the visual enabled an understanding of the ways that profiles are entangled in material embodied processes and practices. Both gazing and constructing Grindr profiles are shaped by different regulatory discourses that work to (re)produce men’s material lives. I highlighted how two relational constructions of masculinities emerge on the Grindr grid – hypersexual and lifestyle. These emerge through the different ways men display their bodies (body parts, skin and flesh) and use certain languages. I paid particular attention to ways these are produced through assemblages with material and offline lives. For example, the ways men attempt to keep their digital bodies and their material identities inconsistent – by hiding their face

and focusing on their skin – can cause hypersexual masculinities to emerge. I also explored how looking is a multisensory experience that is shaped by regulatory discourses. By this, I mean some men often look for young, slim and white bodies on Grindr. However, this way of looking can be reorientated by proximity of other users on the grid. I argued that men are constantly negotiating these regulatory discourses – that shape understandings of age, gender, sexuality, race and body size and shape – through their skins, bodies, flesh, distances and proximities in Grindr profiles. Through this, I highlighted how Grindr profiles are embedded in complex assemblages of online and offline objects, bodies and places that are brought into working arrangements through looking and a desire to touch/be touched.

Chapter five adopted a visceral geographic approach to digital Grindr conversations. I explored the ways semen and ejaculation come to be entangled with visceral imaginaries and use of Grindr. This chapter highlighted how Grindr is not always used to meet other men. Men who use Grindr often use the app to have erotic conversation with other users as they masturbate. I highlight how this enables men to ‘control’ how much of other men’s bodies they can invite into their private spaces. Erotic Grindr conversations are often centred on achieving ejaculation. Therefore, it is a convenient sexual practice that can be controlled. Ejaculation symbolises the moment when Grindr assemblages no longer have a function and therefore they can fall out of working arrangements. Ejaculation is one moment when the inside/outside of the body is explicitly blurred. Therefore, I adopt a visceral approach to pay attention to relationship between the inside/outside of the body and the places it is located in. In this chapter, I thought through the physiological, social and discursive to understand how masculinities come to be meaningful – and desirable – in the lives of Grindr users. I also paid attention to the way that these conversations are not experienced in the same ways by the men who

practice them. I argued that these practices have to be learned by different Grindr users so they are able to navigate these conversations comfortably. However, different people learn different ways of doing Grindr. Through this, I highlighted how learning to negotiate Grindr can mean learning how to manage, mediate and negotiate bodies, histories, memories, desires and identities

Chapter six adopted a haptic geographies approach to offline Grindr encounters. I used this lens as a way to explore touch as more than a tactile skin encounter. I framed human experiences of touch as multisensory. Furthermore, haptic geography encourages an appreciation of the relationship between the skin, muscle receptors and nerves that are aroused by bodies, objects and things that we do/do not want to be touched by. I highlighted ways that anticipation and expectations of touch are reconfigured when Grindr users meet ‘in the flesh’ and the different ways that men experience the desire to be touched when encounters are formed in the digital and move into offline spaces. For example, the ways voices, smells and objects can work to facilitate or inhibit bodies from touching. I highlighted how the unstable dichotomies of online/offline – and their constant interactions – shift understandings and experiences of bodies and materiality. In other words, different ‘parts’ of bodies come to matter in and between online and offline spaces. The negotiation of shifting materialities can often throw users into ‘disorientation’. I argue that this negotiation highlights how Grindr users are still learning how to ‘do’ Grindr encounters.

The four empirical chapters explored embodiment in different yet overlapping ways. I have taken approaches that consider how using Grindr involves emotional, visceral and multisensory experiences and practices. In this sense, I explored how the inside/outside of bodies blur in the ways they relate with other bodies, place and digital technologies. In each chapter, I have highlighted how using Grindr is not seamless and it

is fraught with ambiguities, contradictions and difficulties. Men who use Grindr must learn skills and knowledge to be comfortable using the app. Therefore, Grindr is reorientating the ways men do gender, sexuality and desire. In the next section, I explore what these conclusions contribute to geographical knowledge on sexualities, the digital and masculinities.

7.2 Sex, screens and men: contributions

The focus of this thesis has been to explore the ways gender and sexualities emerge and become meaningful as men use Grindr. I build on and contribute to feminist and queer understandings of the ways power reshapes, reorganises and reproduces gendered and sexed bodies, identities and places. I bring these ideas into conversations with recent debates in digital geography – to take a material and corporeally grounded approach to technologies. Therefore, this thesis contributes to understandings of how masculinities and sexualities come to be practiced, embodied and experienced as men use Grindr.

Throughout this thesis, I have explored how geographic concepts such as public/private, home, mobility, sexual citizenship and proximity and distance are being (re)produced, disrupted and reorientated as bodies become entangled with digital technologies in their everyday sexual lives. Therefore, I have contributed to geographic understandings of the ways technologies are shifting how we understand and experience space, place and bodies. In the introduction of this thesis, I highlighted three fields of study that this thesis builds on and contributes to; geographies of sexualities; digital geographies and; masculinities studies. In the following three sections, I highlight how I contribute to existing conversations in these fields of study.

7.2.1 Geographies of sexualities

‘Arguably, online and offline life are now so thoroughly intertwined that conceptualizing urban spaces requires understanding the embeddedness of technologies in our everyday lives. For gay men at least, the internet is the main facilitator for gay cruising’ (Nash and Gorman-Murray, 2016, p. 402)

This thesis is situated within geographies of sexualities research, exploring how sex and sexualities organise bodies, space and place. Building on the arguments of Nash and Gorman-Murray (2016), I explored how technologies are becoming increasingly embedded in everyday spatial lives. I have particularly spoke to concepts of sexual citizenship, morality and heteronormativity and how these emerge as bodies and technologies assemble. For example, in chapter three I highlight how the use of Grindr in and across public and private spaces (re)maps notions of respectable and moral sexual citizens. Additionally, chapters five and six explore moments when heteronormative spatial and bodily boundaries are disrupted and (re)made as men use Grindr for convenient sexual satisfaction. I have highlighted how identities, desire and place are continually organising gendered and sexed bodies. I contribute to conversations that highlight how ‘gay’ identities are multiple, with normative discourses being (re)produced amongst gay men (Nast, 2002; Casey, 2007; Brown, 2009). At the same time, I also explore where these discourses are complicated in moments of sex and touch.

I extended work in sexualities that seeks to think critically about the spatial dimensions of messy, fleshy and material sex (Binnie, 2004; Brown, 2008; Morrison, 2012a). Binnie (2004) and Brown (2008) have particularly critiqued the squeamish nature of geographies of sexualities research in the global north. Therefore, in chapters five and six I gave attention to various sexual practices - masturbation, kissing, licking, biting, and oral and penetrative sex – and the ways that these practices are mediated and (re)orientated through Grindr encounters. Furthermore, I highlight how men who use

Grindr experience, disrupt and (re)produce normative ideas of masculinity and sexuality through their visceral, haptic and affective geographies. Paying attention to the affective moments of touch can reveal subversions to dominant discourses. In other words, touchy feely sexual acts do not always neatly map onto discursive identity categories. Exploring sexualities in this way challenges the idea that sexed bodies and sexual identities are simply discursively produced. Therefore, sexualities should be understood as constituted by a myriad of flesh, bodies, senses, objects, emotions and affects that are in constant states of flux. I want to urge geographers to pay attention to intimate moments of sex to further understand how gender and sexualities come to be played out when bodies encounter one another – both online and offline. Furthermore, taking this approach to digitally mediated sex gives an enhanced understanding of how dominant ideas of gender and sexuality are being performed, embodied and felt in the spaces and places that are reorientated by digital technologies.

7.2.2 Digital geographies

Digital geographies are currently faced with many challenges and questions around how to conceptualise and understand the increasing integration of technologies into everyday lives (see Ash *et al.*, 2016 for review). This thesis builds on Kinsley's (2014, p. 378) call that geographers studying the digital should 'attend to the manifold ways in which technical activities convene assemblages of bodies, objects, languages, values and so on and fold them in and out of spatial practice', by exploring the ways Grindr becomes entangled in users everyday lives. To do so, I have focused on the multisensory, visceral and haptic experiences of bodies in encounters that are mediated by screens, phones, profiles, messages and pictures. For example, in chapter three I highlighted how shame can be felt by users when using Grindr in public spaces. In chapter four and five, I explored how experiences of profile and conversation spaces in and through Grindr are

multisensory, visceral and affective. I argued that these embodied intensities are shaped by men's sensory engagement with the spaces and places that technologies are used in. In chapter six, I highlighted how offline Grindr encounters are shaped by anticipations of touch. Therefore, fleshy encounters are negotiated when users hear, see, touch, smell and taste, fleshy and material bodies.

Digital screens are becoming increasingly integrated into our everyday lives in ways that are changing how we experience spaces, places and bodies. In this thesis, I have argued that digital technologies and spaces are shifting how men do gender and sexuality. I contribute to emerging work that highlights how bodies are becoming reorientated by the digital (Longhurst, 2017). Bringing together scholarship in feminist geography and geographies of sexualities, I highlight how contemporary dating, romantic and sexual practices are being mediated by technologies that enable gender and sexualities to emerge in different ways. The ways men desire to encounter other men's bodies is being reorientated by these technologies. Notions of control, public/private, convenience, proximity and distance are being reshaped by technologies, therefore they reorientate assemblages of desire. By exploring this, I contribute to the ways that the digital is reorientating how everyday spatial lives are being lived.

7.2.3 Masculinities

Finally, an important contribution is around studies of masculinities. Paying attention to the ways that gay men experience, desire and feel masculinities highlights how particular bodies come to be understood as (un)sexy. I have chosen to think about men and masculinity as something that is assembled in and through multiple spaces, objects, bodies and technologies by affective forces, emotions and desires. This thinking was inspired by Waitt and Stanes (2015, p. 31) who argue:

...gendered subjectivities emerge within material (bodies, things, objects) and expressive (ideas, affect/emotions, desire) forces that fold or assemble bodies within particular contexts. It is therefore possible to think of assembling masculinity within a context of situated body sizes, shapes, phenotypes, gestures, practices, ideas and desires while also in combination with the sensual responses to the myriad of material objects.

I have explored masculinity as something that is emergent and made meaningful by working arrangements of organic and inorganic things. For example, in chapter three I argue that bodies and technologies are becoming increasingly entangled as screens – or what can be seen on them – can be understood to be extensions of embodied gender and sexualities. Chapter five explored visceral imaginaries. I focused on the ways particular forms of masculinity are assembled – and made meaningful – through visceral imaginations during online Grindr conversations (Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy, 2010a). This means that language that is associated with ‘manly’ forms of masculinity (e.g. mate and lad), offer heightened physiological arousal and therefore come to be imagined as more desirable men. These ideas of masculinities emerge when men are in assemblage with Grindr, attempting to arouse themselves to achieve an orgasm. Chapter six explores how different parts of men’s bodies come to matter when these assemblages shift and men meet in the flesh. Here, I highlight how multisensory experiences of Grindr encounters can shift and change the visceral imaginaries that are assembled in online conversations. These examples highlight how masculinities are constantly assembled and reassembled in Grindr arrangements.

This way of thinking about masculinities shifts focus from hierarchical understandings that resign gay men to subordinate positions (Connell, 1995). Instead, I explore the multiple bodies, objects and things that make masculinities meaningful for different men. Furthermore, it has enabled me to think about masculinity as more than

discourse. Instead, masculinity is understood as emerging through sensory engagements that produce visceral, emotional and affective arousal. This approach opens up masculinity as more than simply physiology or discursive and it recognises the relational nature of these positions. Therefore, I build on ideas that masculinities are constantly experienced through assemblages of physiology, material, social, discursive and spatial. Masculinities are lived through multiple factors, things and arrangements. Using assemblage thinking to explore the ways bodies and technologies enables gender and sexualities to emerge can open up geographic understanding of place. In the final section, I highlight three directions for future research that this thesis has revealed.

7.3 Digital bodies and geography: looking forward

In this thesis, I have explored how a visceral, multisensory and material exploration of the digital can enhance understandings of the ways gender and sexuality can emerge and be made meaningful. In this section, I highlight three directions that open up further avenues for geographical scholarship. I want to suggest increased attention be given to ‘digital bodies’. Throughout this thesis I have pointed to ways bodies *become* digital – the ways they are becoming increasingly entangled with technologies. Geographical scholarship on bodies and technologies requires continued critical attention. Exploring the ways that digital and flesh are becoming entangled can reveal how people are experiencing spaces differently. In other words, how gendered and sexed bodies emerge in and through the entanglement of fleeting and durable spatial arrangements or assemblages comprised of material (human bodies, things) and expressive (ideas, emotions and affects) elements. Using feminist notions of bodies, I urge geographers to consider the following three directions for research. First, to explore the material, embodied and corporeal practices that shape how and why we become digital. Second, to examine how bodies – that are

always located – negotiate everyday life that is mediated by screen. Third, to think through how researching these practices can help explore the power relations that organise gendered and sexed bodies. In the rest of this section, I highlight how these directions can advance understandings of technology, the digital and bodies.

Exploring the material, embodied and corporeal practices that shape how and why we become digital. This involves paying attention to the bodily, material and affective forces that shape the ways we construct, maintain and regulate how we become digital. Therefore, attention has to be paid to how the fleshy body feels when becoming entangled with the digital. For example, in chapter four I have highlighted the multisensory ways that profiles are constructed. At the same time, what other bodily processes are involved here? What is the embodied, emotional and identity works that are involved in becoming digital? These can help us understand the way that digital profiles, conversations and social medias are fleshy, material, and multisensory, but also the embodied effort, skills and knowledge involved in bringing digital bodies into being.

Examining how bodies – that are always located – negotiate everyday life that is mediated by screen. This involves paying attention to the ways people feel increasingly comfortable and uncomfortable using certain digital technologies in and through particular places. The ways different people feel in different places is important here. People are not the same - multiple identity positions are always emerging and this can shape how people engage with digital technologies and spaces. As I argued in chapter three, using Grindr on public transport reveals how sexual citizenship is (re)mapped through bodies and screens and in chapter five how certain men are still learning skills to negotiate the sexual politics of Grindr. We are increasingly living with screens. Therefore, how they mediate everyday lives and how we negotiate their presence can enhance understanding and experiences of space and place. What bodies feel more

comfortable with what screens and where? How are screens shaping how we negotiate power as we move through cities or across public and private spaces? This could enhance geographic insights to the ways power organises bodies and how power is subverted by bodies when they are assembling with digital technologies and screens.

Thinking through how researching these practices (the first two directions) can help explore the power relations that organise gendered and sexed bodies. This can further understand how power, politics and regulation shape everyday lives that are becoming increasingly mediated by the digital. I find this question important for feminist geographies, geographies of sexualities and queer geographies. What tools – conceptual, methodological and epistemological – can assist in understanding discourses that (re)produced genders and sexualities? In this thesis, I have paid attention to the ways gender, sexuality and desire are organised, regulated and shaped as bodies and the digital are assembled. At the same time, I have explored how gender and sexualities emerge in different ways by paying attention to the multiple ways bodies are reorientated through relations with the digital. Understanding how we are *doing* identities, normativities and bodies in a digital ‘age’ can help geographers better think through the ways that people are being regulated, marginalised and oppressed, but also the moments of disruption, contestation and subversion. I hope these ideas are developed to think through a wide ranging host of digital technologies (For example, mobile phone apps, digital watches and tablets) spaces and interfaces that are (re)shaping everyday spaces, places and bodies.

Appendix A: Demographic information form

Some Details About you

You do not have to disclose any information you do not feel comfortable with.

About You

What is your name?
(pseudonym) _____

What is your current address?
(Current area) _____

Age _____

Ethnicity _____

Sexuality _____

Relationship status _____

Grindr

How long have you used Grindr? _____

How often do you use Grindr?
(Daily, weekly etc.) _____

Grindr Tribe(s) used _____

Appendix B: Research information sheet

Information Sheet for Interviewees

Title of study: ‘No camp, no fem’: exploring the ways men ‘do’ masculinities and sexualities across



Grindr

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What Does This Study Aim to Do?

Online social networking has become a very important part of our everyday lives. The development of smart phone, geosocial networking apps has begun to change the way we interact and meet other people, Grindr being one of the most popular for men. This study will explore how men understand and engage with ideas of ‘manliness’ and ‘masculinities’ across Grindr, particularly focusing on the ways people present their bodies through the internet.

What is involved if I take part?

There will be an interview which will last approximately 1-2 hours. They will be in an informal, conversational style and will be recorded using a Dictaphone.

The second stage involves keeping a 1-4 month length diary (time spent is negotiable) about your experiences across Grindr. If you wish to record a diary you will be provided with further information about it and a diary.

Confidentiality

All information that will be shared will in confidence and you will be anonymised by the use of a pseudonym. All ethical regulations of Newcastle University will be upheld throughout the research. You have the right to withdraw yourself and your information at any time.

The Results

The research is part of a postgraduate geography PhD project. If you wish to be provided with a copy please leave your details and I will forward the completed project.

Contact Information

Researcher: Carl Thompson 07891269028

c.a.b.thompson@newcastle.ac.uk

Supervisor: Peter Hopkins (0191)2083924

peter.hopkins@newcastle.ac.uk

Appendix C: Research Interview Consent Form

NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY
Geography, Sociology and Politics



**Title of study: ‘No camp, no fem’: exploring
the ways men ‘do’ masculinities and sexualities across Grindr**

Research Interview Consent Form

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research.

The researcher will provide a written document for you to read before you agree to take part. If you have any questions arising from this, ask the researcher before you decide whether to take part. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

I confirm that I have read the statement provided for the above research project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, without needing to give a reason.

I agree to the interview being audio-recorded.

I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in the research project and publication.

I would like to view and edit my transcript after the interview Yes No

Name of participant Date Signature

Researcher Date Signature

One copy to the participant and one to the researcher

Appendix D: Participant Diaries Information Sheet

Participant Diaries Information Sheet

Title of study: ‘No camp, no fem’: exploring the ways men ‘do’ masculinities and sexualities across

Grindr



You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is involved if I take part?

It will involve recording your own diary (audio, video, visual) for a period 1-4 months (time is negotiable) about your interactions on Grindr. In the diary I would like you to think about and reflect upon particular aspects of your encounters and everyday experiences:

- Do certain things about people’s profiles influence how you understand their ‘manliness’?
- How you respond to Grindr interactions
- How do conversations/interactions across Grindr make you feel?
- What happens when you meet people – are they as expected?
- Where do these interactions take place?

These are a rough guide to get you started, you may write about other things you find interesting. If you have any issues or questions whilst completing the diary please do not hesitate to contact me via the details below.

Confidentiality

All information that will be shared will be in confidence and you will be anonymised by the use of a pseudonym. All ethical regulations of Newcastle University will be upheld throughout the research. You have the right to withdraw yourself and your information at any time.

The Results

The research is part of a postgraduate geography PhD project. If you wish to be provided with a copy please leave your details and I will forward the completed project.

Contact Information

Researcher: Carl Thompson 07891269028

c.a.b.thompson@newcastle.ac.uk

Supervisor: Peter Hopkins (0191)208392

peter.hopkins@newcastle.ac.uk

Appendix F: Ethical form/approval

Survey name (ID): Full Ethical Approval Form Version 1.4 (03/09/2014) (661978)	
Date submitted submitdate	17-03-2015 14:51:57
Applicant Details	
Is this approval for a:	Student Project [A2]
What type of degree programme is being studied?	Postgraduate Research (e.g. PhD) [A3]
Name of Principal Researcher	Carl Anthony Bonner Thompson
Please enter your email address	c.a.b.thompson@newcastle.ac.uk
Please select your school / academic unit	Geography, Politics and Sociology [AA16]
Please enter the module code	8200F PhD SSCI
Please enter the supervisor email:	peter.hopkins@newcastle.ac.uk
Please enter the supervisor's school / unit	Geography, Politics and Sociology [AA16]
Project Details	
Project Title	'No camp, no fem': exploring the ways men 'do' masculinities and sexualities across Grindr
Project Synopsis	My ESRC funded PhD is situated in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and will explore the ways men who use Grindr are 'doing' sexualities and masculinities. Bodies will be placed at the centre of this project, examining how discourses of gender and sexualities and shaping and shaped by online performances of identity. Therefore, the ways online space becomes, or can become embodied, through materiality will also be part of this research. Grindr is a social networking mobile 'app' for non-heterosexual men which is arguably reshaping socio-sexual relations between men. I will be using a combination of queer and feminist theoretical, conceptual and methodological tools to interrogate the ways in which sexuality and gender are constituted through online spaces. Semi-structured interviews and participant research diaries will be conducted with participants recruited from Grindr directly.
Project start date	06-07-2015
Project end date	01-03-2016
Is the project externally funded?	Yes - I do not have a MyProjects reference number [A2]
Project Funder Details [Primary funder][Funder Name]	ESRC
Does your project involve collaborators outside of the University?	No [N]

High risk areas flagged at preliminary review [Animals]	No [N]
High risk areas flagged at preliminary review [NHS]	No [N]
High risk areas flagged at preliminary review [Humans in a non-clinical setting]	Yes [Y]
Existing Ethics, Sponsorship & Responsibility	
Has ethical approval to cover this proposal already been obtained?	No [N]
Will anyone be acting as sponsor under the NHS Research Governance Framework for Health and Social Care?	No [N]
Do you have a Newcastle upon Tyne Hospital (NUTH) reference?	No [N]
Will someone other than you (the principal investigator) or your supervisor (for student projects) be responsible for the conduct, management and design of the research?	No [N]
Project Outline & Proposed Research Methods	
Project Outline & Aims In everyday language, briefly explain the aims of this research including the anticipated benefits and risks. In cases where the use of technical or discipline specific terms is unavoidable, please explain their meaning clearly.	<p>This project will explore how men who use Grindr practice and understand their masculinities and sexualities. I will be examining how men, who are using Grindr to interact with other men, understand what it means to 'be a man' and how this may influence their daily interactions across Grindr. Our gender is lived through our bodies therefore bodies will be central to this project. However, when using online space there are no physical 'bodies', yet the internet can become embodied (images, texts, descriptions) therefore I will be exploring the ways masculinities become embodied across Grindr. There has been extensive research into masculinities in contexts such as schools, work, home, leisure, sport and the media, however there is less written about the ways in which masculinities are constructed through the internet, with even less research around social networking. Furthermore non-heterosexual men often receive less attention in discussions of masculinities, as they are assumed to be 'subordinated' to other men. This project seeks to examine such claims further, therefore exploring sexual and gendered dimensions of Grindr. Grindr is a social networking mobile phone application that is reserved for men. It is a geosocial networking 'app' which uses mobile phone location-services in order to show other Grindr users closest to an individual. Its aim is to 'connect' non-heterosexual men within a specific proximity. Men who use Grindr can vary in their sexuality in that they can identify as gay, bisexual, or even straight as men who are not 'out' often use Grindr, therefore this project will not be exclusive to 'gay' men. Opening up masculinities research to multiple sexual identities will provide innovative empirical data to an ever-growing field of study. Research aims/questions: To critically explore the ways masculinities and sexualities are interrelated and how such relationships cause Grindr users to 'do' gender across online spaces. 1. Explore the multiple discourses of masculinities which are working in and through Grindr 2. Explore the ways Grindr users understand their own and other users masculinities 3. Examine the</p>

	<p>extent online embodiment shapes the multiple ways the way men ‘do’ their gender This project will recruit participants directly from Grindr itself, therefore there is a risk about meeting individuals and what they may expect from our meeting. I aim to meet participants in public spaces or in university rooms (cafes, interview rooms) in order to avoid unwanted sexual encounters. Furthermore as discussion will focused around sensitive issues of gender and sexualities, therefore I will not force participants to discuss anything they do not feel comfortable with.</p>
<p>Proposed Research Methods (Experimental Design). In everyday language, please provide an outline of the research methods in a clear step by step chronological order. Noting any pertinent information such as whether the research involves overseas partners and how you will handle the research data.</p>	<p>This qualitative project will employ two different research methods, participant research diaries and semi-structured interviews, in order to gain a fuller understanding of their experiences. I aim to recruit 40 interview participants who will then be invited to record a participant diary for approximately three months. I aim to recruit 20 of the 40 interview participants to record a participant diary. The length of this will vary depending on the time participants are available to complete the dairy, however there will be an aim for three to four months. I will recruit participants from Grindr by setting up a personal profile which will explicitly state that my academic intentions. The profile will specify that I am looking for research participants only, and that the interests are strictly academic. I will send a standardised instant message to those online at the same time as myself inviting individuals to take part in an interview and I will reiterate that my I am only looking for research participants. By explicitly stating my academic intentions on Grindr I hope to reduce the risk that participants may assume I am also have romantic or sexual interests. I will also ask participants if they would record a participant research diary, but I would be explicit that this also optional. The recruitment will begin in July 2015 with the establishment of a profile. I will log onto to the app several times a day through my personal mobile phone in order to contact as many participants as possible. Once individual participants agree to take part I will offer them to communicate either by e-mail address of mobile phone number to arrange an interview. This will be done to make contacting one another easier. E-mail give me an opportunity to send more information about the study (vis. an information sheet) to the participant and I can answer any questions. Participants will be given the opportunity to select the public venue that the interview will take place. If they do not have a preference I will chose a local coffee shop. Upon meeting the participant(s) I will provide them with an opportunity to ask me any question before providing them with the consent forms to read and sign. The interviews will be recorded through an electronic Dictaphone whilst I take some personal notes. Once the interview in completed the participant will be invited to ask any questions. I will also invite participants to record one of the participant diaries and offer the chance for them to ask any questions and negotiate a time-period in which they would like to record. If participant agree to record a diary I will provide them with the relevant ethical forms and a physical diary. I will maintain contact with diary participants throughout their writing period to act as a gentle reminder and to answer any questions.</p> <p>September 2014 – June 2015: Literature review and methodology plans July 2015: Set up online Grindr profile and contact participants. July/August 2015 – March 2016: Begin conducting interviews with participants and providing research diaries. The recorded interviews will be transcribed and analysed based on information from the literature review. Continue to contact participants who are completing diaries and arrange to collect them once they are complete. March 2016 – onwards: continue transcription and analysis</p>
<p>Humans in a Non-Clinical setting</p>	
<p>Participant Details Does the research specifically target participants recruited who are:</p>	<p>Yes [A1]</p>

[Adults (over 18 years old and competent to give consent)]	
Participant Details Does the research specifically target participants recruited who are: [Children / Legal minors (anyone under 18 years old)]	No [A2]
Participant Details Does the research specifically target participants recruited who are: [People from non-English speaking backgrounds]	No [A2]
Participant Details Does the research specifically target participants recruited who are: [Persons incapable of giving consent]	No [A2]
Participant Details Does the research specifically target participants recruited who are: [Prisoners or parolees]	No [A2]
Participant Details Does the research specifically target participants recruited who are: [Recruited through a gatekeeper]	No [A2]
Participant Details Does the research specifically target participants recruited who are: [Welfare recipients]	No [A2]
How many participants do you plan to recruit?	40
From which source and, by what means do you plan to recruit your participants?	Participants will be approached through Grindr directly. I will establish a profile which will explicitly specify the academic intentions of the research from which I will contact individual users with a standardised message. When engaging with individuals through Grindr I will continually reiterate that I do not have any romantic or sexual intentions. Therefore participants should not 'expect' our encounter to be more than an interview. The message will ask if the user would like more information about the study and if they would like to take part in an interview. From here I will offer my e-mail address so I can send over relevant information forms. I will also use a snowballing technique if an opportunity arises. If participants or any personal contacts know of anyone who has used Grindr and may be interested in participating in the study I will ask if I could contact them to request an interview.
Participant Information [Will you inform participants that their participation is voluntary?]	Yes [A1]

Participant Information [Will you inform participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?]	Yes [A1]
Participant Information [Will you inform participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?]	Yes [A1]
Participant Information [Will you provide an information sheet which includes the contact details of the researcher / research team?]	Yes [A1]
Participant Information [Will you obtain written consent for participation?]	Yes [A1]
Participant Information [Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation (i.e. give them an explanation of the study aims and hypotheses)?]	Yes [A1]
Participant Information [Will you provide participants with a written debriefing too?]	No [A2]
Participant Consent Please describe the arrangements you are making to inform potential participants, before providing consent, of what is involved in participating in your study and the use of any identifiable data, and whether you have any reasons for withholding particular information. Due consideration must be given to the possibility that the provision of financial or other incentives may impair participants' ability to consent voluntarily.	All potential participants will receive an information sheet (if they wish too) outlining the aims and intentions behind the research (see attached). The information sheet will be available for participants to read before any decisions about the involvement are made. In order to do this I will offer the chance for participants to be sent via e-mail. The form will provide potential participants with a greater depth of information about the study than can be given via Grindr, therefore allowing them to make a better informed decision. The sheet will be void of academic 'jargon' to allow individuals to have a full understanding of the nature of the study. There are separate information sheets for both the interviews and research diaries as they are slightly different in nature, both of which will be available for participants at any point of the research process. The information sheet will contain the research aims and intentions alongside my contact details. I will outline that participants will remain anonymous and will be assigned pseudonym for their own confidentiality. Furthermore I will ensure participants understand that they have the right to withdraw before, during or after the interview. I it will also state that participants may have access to the research findings once the PhD is completed. Any questions can be asked throughout the recruitment process.
Participant Consent II Participants should be able to provide written consent. Please describe the arrangements you are making for participants to provide their full consent before data collection begins. If you think gaining consent in this way is inappropriate	Participants will also be provided with a separate consent which will clarify that they have understood all the information they have been provided with and that they are still willing to take part. This from will be signed and date by myself and participants in order to confirm this (see attached). Again, this form will also be void of academic 'jargon' to allow for a fuller understanding. By signing the consent form participants will confirm; they have read the statement provided for the above research project and have had the opportunity to ask questions; there participation is voluntary and are free to withdraw from the project at any time, without needing to give a reason; they agree to the interview being audio-recorded; the use of anonymised quotes in the research

<p>for your project, please explain how consent will be obtained and recorded. (A copy of your consent form must be provided with your submitted application)</p>	<p>project and publication. The participant and I will be provided with a copy of the consent form so we are both aware of the agreement. Due to the sensitivity of the research, the consent agreement will be referred to throughout the research process in order to remind participants that they do not have to answer any questions which they may find uncomfortable or withdraw themselves at any time.</p>
<p>Participant Debriefing It is a researcher's obligation to ensure that all participants are fully informed of the aims and methodology of the project, that they feel respected and appreciated after they leave the study, and that they do not experience significant levels of stress, discomfort, or unease in relation to the research project. Please describe whether, when, and how participants will be debriefed. (A copy of your debriefing sheet must be provided with your submitted application)</p>	<p>At the end of the interview participants will be have the opportunity to ask any question about the research and I will answer honestly. However, this research is not covert meaning participants will not be deceived at any point and they will be made fully aware of the research aims, topic and theme. Therefore, it not necessary to provide participants with a debriefing sheet as there will be no extra-information required. I will ask the participants if they feel distressed about any of the topics we have been discussing and ask if they would like any help, however this work is confidential so I can only do so if the participant wishes. They will be able to keep the information sheet so they may be able to contact me at any point if they have any further questions to ask me. Furthermore I will still be accessing Grindr throughout the research process and therefore participants can freely contact me, and I them, via the app. Those participants who record a diary will also be in constant contact with me and therefore I can ensure that they need any support as they complete the diary.</p>
<p>Potential risk to participants and risk management procedures Identify, as far as possible, all potential risks (small and large) to participants (e.g. physical, psychological, etc.) that may be associated with the proposed research. Please explain any risk management procedures that will be put in place and attach any risk assessments or other supporting documents. Please answer as fully as possible.</p>	<p>See risk assessment for full breakdown of risks. There are no physical risks in conducting interviews with participants in public spaces which are no different to that of everyday risks. If I meet participants in a public area which involves walking to the meeting place then I will follow strict safety rules when crossing roads. There may be greater ethical risks to my participants as I will be discussing a topic which could be deemed sensitive by individuals. Issues of sexuality and their behaviour on a networking website. To manage this I will ensure participants are aware that they do not have to share any information which they do not feel comfortable with and withdraw themselves at all times. Furthermore, I need to be sensitive to user's sexual identification. Some of the men who use Grindr may not be 'out' to wider society and may even be involved in heterosexual relationships (girlfriend, wife), therefore if any of these men agree to take part I will keep their Grindr activities confidential and protect their information like all other participants. Furthermore, as they have the choice of venue for the interview they can select somewhere they would feel comfortable. Additionally, some 'gay' men may also be involved in relationships with other men, therefore discretion would be understood as important and I would ensure that their Grindr activities were again kept confidential.</p>
<p>Please describe how data will be accessed, how participants' confidentiality will be protected and any other considerations. Information must be provided on the full data lifecycle, from collection to archive.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Data</p> <p>I will follow the ESRC data management plan, which is attached to the approval form. All field note which are taken during the research process will transferred to a university issued computer at the earliest point possible and the paper copy will be destroyed. Until they can be destroyed they will be stored in a locked draw. Interviews will be recorded via a Dictaphone and will also be transferred to university issued computer at the earliest opportunity. The Newcastle University issued laptop will serve as a 'work computer' and will be used to store all research information. This laptop is password secured and can only be accessed by me. Documents which contain any form of personal, sensitive and interview data will be encrypted and password protected to protect</p>

<p>Alternatively please send a copy of your data management plan to the ethics committee. Please note that you plan to do this in the box below.</p>	<p>participant confidentiality. To prevent files becoming lost or corrupt, they will be uploaded to my personal area on the Newcastle University's server through RAS, which is also password protected and only accessible by me. All the data collected will be destroyed upon completion of the PhD and/or after research has been published. Once the interview has been conducted participants will have the opportunity to choose a pseudonym which their transcripts will be known as from this point onwards. If the participants do not want to choose a pseudonym then I will assign then one. Only I will have access to each participants information which will be saved on the password protected university issued laptop. If a participant wished to read their transcript I will provide a copy either through e-mail or print. Parts of transcripts will be shared with supervisors. If the transcripts were to be used in the final PhD or any subsequent publications they will be anonymised and any information that may identify them will be removed or changed.</p>
<p>Permissions</p>	
<p>Risk Considerations & Insurance</p>	
<p>What are the potential risks to the researchers themselves? This may include: personal safety issues, such as those related to lone working, out of normal hours working or to visiting participants in their homes; travel arrangements, including overseas travel; and working in unfamiliar environments. Please explain any risk management procedures that will be put in place and note whether you will be providing any risk assessments or other supporting documents.</p>	<p>A risk assessment has been attached to fully understand and create procedures to deal with risks. When conducting the interviews I will be working alone and therefore there are risk associated. Due to the eroticised nature of Grindr, some participants may assume that I wish to engage in sexual acts, therefore interviews conducted in public places or university buildings, rather than participants homes, will help prevent any participants from attempting to engage in such acts. Furthermore I will be conscious of my researcher identity and therefore taking on this role. As participants will be contacted through Grindr, the interview will be the first time I will meet the participants. Meeting individuals in populated public prevents any danger I may encounter meeting a stranger in a non-public place. I will also ensure that I have a contact within the city who will know when I am conducting an interview and when I am expected to finish. I will notify this individual once the interview has been completed, however if I do not make contact within a specified time frame, my personal contact will have instructions to follow.</p>
<p>Supporting Documentation</p>	
<p>Please specify which documents you will be supplying in support of your documentation. [Participant consent form]</p>	<p>Yes [Y]</p>
<p>Please specify which documents you will be supplying in support of your documentation. [Participant information sheet]</p>	<p>Yes [Y]</p>
<p>Please specify which documents you will be supplying in support of your documentation. [Project risk assessment]</p>	<p>Yes [Y]</p>
<p>Please specify which documents you will be supplying in support of your</p>	<p>Yes [Y]</p>

documentation. [Data management plan]	
Please specify which documents you will be supplying in support of your documentation. [Other]	Lone working policy and Risk assessment

Carl Thompson (PGR)

From: Wendy Davison Sent: 11 May 2015 15:44

To: Carl Thompson (PGR) Cc: Peter Hopkins Subject: Ethical Approval

Dear Carl

Thank you for your application for ethical approval of your project "No camp, no fem": Exploring the ways men "do" masculinities and sexualities across Grindr. I confirm that Daniel Zizzo is happy to approve it on behalf of HaSS Ethics Committee subject to each interviewee being able to see a copy of the transcript of his interview and have an option to amend it or delete it within a reasonable timeframe if he feels uncomfortable with any of its content, without needing to provide any justification for doing so. This clarification would go on the consent form. We would be grateful if you could confirm that you are happy to do this and provide a copy of the amended form to complete our records.

Finally, please note that this approval applies to the project protocol as stated in your application - if any amendments are made to this during the course of the project, please submit the revisions to the Ethics Committee in order for them to be reviewed and approved.

Kind regards,

Wendy

Wendy Davison PA to Daniel Zizzo (Dean of Research and Innovation)

Lorna Taylor (Faculty Research Manager)

Sue Mitchell (Research Funding Development Manager)

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Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 7RU

Telephone: 0191 208 6349 Fax: 0191 208 7001

Appendix G: Interview schedule

- Tell me a bit more about yourself?
- Tell me about your first engagement with Grindr
 - When you first downloaded it
 - What did you fill out on the profile
 - How much did you fill out of the profile
 - Has this changed much?
 - Why?
- Tell me about your use of Grindr,
 - What you do from when you first open the app/what is involved in your average Grindr 'session'.
 - Is it something that you 'dip' in and out of/do you leave it open?
 - Where do you access it?
 - What are you looking for?
 - When/how does this change?
 - What are the main reasons you use Grindr?
 - What type of people do you chat to?
 - How do you chose who to chat to and who to reply to?
 - Does it make a difference if you're drunk or sober?
 - How does time of day effect your use of Grindr?
- Masculinity
 - What does 'manly' mean to you?
 - Can you describe a 'masculine' men?
 - What qualities about other men do you find manly?
 - Do they have to have particular body size?
 - Is it about muscles?
 - How important is exercise?
 - What are your thoughts on body hair?
 - Should they wear Aftershave?
 - How important is intelligence?
 - What is the significance of dress? (Uniforms, suits, jeans, tracksuits)
 - What about camp men?
 - What are your thoughts on men who wear fake tan?

- What are your thoughts on men make up?
- What about men who pluck their eyebrows?
- Men who walk in feminine way
- What do you look for in a man?
- For you personally, what does a desirable man look like on Grindr?
- How do you look for this on Grindr?
 - Profile picture – what they’re wearing, undressed, background, blanks
 - Bio – no info, likes, dislikes, no camp, masc
 - Tribes – manly tribes? What do you look for?
 - Ethnicity
 - Body type – what do you prefer, what’s manly?
- How do you chose a man to chat to on Grindr?
- Do you have anything on your profile to indicate your preference?
- Messaging
 - In what ways are the type of words other people use important to your interactions?
 - Can you give an example?
 - What can you tell about a person from their messages
 - How does this influence your decision to continue speaking to them?
 - How do you write out your replies?
 - What type of language do you use?
 - In what ways do you think this says something about who you are?
 - Is there a manly way of typing?
 - Do you ever sext?
 - How do messages make you react?
- Meeting people
 - Are people as you expect when/if you meet them?
 - What do you do if you meet a man who you though was masculine on Grindr but isn’t necessarily what you thought of as ‘manly’?
 - What about meeting men who you thought were feminine online but are actually ‘blokey’ offline
 - Are there certain characteristics that are difficult to portray online? Examples?
 - Have people ever thought you were different?

- What have your sexual experiences been like?
- How do you think your masculinity compares to that of other men?
 - What type of man are you?
 - Do you think you're a particular type of man?
 - What makes you a man?
 - Are you a different man in different place?
 - How do you portray this in your profile?
 - What type of man are you on Grindr
 - What is it like being that type of man on Grindr?
 - Is Grindr important to you as a man/manliness?
 - Has anyone from Grindr ever questioned your type of manliness?
 - What happened?
 - How did this make you feel?
- What about your profile
 - What is your picture, describe it if you could/ maybe show me?
 - What is in the background of this image
 - Why have you chosen this one specifically?
 - What do you think it portrays about yourself?
 - Does it say much your manliness?
 - Did you change your profile picture beforehand? If so why?
 - Bios – what does this say?
 - What information about yourself do you prioritise in this section?
 - What do you make sure that people know about you?
 - What information do you leave off that you would like other people to know?
 - What does your bio say about the type of man you are?
 - Tribes – what do you identify with?
 - Why these ones?
 - In what ways do you think these have something to do with your masculinity
 - What about your sexuality?
 - Ethnicity
 - Is this an important part of your profile?

- Body type
 - How important is this for you to show over Grindr
- Final questions – these are based on the recruitment process and the interview itself
 - What were your thoughts about me, as a researcher, using Grindr, inviting you to conduct this interview
 - What was it about my profile and the ways I interacted with you that influenced your decision to come for this interview
 - How did you find talking about being a man and masculinities
 - Do you think any of these ideas would have been different if I had been a woman or transgender even?

Appendix H: List of codes

Name/code	Sources	References
Grindr/digital	1	1
(Dis)embodiment	7	13
Closeness	2	4
Emotion	6	11
Voice	1	1
Advertising	9	13
Everyday practices	7	9
Bonding activities	1	2
Location and proximity	7	13
Messages	23	69
Motivations	15	28
Boredom	7	8
Pictures	5	6
Time	3	4
Everyday spaces	15	26
Hooking up	10	13
Online identities	7	13
Profiles	1	1
Bios	18	30

Pictures	24	44
Masculinities	0	0
(Dis)embodied masculinity	0	0
Age	14	29
Body dependent	6	10
Body language	19	33
Camp-ness	21	30
Class	8	18
Dress	16	31
Emotion	10	15
Hair	24	52
Materiality and flesh	11	14
Normal	3	3
Parts of bodies	5	5
Practices	26	74
Private vs. public	3	6
Profession	6	9
Race and ethnicity	4	7
Sexuality	21	47
Size and shape	31	157

Strength	1	2
Violence	2	2
Voice	20	34
Constructing masculinity	3	15
Against 'over manliness'	4	9
Age	14	30
Biology	2	2
Class	4	5
Effeminacy	8	13
Emotion	5	7
Ethnicity	1	2
Family	6	16
Job	11	22
Leisure	16	34
Morality	4	7
Normal or middle	6	13
Personality	24	55
Place	2	3
Sexuality	21	41
Size	10	16

Social construction	9	12
Desirability	11	27
Digitally mediated	6	9
Digital bodies	6	9
Messages	9	20
Doing gender	8	22
campness	2	3
Class	2	2
Sexualities	0	0
Desire	15	19
Intimacy	9	11
Identities	2	2
Age	12	22
Class	2	2
coming out	4	8
Connectivity	13	22
Dress	0	0
Grindr as important	4	5
Hook ups	13	26
Race & ethnicity	4	5
Recognition	4	7
Religion	1	1

Sexual positions	9	14
Size and shape	6	7
Small part of identity	2	2
Porn	2	3
Practices	18	39
Scene space	2	2
Methodological	18	18
gender and age	1	1
Masc	1	1
Sexuality	5	5

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