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**Older People, Sexualities and Soap Operas:  
Representations of lesbian,  
gay, bisexual sexualities and transgender identity  
in television soap operas, and older audiences'  
responses.**

**A study submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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## ABSTRACT

The thesis investigates the responses of older audiences to representations of lesbian, gay, and bisexual sexualities and transgender identities in British prime time television soap operas between 1986 and 2002. It combines cultural research, in relation to theories of soap opera and audience engagement and social research into the responses and views of older audiences to such representations and the life experiences of the participants which inform their views. The thesis recognises that the voices of older people are under-represented in socio-cultural research, especially when investigating sexuality.

Soap opera constitutes a genre which functions as a vehicle for social issues, including sexualities. Soap operas draw large audiences across generations and gender; they have high profile publicity and intertextual material to engage viewers' interests, and broadly accessible scheduling. They therefore provide an accessible means of engagement with these issues with older people.

Chapter 1 outlines the social context of the research and reviews selected discourses and research, noting that much recent research is directed to issues of care and therefore tends to address the needs and preferences of older people rather than their active engagement with, and potential contribution, to popular culture and issues of sexualities and gender identity. Chapter 2 identifies and evaluates cultural theories and issues around textual analysis. The relevance and validity of these general themes are examined in Chapter 3 by means of 'close readings' of two selected episodes with relevant narratives and representations through textual analysis and in relation to everyday social interaction.



Chapter 4 addresses the epistemological issues involved in combining cultural research into the meanings and significance of these representations and narratives with social research into the meanings, associations and value derived from them by older audiences. The methodological framework for social research and the qualitative research methods are discussed and evaluated. The research focuses upon five groups of older people, two from an Inner London Drop- in Centre and an Outer London Day Centre and three from Campaign groups who identify as members of a London based Older Lesbian Group, Older Gay Men's Group and Male to Female Transgender Group. More self-conscious readings of the narratives and representations could be expected from groups with a campaigning history or trans-gender identity than the other two groups. Differences and commonalities between and within groups are noted and analysed in Chapter 5 and the analysis of the data is structured by the theories and themes identified and demonstrated in Chapters 2 and 3.

The thesis supports and develops recent research which recognises that older people are diverse and demonstrate strong opinions. It also shows that as television audiences and in conversation older people actively engage with issues of non-normative sexualities which are too frequently regarded as peripheral for older people, if not taboo. This could usefully be further investigated.

## INTRODUCTION

The thesis builds on emerging research which recognises the diversity of older people and uses both cultural and social analysis to investigate older people's diverse responses, perceptions and attitudes to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) representations in British prime time television soap operas from 1986-2002. Chapter 1 examines traditional, emerging and recent research on older people and outlines the context of this research. Chapters 2 and 3 examine how LGBTs are represented in soap operas and related texts and the extent to which the theories provide effective tools for analysis. Epistemological issues of combining social and cultural analysis are developed in Chapter 4, linking the section which identifies a set of themes which are applied in the close readings of selected episodes of soap operas and their use in the analysis of data from the social research. This chapter also describes the methodologies, addresses ethical issues and research methods. In Chapter 5 the responses and interpretive repertoires of older audiences are investigated in relation to representations of LGBTs in soap operas. These are analysed through responses of different Groups of older people who have been selected for interviews. Focus Groups and one to one follow up interviews are used where original Group discussion shows that participants have more relevant experience to offer.

Television soaps are chosen as an ideal site as they have large audiences, and are accessible in relation to scheduling (early or mid evening) and publicity in the form of previews reviews and articles. They also have diverse points for identification, are narrative based and have multiple points of investigation. They span decades and hence generations and are available to all the audiences under investigation. British soaps are 'social realist' and encourage identification with characters; they generate texts and most importantly talk. Discussing the representations of LGBTs in the soaps is conceived as a non-threatening and non-invasive way of eliciting discussion of the issues, that allows the participants to judge their own degree of engagement and response. Thus an interdisciplinary approach using cultural and social perspectives firstly compares how

older audiences are set up to experience LGBT narratives through textual analysis, and then investigates older audiences' perceptions.

### **Context of Social Research in Literature and Policy**

The project builds on emerging literature and policy which recognises that older people are diverse and contributes to the challenges to discourses which place them as homogeneous and incapable of change. Older audiences are the focus of the study because they have been neglected as subjects of LGBT analysis, frequently treated as problems, passive, unchanging or reactionary in their views and unable to learn new ideas or skills. They have been inadequately consulted about sexuality, and the very old frequently represented in popular culture as victims in need of protection rather than sexually active or actively interested in sex and sexualities. However in British soap operas research shows that younger older people are frequently represented as sexually active in comedic ways, while the older are often seen as vulnerable, or perverse, as in 'dirty old men.'

Challenges to homogenising theories include the emerging category of the 'new old', for example those under 70 years of age, which can be read as changing perceptions but can coincidentally construct the 'old old' as 'burdens' and with multiple needs. This 'new old' and 'old old' creates a new ageism which represents older people as differing within two Groups. This is an example of how even new distinctions can become binary with research and discourses on 'old old' frequently focused on care, health and decisions about terminal illness similar to the way 'gerontology' has been placed in the past (Phillipson and Biggs 1999) and that of 'younger old' (Higgs, Hyde, Gilleard, Victor, Wiggins, Jones 2009) more on votes and consumption.

Research aimed at policies of social care among older groups increasingly recognises voices and desires. However the voices of older people are, in spite of new emerging discourses, under-represented in socio-cultural research, particularly when investigating

sexuality, and frequently represented in a problematic context in age-based research, emphasising needs and dependency. This project aims to build upon and contribute to research which recognises older people's voices and desires, for example Pangman and Seguire, 2000; Gott and Hinchcliffe 2008 and 2003; Scourfield, 2007; Manthorpe, Iliffe, Clough, Cornes, Bright and Moriarty, 2008; Jung and Schill, 2004; Ginsberg, Pomerantz and Kramer-Feeley, 2005.

People who grew up in the 1950s are particular of interest for this project as they have experienced important historical moments and changing discourses. These historical moments are considered to be memory markers, and soaps use social issues which can be related to particular social and political issues which have been debated and campaigned for in their lifetimes. These events include the Beveridge Report (1942) which established the principles of the welfare state, the Wolfenden Report (1957) which provided the background for the Sexual Offences Act (1967) legalizing sex in private between consenting males over 21 except for those in the armed forces. The Sex Discrimination Act (1975) and the Race Relations Act (1976) brought 'inequalities' and 'equalities' into public and legal discourses. 'Second wave' feminism, described by Mitchell (1986) Rowbotham and Threlfall (1996) was key to legislation being enacted. Section 28 of the Local Government Act, brought in by the Conservative Government in 1988, prevented local councils from 'promoting' or supporting homosexuality through publications, campaigns or in schools. In spite of campaigns for Civil Partnerships a culture of homophobia was created and prevailed through political and media discourse in the 1980s and 1990s. Soaps attempted to challenge this during the late 1980s and 1990s with key episodes of a gay representation in 1986 in *EastEnders* and a lesbian storyline in *Brookside* in 1994; social attitudes are complex and are presented in the context of audiences' readings and views recollected in interviews in Chapter 5.

## **Aims of the Research**

The research aims to investigate older people as diverse and active audiences of representations of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) people in television soap operas in the late twentieth and twenty first centuries.

The researcher's standpoint is informed by campaigning, academic and employment experiences. I come from a working class background with academic experience as a mature student. My academic history includes BA (Hons) Sociology, MA Gender in Society and a post graduate Certificate in Education (FE) which enables me to participate in training Primary Care Trust staff to engage with age discrimination and homophobia. My research history includes interviewing older people about experiences of ageism for an Open University publication for the Centre for Policy on Ageing (Ward, Jones, Hughes, Humberstone, Pearson, (2008). This research was designed with an assumption of ageism, however; this project aims to avoid this assumption but is informed by my interest in ageism. As a lesbian feminist I have been part of feminist and older people's campaigning Groups and in the past involved in conflicts between socialist, revolutionary and radical feminist perspectives and actions in the 1970s. Since the late 1970s I have been employed in organisations supporting older people particularly campaigning groups. Current work is with older patients, developing a non ageist environment and activities and interviewing and auditing patient experiences. I am also a development worker with an older women's campaigning organisation which uses drama to facilitate discussion of good practice to raise awareness of and challenge ageism. Sexual identity is an important factor in choice of thesis and in relationship to the Group, identifying as a lesbian to Campaign Groups but not to the two Mainstream Groups. The extent to which these interests and experiences affect the research are discussed in Chapter 4 in the context of methodology.

Interest in soap opera comes from a personal fascination. They have been reclaimed as worthy of academic study and of particular interest to women by feminist and key researchers; they also represent older people and LGBTs.

Academic and action oriented research for policy formation inform the project which aims to contribute to emerging discourses which represent older people as active and diverse.

### **Day Centres as a Site for Exploration**

Day Centres were chosen as a site for accessing older audiences because they have a wide range of ages (50 plus), a mix of people with a wide range of mobility and memory problems, and activities and discussion group programmes in which they can participate. These Groups provide useful comparison with more informal Groups where mobility is not an issue and formal referral systems are not used i.e. Drop-in Centres. There is a mixed economy of council, voluntary and charity as providers. Criteria for accessibility may vary and become more stringent, as the Department of Health guidelines (2010, p6) recognize. Resources in the community, including day centres for older people, are frequently run by charities rather than local councils and have a range of criteria for being able to participate and receive transport. Large providers like *Age Concern* increasingly receive referrals from Social Services which may affect the chance of local people being able to 'walk in' and increases the numbers of those who need transport and are less mobile. More flexible small scale structures are sometimes able to attract members without referrals from local or wider areas, and can allow a looser structure although grant providers increasingly require 'outcome' focused activities. Efforts have been made to include these different types of organisations in this research, providing opportunities for contrasting organisational cultures, and therefore differing access and gatekeepers. A structured Day centre, an informal Drop-in for carers of older people and three Campaign Groups were chosen for interviewing, providing varying identification, histories, geography and involvement with the issues under discussion.

### **Television Soap Operas as a Site for Exploration**

Older audiences are investigated as diverse, active viewers of television soap operas in order to examine how they negotiate their views on different sexual and transgender

identity from soap television viewing. Soap operas are chosen as they are a popular, widely available cultural genre with an emphasis on family and interpersonal relations. They encourage identification and generate 'talk' about LGBT issues from 1986. Previews, reviews, discussions in printed and broadcast media point to absence of research on older audiences while setting them up to be shocked and sometimes disgusted.

Soap opera theorists are examined with particular reference to identification with characters and narratives and intertextuality (Ang 1985) and relevant work on talk about soaps (Brown 1994).

There are four areas that are important in the generation of resistive readings: talk, boundaries, strategic knowledge, and the lowering of normative controls. There is *first* the necessity for the talk to take place. Not only are soap operas constructed in such a way that they elicit talk but it is also obvious that a large amount of the pleasure that women derive from soap operas is in talking about them. It is in this *spoken* text that most of the meaning generation concerning everyday life and the construction of identity for audiences takes place. (Brown 1994, p167)

British Film Institute (BFI) research on *EastEnders* (Schlesinger, Emerson, Dobash, Dobash, Weaver, 1992) is helpful to this project and emphasises that class, gender, race and experience of issues all affects audience involvement and negotiation of views.

Soap operas are 'popular' programmes and the issues are discussed by many audiences, historically particularly women. From some contemporary reviews there is a hegemonic view that the soaps had jeopardised their ratings by putting LGBT characters and narratives in the episodes, these reviews referring intertextually to excesses of what was viewed as 'political correctness' and earlier race discourses, describing a flooding of alien sexualities, becoming a threat to heteronormativity and by implication going too far from 'British' cultural viewing. Some reviews address older audiences as absent

referents, shocked by the new and especially the transgender narrative. (c.f. Kingsley 1998) Soaps have large audiences and an intertextual survey demonstrates a wide social impact. 'Social realist' soaps are the site of research because they set up narratives and styles which viewers can identify with as they represent recognisable aspects of reality. The soaps focused on are all transmitted at prime-time: *Emmerdale*, (7pm on ITV1) *Brookside*, (previously 8pm on Channel 4), *Coronation Street*, (7.30pm on ITV1), and *EastEnders*, (7.30pm or 8pm on BBC1). The broad period of time covered by the study is 1986 to 2002. This study has been generated by the data which informed the decision to focus on the LGBT episodes to date, that have had the biggest social impact in terms of viewing figures and attention given in reviews and other texts. The introduction of 'Colin' in *EastEnders* in 1986 is a clear starting point. By 2002 there had been interventions of openly lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender characters in British prime-time soaps. There have been a number of lesbian, bisexual (rarely named), and gay men narratives over the past 15 years, and more recently a male to female transgender character. The representations have been both negative and sympathetic, sometimes striving to be the latter but written from a heteronormative perspective. There is therefore an opportunity to investigate older audiences' diverse readings of these representations and the more public reactions to them. The thesis identifies active older audiences of soaps as an appropriate and hitherto neglected site of research to examine diverse and complex attitudes to non-normative sexualities and to challenge traditional perspectives which appear to assume either lack of interest in sexuality or disapproval or avoidance of LGBT issues.

## **Methodology**

The thesis examines older audiences' responses to LGBT representations in British prime time soap operas from 1986-2002 through their talk or 'spoken texts'. (Brown 1994) Particular episodes and narratives are chosen which will allow useful discussion of LGBT issues. Previews, reviews and close readings are analysed to identify intertextual references utilising Barthesian (1973), Grosz (1994), Brown (1997) perspectives, camera work, speech and context in the soap communities).



Two categories of Groups are identified: users of local facilities, and Campaigning Groups. There are two Groups attached to contrasting Centres; one is a loosely structured 'drop-in' for carers and former carers of older people, and one is part of a more structured organisation with a corporate image. Older lesbian, older gay men and a male to female transgender Group provide access to audiences with campaigning backgrounds and further contributes to research which challenges heteronormative assumptions of older people. The interviews reveal a range of different perspectives on gender and sexualities and the experiences and perceptions sometimes run counter to mainstream perceptions. Individuals in Groups which identify within a particular sexual identity cannot be assumed to have similar views on sexual politics or have other political and ideological perspectives in common, any more than individuals using day care facilities can.

### **Structure of the Thesis**

Chapter 1 describes the aims of the thesis and examines discourses in which older people are placed, including literature which is aimed at policy makers and care providers, some of which contributes to recognition of older people's voices and desires. The social context of older people is diverse and the literature which recognises sexuality and particularly by older LGBTs challenges the type of literature which 'others' them.

In Chapter 2 there is an examination of available theories of soap opera in relation to narratives and audiences. Textual analysis and audience research are investigated for theorised hegemonic and transgressive narratives and audience readings in general and also lesbian gay bisexual and transgender narratives. Theories of interpellation and implied readings, identifications and talk, show active and changing views which are particularly important to the project. These inform the methodology to be used for researching older audiences in chapter 5.

Chapter 3 analyses specific LGBT soap opera narratives that had social impact, identified by emphases in the previews and reviews, using textual and semiotic methods with

particular attention to the deployment of dominant/emergent popular discourses of non-normative sexualities and the processes by which such identities are achieved. (Foucault 1976, Butler 1991, Grosz 1994). Textual analysis is used to analyse the meanings and messages, to show evidence for broad social analysis and to show how viewing subjects are positioned by narrative direction and camera work. Older audiences are often interpellated as shocked, uninterested or aghast. There is an analysis of intertextualities to investigate their role in changing and emerging discourses (Barthes 1973, 1977, Brown 1997) and enquiry into a specific campaigning intervention in the production, reception and evaluation of discourses on soap opera representation of the transgender character.

Chapter 4 considers the epistemological and methodological issues of combining cultural and social research, and presents the social methodology and research method used to investigate the older audiences, informed by the attention given to specific LGBT episodes in the form of previews, reviews and intertextual materials, and theoretical literature. Contrasting focus Groups of older people are used to elicit 'talk' and discussion about LGBT issues. The social research comprises taped interviews with older audiences in small Groups and one to one follow ups where necessary. Spine questions which allow prompts and encourage narratives are used in the semi-structured Group discussions, followed by selected one to ones.

The questions are listed here and aims and contexts are explained in Chapter 4. The first question refers to life histories, knowledge of or participation in political life in order to investigate how these inform views of soap narratives and characters.

### **Questions**

The questions are listed here and aims and contexts are explained in Chapter 4.

What do you remember about the social movements/ political movements?

What did you think of them?

Is there anything in soaps that reminds you of them?

When did you first watch soaps?

Which ones do you watch now?

Do you watch them on your own or with others, and how did you watch them in the past?

How do you think that relationships are represented?

What do you think about how Lesbians, gay men, transgenders are represented?

Are they realistic? Can you identify with any of them?

Having seen these episodes do you think they change audience views? Do you talk about the characters and storylines with friends, etc?

Narratives of soaps and participants' lives are able to be discussed and related to each other. Memory is recognised as a potential problem and group structures considered as a method of reminding and supporting each other where soap narratives have been dropped and occurred up to 20 years ago. The Groups provide analysis of different cultural contexts including implications for access (more difficult where the organisation is tightly structured and more flexible in the other four Groups) and the role of gatekeepers. The researcher's knowledge of networks and individuals facilitates the research and becomes meaningful for reflexivity.

Chapter 5 is a thematic analysis of the group discussions and one to one interviews, with attention to paralinguistics (pitch, volume, intonation patterns, pauses, laughs, self contradictions and inconsistencies) which are of significance in the spoken text revealing agreement, depth of feeling, carnivalesque, hesitancy and agreement. Interviews focus on those over sixty in terms of audiences although some are younger. The age range is broad (55 to 85 years) and although much research uses broad categories it is not intended to reproduce research which homogenises older people but to allow for difference. The discussion are analysed in relation to memories of campaigns, responses to representations of sexualities in soaps, engagement with the text, intertextuality, recognition of melodramatic imagination, compulsory heterosexuality, encoding and decoding, the carnivalesque, intensity of feeling, gaps, silences and contradictions and interpretive repertoires.

In conclusion it is argued that the theorists most useful for this audience research are the diverse responses theorised by Ang (1985) and significance of experience of the issue in Schlesinger, Emerson, Dobash, Dobash, Weaver. (1994) Brown's (1994) and Thomas's (2002) research is validated and extended to include older people as diverse and active audiences and the significance of talk generated by soap narratives on sexualities and transgender identity.

In contrast to Modleski's (1979) thesis, while the LGBT narratives create discussions and bring non-heterosexual identities into public discourses they do not 'reverberate' through the soap texts and challenge heteronormativity although reverberations occur across soaps and other genres thus creating popular LGBT discourses. However in the period studied and to date lesbian representations are not prevalent, do not have longevity or the sympathetic portrayal that many of the gay or transgender representations have and this has consequences for talk and needed for more prompting to encourage discussion of experiences.

The conclusion considers the findings of the research, its limitations and the possibilities for future areas of study. Outcomes of social research include effectiveness of group and one to one interviews for this project in providing room for jogging of memories, fluidity of views, and in depth details for one to one interviews. Themes which emerged from the social research included knowledge and ambivalence of what is considered 'politically correct' in relation to LGBTs, critical and enthusiastic audience responses to representations of sexualities and gender identities, differences across and within Campaign and community Groups, and East London and South London Outer Suburb identities.

Future research is needed to address neglect of older audiences, soap opera audiences broadly, male and culturally diverse soap audience readings, and similar research in other geographical areas including rural. The research contributes to textual and thematic analysis of television soap operas and social research which acknowledges older people as active and diverse audiences.

## **CHAPTER 1. OLDER AUDIENCES: CONTEXTS AND DISCOURSES**

The thesis builds on recent and emerging social research which recognises the diversity of older people in order to investigate the responses of older television audiences to the narratives and representations in soap operas which are discussed and analysed in Chapters 2 and 3. While the cultural theory and analysis used in these chapters focuses upon lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) representations, social research investigates the responses to and perceptions of LGBT sexualities and identities of older audiences through interviews and focus Group discussions. In addition to demonstrating the range of responses and reactions among these Groups and the extent to which their attitudes to and perceptions of sexuality contributes to discourses on older people, the thesis compares the outcomes of cultural analysis which emphasises the positioning of the audience by the text and shows that the meanings and messages which they receive and interpret can not be fully explained by these methodologies. Their social positions, life histories and interpretative repertoires are analysed in Chapters 4 and 5.

This Chapter briefly indicates the demographic and socio-cultural positions of older people, with reference to data contemporary with the broadcasting of the soap operas analysed in Chapter 3 as well as recent and emerging research and other material, and the rationale and context of the research into older audiences. Emerging discourses which begin to break down previous discourses of homogenisation of the 'nature' of older people as out of touch and more passive are noted, but more is needed to give voices to older people as active agents, who do not necessarily conform to the implied audience likely to be shocked by alternative sexualities, positioned within heteronormativity and usually assumed to be heterosexual.

### **Basis for literature review**

The rationale for the selection of literature is two dimensional. More 'traditional' discourses current during the period of the broadcasting of the soap operas between 1986 and 2002 are briefly discussed. Secondly, the review of more recent research focuses upon emerging emphases on the diverse and active voices of older people in small scale qualitative analyses. Similarly, on sexuality, selected 'traditional' discourses from the historical period corresponding to the cultural analysis of soap operas are more quantitative, homogenising and objectifying, as well as emerging small scale qualitative analyses which focus on older people as subjects. These however acknowledge the recent reconfiguration of 'old' with the new constructions of 'young old' and 'old old', shifting the boundaries and redefining discourses on ageing.

Recent research using focus groups demonstrates less reliance on solely directive questions or 'tick box' approaches and more recognition that views can change and responses differ according to social context. It is argued that this research expands the possibility of identifying the range and fluidity of many older people's views. The structure of the groups researched in this project and the topics raised allow for investigation of views of LGBT issues and changing responses. The research also encompasses older LGBTs themselves and challenges assumptions of discourses of heteronormativity within older people's communities.

The Chapter pinpoints some key historical moments which older people have lived through, in order to place the narratives given in the Group discussions in historical context and to permit the analysis of their personal stories. These are important in relation to social movements which are connected to recent representations of LGBT people in soaps. Older people's histories are varied and related to moments of change which have informed views and experiences and argue for theorising of older audiences as diverse and active.

The following section briefly outlines some of the key aspects of the social aspects of the social contexts of older people in the UK.

With reference to demographics, the increase in numbers of older people is large, and increased life expectancy can be seen as a result of advances in standard of living and medical care. There are however competing discourses in relation to this changing demographic; some responses and analyses are positive but many are a prediction of 'old' people being 'burdens on society', with images of most needing care and financial support and new private pension plans replacing state pensions as 'insurance'.

Recent demographics reveal an increase in older populations in Britain. (*Age Concern* 2001, 2008). In broadsheets and tabloids statistics are frequently accompanied by predictions of society's struggle to cope with an ageing population and panic about increasing numbers of people with needs and lack of adequate provision. Rarely in these are the figures framed within a positive tone of medical advance but the focus is frequently on the need for carers. Older people are living longer and the 'baby boom' generation is said to have created a bulge in the UK population; there are a growing number of older people compared to younger ones, alongside changes in family structures with more couples living in reconstituted families and single person households. According to *Age Concern*, (2001)

In the United Kingdom, in 2000, there were over 10.7 million older people. In 2000, the population of the United Kingdom based on mid-year estimates was 59,756,000. Of this figure, 18.1% were over pensionable age. The number of people over pensionable age, taking account of the change in the women's retirement age, is projected to increase from 10.7 million in 1998 to 11.9 million in 2011, and will rise to 12.2 million by 2021. (*Age Concern* 2001)

By 2008 however, the position has developed.

The United Kingdom is going through an extraordinary demographic transition. The first 'baby boomers' are now drawing their pensions and the number of people over State Pension Age are overtaking the number of children. In 2006: 20.5 million people were aged over 50, up 690,000 since 2002. 11.3 million people were over State Pension Age (SPA), up 420,000 since 2002-7.2 million women were aged 60 and over 9.7 million people were aged 65 and over, of whom 4.2 million were men and 5.5 million were women. 2.7 million were aged over 80, up 220,000 since 2002. (*Age Concern* 2008, p4).

The commentary on the statistics can be read as alarmist rather than celebratory; the terms 'extraordinary' and 'overtaking' reinforce some popular cultural texts. However the breaking down of figures for older people into more detailed age groups is helpful and provides evidence for less blurring of all older people into a 50 plus category. Further, the same publication omits in its chapter on "Social Exclusion" any mention of LGBT older people, thus any acknowledgement of sexual difference. This is in spite of the *Age Concern's* LGB "Opening Doors" project which addresses the differences and receives much publicity and funding. In this document heteronormativity is reinforced and older LGBT people rendered invisible. Other statistics reveal a more complex picture which relates to this project, and shows differences in life expectancies for women and men and region. Figures available from the Office for National Statistics for mid 2006 show that of 20m of the population aged 50 plus, 1 in 6 people in the UK were 65 and over, more than a million were over retirement age (then 65 for men and 60 for women), more than a million were 85 and over, and there were three times as many women over 90 as men (2008, p1). The *General Household Survey* describes variations in areas of the UK; "a female born in Glasgow can expect to live 9.5 years less than one born in Kensington and Chelsea. For males, the difference is 11.5 years." (2008) A large proportion of the older population live on restricted means and issues of quality of life and social care have only recently become a government priority and of electoral significance. Older people living solely on state pensions and housing benefit are relatively poor. Amounts vary depending on National Insurance contributions so that people who have been unemployed get a lesser amount and claim pension credit to make



up an income of around £100 after rent or housing costs. Savings are taken into account for full credits. Women who have been married and worked in the home rely on husbands' pensions or have lower ones themselves. Pension increases have not kept up with the cost of living or inflation and many rely on extra benefits such as housing benefits (means tested) and heating allowances currently £250 for a household with someone over 60, and more when someone in the household is 80 or older. There is a 25p addition to the pension for people 80 and over. 63% of pensioners receive at least half their income from State pensions and benefits. (*Age Concern* 2008, p11. Appendix 1.1).

## **Consumers**

Research on voting power and consumer views of older people is promoted by some organisations working with older people; *Counsel and Care's* "Voting Age: An Older People's Manifesto" (Bernard 2008) includes consultation with older people and is affiliated to *Comic Relief*, a major funding body asking for project proposals to support older people's campaigning. Older people as consumers are taken more seriously as a market niche, as recent conferences evidence. For example "Products and the older consumer" (2008) invited speakers from *Help the Aged*, *Association of Train Operating Companies*, *Royal College of Art*, *British Telecom*, to develop design and practice for older users and consumers although older people's participation was not visible. Older people's material circumstances are perceived to have worsened since fewer remain within the households of their children. They have, however, received more attention as consumers. Research which focuses on consumer power and difference highlights the financial variables of older people while noting that differences in ownership of goods between 'retired' households and the employed persist. (Higgs, Hyde, Gilleard, Victor, Wiggins, Jones 2009 p102-124). This challenges traditional discourses on the older groups as 'passive' rather than 'active' consumers but shows that this attitude persists in spite of evidence of their increased ownership of goods. Access to education for older people, however, is increasingly difficult to attain. Adult Education Institutes, which

provided free or cheap education classes for older people and were well attended by them, have largely been replaced by community colleges and classes aimed at skills for employment, targeted at young people. A qualification at the end is seen as vital. Ideas about older people not being interested in or able to learn are reinforced. As the *Education Guardian* notes, while some set up their classes, employing tutors directly or becoming part of the University of the Third Age, there is exclusion in areas of many depending on geography and networks. (Kingston 2008, p9). Hafford-Letchfield's research (2009) indicates inequalities for older people using care services and life-long learning opportunities.

### **Dominant Discourses and the Popular Imagination**

Dominant discourses around older people and sexuality, income and work, tend to position them as passive recipients rather than contributors and in Gramscian terms ageism can be seen as linked to the political economy: a post Marxist analysis identifies discrimination and powerlessness as inevitably linked to the means of production, in which people who are no longer involved in the labour market are seen as non-productive and therefore economic burdens rather than assets. A possible exception is the provision by 'grannies' of unpaid childcare which is positioned as a 'naturalised' familial resource placed within ideologies of heterosexual extended families. However some emerging discourses recognise the voting power of older people and the 'younger' old are increasingly viewed within New Labour discourse (Needham 2007) as potentially challenging to ideas of passive old people.

Emerging discourses can be seen to contain tensions around changing perceptions of older people and the age in relation to new equalities legislation. A close reading of part of a text in the *Guardian Guide*, is helpful in indicating some popular views of older working class women, assumptions about the readership but also the potential power of older women. "I own a Phillips Savvy. It's huge, it's blue and it looks like something

Simon Le Bon might have used in the 1980's to radio coastguards for help. It also appears to be quite popular with a particular gang of old women who spend their days riding around North London's 271 bus route looking for new pound shops." (Paphides 2002, p3) The interpellated here are not old women from North London. Readers are invited to share the joke, and to have the same opinion as the writer. The writer is admitting to a fashion disaster and initially the article can be read as a critique of the desire for smaller and more technologically sophisticated mobile phones. While he is creating and in some ways the butt of the joke, he is very aware of the styles considered 'cool' and makes this explicit. The old women from north London are not constructed as aware; they are a metaphor for the old-fashioned, poor, without taste, women who have no desire but to travel about on buses looking for 'pound shops', the latter not merely cheap, but tasteless. It would be considered very humourless not to find this amusing, (the 'humourless feminist' discourse) and indeed it works as an amusing and witty comment on capitalism, while using 'old north London women' as an indicator of bad taste. However, the use of "gangs" referring to old women is unusual, and works in two ways: as a joke, because it is unexpected, and it also challenged ideas of passive older people. The recent 'threats' of 'girl gangs' illustrated in newspaper reports is referred to and changed. These north London women are tough, with their enormous mobile phones and missions for pound shops. They are a threat, as well as (and perhaps therefore) to be mocked.

Constructions of older people within independence or dependency discourses vary; they can appear more or less isolated, more or less supported by their peers and informal networks. (Conway 2003). Families who 'look after' their older relatives are often romanticised as ideal extended families (although this is more often the 'female role' in popular culture). Hegemonic views that minority ethnic older people will be looked after by their own 'extended families' can deter offers of support from agencies. (Bornat, Phillipson and Ward 1985, p83). While the 'family' is still seen as the ideal main support for older people of all cultures, this is in reality a role expected of women as 'natural' carers, and it is a popular view that 'other' cultures look after their own, and intervention rarely required. Moreover, the family and the perceived comfort that it gives often

encourage single old people to be viewed as missing vital support. The construction of the 'family' as a haven of support, alongside a lost working class 'caring community' (Young and Willmott, 1957) has been deconstructed by feminist theorists and exposed as 'women's work.' However many 'informal' carers are older people, both women and men. The 2001 census cites 10% of men and 11% of women over 50 providing up to 19 hours of unpaid care, to family, neighbours or relatives. (Soule, Babb, Evandrou, Balchin and Zealey (2005). Some research has highlighted this but not enough to challenge the idea of older people as recipients of care in a one way process. Older people may prefer independence and their own tenancies or properties, while housing stock is increasingly designed within individualism and for the 'nuclear family' making extended family structures difficult. In contrast to this trend to familial isolation, there are networks for support and activities: Day Centres, Drop-in Centres and lunch clubs, for example as well as peer support in local neighbourhoods. These centres and clubs offer a range of activities and discussions, some autonomous and some structured. Day centres have increasingly become resource centres with computer classes and other activities. However these increasingly require referrals from Social Services for people with transport needs, creating a two tier system and consumer base. For this project formal Day Centres and informal Groups can be contrasted and compared with each other, and then with Campaign Groups which may align around identity or issues, and all provide potential sites for social interaction for older people and sites for researching older views and audiences. Resistance to ageism has been possible although labour movements have rarely included non-paid workers and the 'British Pensioners' movement, a campaigning organisation although linked to the Trades Union Congress rarely has negotiating power. 'Women's issues' were arguably given less prominence in an organisation run predominantly by men on trade union structures. More recent conference statements reflect more awareness of older women in employment. (TUC press release 2002). There is absence of research on older people's campaigning Groups. State Pensions continue low and not linked to inflation; older people who live on pensions have little disposable income unless they have private pensions or savings, and have been perceived to have little consumer power. They are however increasingly targeted as a 'niche' market within 'grey power' discourses and while this has arguably had a marginalising rather

than inclusive effect the increasing numbers of old people have potential for change. Younger older people are sometimes targeted in more inclusive ways and recognised as consumers, whilst confirming the 'new young old' are different from the 'old old, as noted in the article on the forthcoming Wanless Report (2002) in the national press (Guardian 2001). In Gramscian terms, ideologies operate through 'common sense' and the subject often perceives herself/himself in terms of the dominant discourses, while these constructions are always open to negotiation and resistance. Ageism therefore may appear as 'rational' in relation to reduced and restricted mobility and productivity, and the passivity' and 'dependence' of all older people as a homogeneous category becomes 'naturalised'; low spending power and thus the view of old people as a 'burden' is justified.

While old people are frequently represented in negative terms in news items and policy documents, they are present everywhere in popular culture as absent referents. They can be represented as absent yet ever present as indicators of absence of fashionableness and style, and obsolete, and function to mark the attractiveness and sexual power of youth. There is an emerging visibility of a new 'young' old group being constructed, which can work to further disempower the very old but reveals the changes and tensions within discourses of 'old' and 'older' and helps create a new empowered 'younger old' based on their history as a politically active generation in the 1960s and 1970s. The 'very' old people are frequently represented as non complaining and politically unaware. According to Walker (2001), "The Wanless Report said that spending on heart and orthopedic care for the very old today would need to increase by 11% to give them equality with the younger elderly. But today's very old are deferential and accept their lot. Tomorrow's might not be." (Walker 2001, p15).

A more complex view of the 'baby boomers' discourses is discussed by Phillipson, Leach, Money and Biggs (2008) as they underline the differences within the cohorts rather than confirming homogeneity.

The most interesting aspect of the boomer generation may lie not in what they tell us about the shared identities and experiences existing among this group, but what they convey about new inequalities likely to surface in retirement and middle age....boomers will experience a life far removed from the optimistic images encountered in the media and marketing. (Phillipson, Leach, Money & Biggs 2008 p13).

There have been 'consultations' with older people about services, where views were asked for but perceived by them to be rarely acted upon. This may indicate a reluctance of 'professionals' to listen to older people, and policy makers to give them low priority in terms of health care, (Holland 2005, p9) rather than any generally deferential attitudes of old people. The 'old old' and the 'new old' are relatively recent constructions and evidence more complex discourses about older people. The new 'younger old' are often given more credibility and seen as active and political but the implication is that the 'old old' are passive and do not demand their rights. A dualism is created where there is an 'active' and a 'passive' social group, yet there are overlaps and discourses on ageing which frequently encompass both groups and make a more complex picture.

Much research about 'old' people emphasises and therefore constructs them as problematic and 'other' with multiple care needs, partly because much of the literature is aimed at policy makers, carers and those managing the difficulties of infirmity and illness of older people. However emerging discourses increasingly recognise rights and difference; Settersten promotes a "framework for building new kinds of theories and research on old people and old-age gathered around rights and responsibilities of and for old people; focused on their agency and social participation" but is described as extending "provocative ideas from the emerging disciplinary field of childhood studies to the field of gerontology". (Settersten 2005 p173). Placing older people within rights discourses is more positive and recognises equalities issues; children's rights have political force and attention is paid to abuse. There is tension however as much of the popular imagination perceives older people 'like children' and Settersten is not challenging this. Childhood studies are not equivalent to adult equalities discourses because children are in care of others. Some older people are in care and do not wish to

be. Settersten (2002) highlights the difficulty of placing protection within rights discourses.

Some research increasingly recognises older people as active subjects with diverse views; this supports research which argues for investigations of culturally and politically engaged older audiences with a range of interests. Changes can be seen in the language and framing of research on older people which challenges wholly negative discourses. The broader literature demonstrates a continuing tension between dependency and active discourses. Indicating a more positive approach, Briggs (1993) points out that while 20% of the population over 80 have mental impairment, 80% do not (Briggs 1993 p67). Scourfield (2004) makes a strong case for strengthening the rights of older people in the context of the closure of care homes (Scourfield 2002 p501). Increasing use of focus groups and semi-structured interviews, and addressing issues within concepts of empowerment indicate recognition of the need to listen to older people's own views and acknowledges older people's contributions rather than needs. (Walsh and O'Shea, 2007, Scourfield 2007, Gilleard and Higgs 2005). Scourfield situates his research within empowerment discourse and warns against merely using a consumerist approach. (Scourfield 2007). Older people's campaigning groups and forums can arguably be contributory to these discourses; in addition *Age Concern* and other organisations have campaigned for recognition of older people's needs and rights. Settersten (2005) highlights the need to recognize rights and responsibilities of older people by recommending extending "provocative ideas from the emerging interdisciplinary field of childhood studies to the field of gerontology". Settersten highlights the difficulty of framing protection of 'vulnerable' people within child protection discourses because although there may be a clear need for legal intervention, discourses of vulnerability frequently focus on the older person rather than addressing ageist and demeaning treatment. An example of a campaign which aims to raise awareness of neglect and violence against older people is the national campaign *Action on Elder Abuse* which was informed by research (Bennett and Kingston 1993). The campaign highlights ageism and continues to raise awareness; poster campaigns however represent old people as victims and the 2007 campaign, focusing on unpaid and paid carers as 'abusers' can

result in older carers being put under more pressure and inadequate emphasis on the need for 'informal' carers to have more support. (2007). The demand for "new acts of Parliament that give such protection [for older people] the same status as that afforded to children". ([www.elderabuse.org.leg\\_17.3.2008](http://www.elderabuse.org.leg_17.3.2008)) reinforces the idea of old people as childlike and the slippage from 'vulnerable older people' to 'older people in general' underlines this.

Gilleard and Higgs (2005, p151) argue that 'third agers' cannot be generalised about and identify class and the power to spend as key factors in quality of life. Mention is made of older people's support given to younger groups to challenge the 'burden on society' thesis: "significant inter-generational transfers of resources continue to be made from older to younger generations and through active volunteering, acting as grandparents or through the more passive role of maintaining a social presence in residential areas that would otherwise be deserted during the hours of the working day." (Gilleard and Higgs 2005, p153). "The demise of the local community and its kinship networks is by no means total. But it is, more and more, a historical form of modern life. Those left behind to define and sustain it risk becoming 'old' in consequence." (Gilleard and Higgs 2005, p157). However the potential to theorise older people as part of and not removed from communities contributes to my research which investigates awareness of sexual issues and LGBT issues in particular. It is supported in this thesis by contributions from older LGBTs themselves.

Multi-cultural aspects of older people are an area of interest to researchers. Rawlings-Anderson (2001) looks at the need for nurses to have an understanding of the diverse ethnic backgrounds of their patients; Warnes, Kellaher and Torres (2004) examine older 'migrant' European residents and propose that a 'human capital' approach is useful for researching roles minority ethnic older people take on. Bowes (2006) focuses on "Mainstreaming equality" and implications for addressing the gap between people's lived experiences and good practice aims; this is relevant to LGBT communities as well and highlights the need to include the latter within cultural diversity. She also recommends engagement with user groups and better understanding of delivery issues. Moriarty and



Butt (2004) use one to one semi structured interviews with older people from different ethnic groups and concludes differences within minority ethnic groups relating to health, income and expectations are worth further investigation.

Researching older people's views is less common (Holland 2005 p9) and more useful as Manthorpe, Moriarty, Rapaport, Clough, Cornes, Bright and Iliffe (2008) find when they focus on the views of older people and carers about social workers and their roles. They provide valuable evidence about older people's desires for a person centred approach and knowledge of older people's needs in contrast to social workers' rationing and means testing methods indicating conflict and badly matched services. Iliffe, Wilcock, Manthorpe, Moriarty, Cornes, Clough and Bright (2008 p598-604) research older (50 plus) patient satisfaction surveys in relation to the National Service Framework for Older People and hospital care and find views of both involvement in decision making and opposite experiences. The researchers conclude that the review of a postal survey reveals rich results and focus on a quarter of the returned surveys (584) can be used towards identifiers for action for service delivery.

## **Gender and Sexuality**

Older people and older women in particular are frequently represented as asexual and post-menopausal. Older people's sexuality is regularly viewed as absent or redundant, heterosexual and if enacted, perverted or comedic. (Grenier 2007). These popular views are at times challenged by ideas of a 'new old'. However, where attractiveness, style and beauty are so linked to an ideology of 'youthfulness', often achieved with cosmetic intervention to youth through image rather than action there is little space for older people to be seen as sexually active. In addition, the ideological power of discourses about reproductive sex, often in other contexts considered as too narrow a definition of sexual behaviour, can be a factor in constructing older women as no longer useful in these terms, whereas older men are acceptable as fathers. (Ussher, 1989) The soap opera narratives addressed in chapter 5 are sites for investigation for representations and older audiences' readings of older people's sexuality. Some feminist perspectives identify gender as a major factor in differing experiences of ageism; however this is not much

examined even within feminist analysis (de Beauvoir 1960 p307-328, Greer 1993) and there is relatively little research on older women and age discrimination. However Greer (p53) reinforces aspects of ageism alongside heteronormativity by claiming that older women are not generally interested in sex and are relieved to be free of the pressures of pleasing men. No longer able to reproduce, and with images that construct old women as ugly, (old women are less likely than men to have a younger partner) old women are affected more by ageism than men; high-profile older men are represented as 'distinguished' or 'mature'. Less celebrated 'old' older men with active heterosexual desire are often represented as 'dirty old men'. Older people's sexual behaviour is frequently represented as comedic. In the popular imagination and in much research older people's sexuality is overlooked, ignored or constructed as monstrous.

Research on sexualities of older people contributes to making visible a neglected aspect of older people's lives and this research contributed to knowledge of views of non-normative sexualities and transgender identities. The current and recent literature on sexuality tends to emphasise needs and is directed to carers and staff to raise awareness and improve services; the literature most useful to this project contributes to the deconstruction of homogeneity of older people and recognises that needs can vary from none to many while organisational structures and staff attitudes situated within heteronormativity are problematic. Archibald (1998 p95-101) addresses the neglected area of sexuality and people with dementia in residential care. Gender is a major issue with men making sexual advances to women residents. Staff and residents are predominantly female, and a protective approach of staff prevalent. Views of older people themselves are not recorded as managers' responses provide the data, and there is more recent awareness that this is an issue to be addressed. Deacon, Micinchello and Plummer (1995 p497-513), examine psychosocial and physiological factors which they argue influence older people's sexual expression. Jung and Schill (2004 p123-125), take a medical approach to address 'erectile dysfunction' in men over 60 and challenge ideas of older men's declining interest in sex. Pangman and Seguire (2000 p49-59) focus on nursing research and education as in a position to educate about older people's rights in terms of sexuality and place the discourse within social justice. In research more directly

linked to this project Gott and Hinchcliffe (2003 p1617-1628) use semi-structured interviews and quality of life measures to explore older people's attitudes to the role and value of sex. Those with partners valued sex and those without did not find it problematic. Attitudes to ageing informed the recipients' views and the implications for research are important. Expectations based on other than physical issues can be explored.

Research which focuses on issues of sensitivity and reluctance of staff to discuss sexual attitudes and behaviour with older people indicates the problems of eliciting accurate statistical information, finding effective research methodology and reflexivity issues. Gott and Hinchcliffe (2004 p2093-2103) find, drawing on qualitative data that their sample of GPs do not initiate talk about sexuality with older people, basing their ideas on stereotypes of ageing and sexuality. Andrews (2000, pS21-S24) challenges a myth that older people have no interest in sexual behaviour and addresses the importance of promoting sensitivity, confidence and non judgmental approaches when health professionals and patients require information. Implications of these findings impact on the tendency of staff to project their own ideas about how older people feel about sexuality and to continued silences which reinforce dominant views. The implications for investigating LBT issues place the topic in a 'sensitive' context if participants view researchers as having negative views and silence.

### **Older Lesbians, Gay men, Bisexuals and Transgendered People**

Research about older LGBTs has increased and indicates varied LGBT audience awareness and responses to a range of issues especially LGBT representations. The *Open University*, with *Help the Aged*, carried out research on ageism in 2007. Titled *Too old: Older People's Accounts of Discrimination, Exclusion and Rejection* and based on interviews with older people aged between 55 and 87, it includes a chapter on older lesbians and gay men and concludes that older lesbians and gay men are more invisible than older heterosexual people as older people generally are not seen as sexually active. (Bytheway, Ward, Holland and Peace, 2007) As with the later research which the author was involved in, there is a problematic issue with assuming discrimination before

researching and asking older people to name example, reducing objectivity and validity of conclusions. The research “underlines the way events in different areas of life interact and lead to responses that range from an unthinking acceptance of powerful narratives to personal explorations that begin to challenge previous assumptions.” (Ward, Jones, Hughes, Humberstone and Pearson, 2008, p70). The conclusion of the research does not however reflect the participants who are or have been in campaigning groups and instrumental in creating change and this omission is reflected in much research which does not acknowledge active political LGBTs. Moreover the way that the project is framed assumes ageism and its recognition, making claims of objectivity impossible.

There is value in focusing on older lesbians and gay men as there is too little research of their views; some recent research identifies these groups and begins to recognise LGBT communities and their views on services. Theories about invisibility or trivialisation can be investigated in relation to soap opera narratives and older audience readings and have resonance for this thesis. Although much research is aimed at staff or policymakers when it is based on varied older LGBT views the implications are that older LGBT viewers, especially Campaigning Groups, will have views on the representations and their absences. Within older lesbian and gay campaigning organisations there is some evidence of awareness of issues affecting older lesbians and gay men (particularly linked to care provision) as the people involved in these groups get older.

It is arguably ‘common sense’ to believe that there are no older lesbians or gay men. For example, “Oh, no, there are no gay people in this road. They are all old people along here”. (Daly, Redding 2002, p22) is quoted as being said by a “relative of [a] lesbian woman living in Thanet” in research by *Opening Doors in Thanet*, (2002 p2) a support and campaigning group of older lesbians and gay men. This research was presented to the Scarborough and Ryedale Gay Community Network Conference in 2004 and later published. The researchers find lack of awareness of the existence of older lesbians and gay men in supported housing, residential and nursing homes which can result in inappropriate support and discrimination. The increase in research on older lesbians and gay men in the last few years is mostly the outcome of older lesbians and gay men themselves campaigning within their own communities and in a wider context and, as

Lee (2002) claims, driven by their invisibility. “Mainstream society is even less aware that older gays exist. This invisibility has been reflected by gerontological research as the sexuality of all older people is often sidelined or ignored by social gerontology”. (Lee 2002, p1). This was one of several papers presented to the British Society of Gerontology Conference, 12 September 2002 at the University of Birmingham.

Research recognising sexuality of older people is positive about desire reflecting more discourses about sexual behaviour and attitudes generally. As noted elsewhere in this chapter heterosexuality is normalised and can sometimes place same sex desire as a substitute for this. (Jerrome 1993, p247). In addition, the ideological power of discourses about reproductive sex, often in other contexts considered as too narrow a definition of sexual behaviour, can be a factor in constructing older women as no longer useful in these terms, whereas older men are acceptable as fathers. (Ussher, 1989) Brown (1998) points out that “what research there is rebuffs many of the stereotypes; for example older lesbians rather than being particularly lonely or desperate, are in fact more likely than older heterosexual women to use non-familial informal networks” (Brown 1998 p21). This challenges the ‘tragic’ image while the methodology which enables certain lesbians to identify themselves is unlikely to reach ‘isolated’ older lesbians. There are gaps in emphasis in research on support networks. The importance of non-familial and often non local support networks points to group settings which are not geographically identified and contrast with mainstream services.

Ageism within some LGBT communities reflects the ageism in dominant cultures. Gender differences in experiencing this have been noted although there is more work to be done on the expectations and experiences of older lesbians and gay men. Heaphy, Yip and Thompson find that “In some circumstances being non-heterosexual can mean that individuals are less aware of the ageing process. However, many men (and notably fewer women) indicated that being gay had made them more conscious of the ageing process. In doing so, they were mostly referring to what they believed to be excessively youth-orientated non-heterosexual cultures.” (Heaphy, Yip and Thompson, 2003, p5).

Fish (2006) finds that day care is modelled on heterosexual norms and recommends that “social workers should be aware of the existence of relevant support Groups such as the Alzheimer’s Society’s Lesbian and Gay Carers Network.” (Fish 2006, p59). Sale (2002, p31) describes a case study where “a residential home manager described two older lesbians, who were holding hands while walking along a corridor, as ‘dirty pervs’”. Morrow and Messinger (2006, p301) in an American study which nevertheless has relevance in Britain agree that “until the legal status of LGBT people is changed little real equity in service provision and other resources can be achieved.”

The increase in research on older lesbians and gay men in the last decade in particular is mostly arguably the outcome of older lesbians and gay men themselves campaigning within their own communities and in a wider context and, as Lee (2002) claims, driven by their invisibility. While there are more recently published research papers the lack of attention paid to these specific conference papers is indicative of the need for more LGBT research. Manthorpe (2003) addresses the neglect of attention to lesbian carers. Many of these are older and looking after older people and as Manthorpe (2003) emphasises not homogeneous and “lesbians who provide care for members of their families of origin or birth are labelled as daughters, sisters or mothers with scant recognition to that their identity may not be heterosexual”, (Manthorpe, 2003 p755) making clear the need for consultation and engagement with networks; it is no longer possible to depict lesbian carers as invisible because there is both research and identifiable networks (p765). She recommends that social workers acknowledge older people’s sexual identity and that this does not diminish with dementia. (Manthorpe 2003). “Lesbian, gay and bisexual lives over 50” a study by Heaphy, Yip and Thompson (2003) contributes to knowledge about support provided by lesbian and gay communities and needs and the research informs that one third believe health and social care providers are not aware of lesbian gay and bisexual issues. Some myths are challenged for example the “degree to which participants were confident and open about their sexuality”. (Heaphy et al 2003) p1). The methodology is a mixture of quantitative and qualitative using postal questionnaires, interviews and focus groups. Gender is not equally represented as there are more male participants. *Gay and Grey in Dorset* (2006)

emphasise varied experiences of older lesbians and gay men and the need for awareness and training for health and social care staff and the need for social and support groups. This research came out of discussion groups and expanded to reach other lesbians and gay men.

Stonewall's "Profiles of Prejudice" (2003) research investigates attitudes to different groups, using MORI poll data as a source. The conclusion that older people are among the most prejudiced against gay men and lesbians is useful and this is as worthy of further investigation and very relevant to this project. In the more detailed follow up research using focus groups and in depth interviews (Valentine and McDonald 2004) the results are more complex and less age related. Familiarity with minorities is given as the most common factor in promoting tolerance and respect (Valentine and McDonald 2004, p20). However the omission of age as a possible cause of discrimination is notable and an opportunity for further knowledge missed. .

Research on older bisexuals is not evident and is an issue worthy of investigation. Research on older transgender people is also sparse; visibility in popular culture arguably results from effective campaigning and good practice guidelines for staff. Hines (2007 p159) evidences kin and other networks as supportive to transgender people. Serano (2007, p41) explains that film and other media representations often reinforce the desire to "capture trans women in the act" of creating femininity. Male to female transsexual people in the popular imagination are constructed as desiring to be ultra 'feminine', and often confused with transvestites in appearance Hines' research which investigates support systems cites the Beaumont Society as the first gender support group in the UK (Hines p163), founded in the late 1960s.

Good practice guidelines are a form of literature with a specific set of discourses. The guidelines which are produced for managers and care workers are inevitably aimed at them and not 'consumers' of services. However guidelines which recognise and support staff working with older LGBTs are welcomed and contribute to discourses which support new research seeking views from the letter communities. Research and

campaigning have influenced production of guidelines which are available for staff working with older LGBTs. *Age Concern* has produced a resource pack for professionals which includes guidelines for staff to meet “the needs of older lesbians, gay men and bisexuals living in care homes and extra care housing”. (Knocker, 2001). This also provides guidelines for challenging homophobia by users of the services, an often omitted area. Hunt and Minsky, (2006) produced a *Stonewall* handbook for health managers to reduce health inequalities for lesbian gay and bisexual people. These are not however widely distributed although commissioned through the Department of Health. The transgender working group of the *Department of Health* (2006) provides guidelines to employers to address transphobia in health related employment. Again they are not generally available unless managers promote them in the workplace.

Equalities legislation now includes age within the single Commission for Equalities and Human Rights Acts 2006 and 2007; legislation introduced encourages longer working lives and commissions place discrimination against older people within a discourse of rights and political significance. However the new employment laws of 2007 are not as strong as first appears since employees aged 65 and over have currently only the right to request continued employment and can be refused if deemed unable to continue. Workers lost the right to challenge compulsory retirement age at the European Court of Justice (Murphy 2008); judgement was made that the default retirement age addresses “legitimate” labour market aims. This is evidence that age continues to be used as a reason to terminate employment, rationalising the ‘non-productive’ status assigned to older people. This is reinforced by the continuing scarcity of older people being included within research institutions contributing to policy formation and implementation. The *Open University’s* research on ageing and ageism (Ward, Bytheway 2008) is among that which contributes to recent inclusive and participatory research in that it has made efforts to employ older people as researchers. However the inclusion of older researchers does not guarantee involvement in or analysis or recommendations..

While positively noting the contributions older people make it is common to see the criteria for validation of older people’s existence as helping ‘young’ people and further



research needs to be done on peer support and networks. Studies which cite evidence of older people helping others is frequently based on volunteer schemes which have 'measurable outcomes'. Structured volunteering schemes, which can be measured, can ignore informal help and support given to neighbours which can go unnoticed. Many older people who already support neighbours informally may find efforts to recruit them to such schemes patronising and a bureaucratic hurdle, requiring police checks and training. (Hatton-Yeo 2006, Lie and Baines 2007). Credit for support frequently shifts from older people in the community to the scheme. However the research also recognizes the input of older volunteers and the value they give communities. Contributions by older people are not adequately acknowledged within the tragic narrative of being left behind as if abandoned. The presence and participation of older people in the communities can on the contrary be read as central and valued. While much of the research quoted challenges ageism it is then reinforced because they are seen as 'left behind' with no choice and 'passive' presences. Emerging research does however emphasise spending power and while there is not yet adequate focus on gender, sexuality and ageism, more empowered images are constructed. New and emerging discourses are addressing ageism and some later research (Ward and Bytheway 2008) is concerned to challenge it. Recent research using focus groups and semi-structured interviews, and addressing issues within concepts of empowerment indicates a positive approach and acknowledges older people's contributions rather than needs. However while some of the interviewees in research are older people, few are in control of the design, interpretation and analysis and this absence of authoritative representation arguably maintains the images of older people as passive, needy and relatively powerless. There is however evidence of a range of older people's views and experiences which cannot be contained within one discourse. Many older people have been and remain politically interested and active. They have experienced social movements and changes in societies. Research and policies about older people are increasingly influenced by concepts of 'consumer choice' and 'person centred care'; they are individualistic and can be depoliticised by providers and governments. Some more 'radical' perspectives on older people have been developed by their own pressure groups but research continues to be mostly designed by younger people to solve the 'problems'

that older people are seen to present. There remains a gap between consulting older people, and the structural changes and research this requires.

While dominant discourses create subjectivities which cannot escape being affected by discrimination both external and internally there is resistance and diversity; new discourses and different experiences and histories create change and many older people have been and are in movements which are creators of change. This is reflected in some emerging discourses.

### **Sexualities, Legislation and Politics: Significance for this Research**

The Groups selected for interviewing for this project are described in detail in chapter 4. One Group is drawn from users of a highly organised national voluntary organisation which has a corporate image and a business sector. Another is drawn from a flexible 'user' Group, and three are older 'Campaigning' audiences. Comparison is made between the Groups which have different interests and access. The variety of Groups allows for comparison of organisational structures and to examine the contrasting roles of gatekeepers. The researcher's different relationships to the Groups has implications for insider/outsider, professional/political and personal standpoints.

These are older people who have experienced important historical moments and discourses and some have been active campaigners for social changes. Attitudes and lifestyles about gender, sexual behaviour, and identities have changed during their lives and their views are of interest. The sample and research methods are designed to encourage personal narratives in historical contexts; they are recognised as giving a richer view of meanings and change than a tick box approach. Historical moments of change considered important are outlined in the Introduction. Soaps have contributed to challenges to homophobia, with strong and sympathetic gay and lesbian storylines ('Colin' in *EastEnders* in 1986 and 'Beth Jordache' in *Brookside* 1994). 'Second wave' feminism, in Britain heavily influenced by American civil rights and feminist movements

has contributed to discourses about gender and sexuality which are identifiable in contemporary perceptions and attitudes towards non-mainstream sexuality.

As a result of campaigning and New Labour policy some legislation has recognised and addressed inequalities for LGBTs; Section 28 of the Local Government Act was repealed in 2003, and Civil Partnerships were made legal in 2005. The Gender Recognition Act (2004) gives post operative transgendered people rights and the Goods and Services Act (2006) names LGBTs as having equality with gender, ethnicity and religion. (Age is currently only partly addressed because it has exclusions including retirement age). As with other equality themes the Acts have formal status but do not fully address cultures of heteronormativity and transphobia and place the responsibility on to individuals to bring cases of harassment and discrimination to tribunals rather than providing structural change.

Emerging research and discourses reveal a complex picture which break down homogeneous constructions of older people and challenge some of the discourses which construct a new hierarchy with 'younger old' seen as more demanding and less affected by ageism. Directions and possibilities of the literature draw attention to the tensions between protection and dependence, needs and rights, caring and agency, commonality and difference and potentially threatening category of the 'young old'.

There is relatively little research on attitudes to non-normative sexualities among this section of the population and relatively rare explorations of LGBTs responses to representations in popular culture of which soaps provide a useful site.

## CHAPTER 2. THEORIES OF SOAP OPERA: ISSUES AND CONTEXTS

The aim of this chapter is to examine theories of soap opera in relation to narratives and older audiences. The main focus is on the 1980s and 1990s because this was a period when popular culture including soap opera was validated as a period of study in cultural studies and sociology. Textual analysis and audience research will be investigated for theorised hegemonic and transgressive narratives and older audience readings in general and also lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender narratives. Theories of interpellation and possible readings, identifications and talk resulting from soaps which argue active and changing views are central to the project. Older audiences have not been adequately addressed in relation to any representations, let alone LGBT ones.

The status of soaps linked to working class women audiences and the 'popular' was important in making soaps and their intertextualities the focus of academic debate. Characteristics of the soap opera genre, (Brown, 1994, pp 48/9) the narrative structure, (Modleski, 1979; Ang, 1990; Geraghty 1991; Brown, 1994) audience pleasure and meanings (Ang 1990; Brown 1994; Liladhar 2000; Thomas 2002) intertextuality, (Ang, 1990) textual analysis, are the issues of concern. The soap opera theorists selected for review were informed by feminist thought. Soap operas have been focused on by feminist theorists because of interpellated female audiences inscribed by 'domestic', multi narrative and infinite narrative structures. The issues focused on vary; changes in content and style are evident. (Geraghty 1991, Ang 1990) More masculine storylines feature particularly during the 1990s, which have raised questions about whether soaps can still be seen as interpellating women, or whether the attempts to reach wider audiences, including young people, are changing them fundamentally.<sup>1</sup>

The emphasis in these works is on detailed textual and/or audience analysis, with gender and sexuality as central themes. There are many other theoretical works included in media studies which have influenced textual and audience studies, for example that of Abercrombie, (1980) which emphasizes the power of the economic over the ideological, and Fiske, (1989 a,b) who theorises an audience able to read the signifiers in a way

undetermined by economics or hegemony. The methodology and findings of Philo, (1990) who finds that audiences are more likely to resist the dominant code if they have some personal experience of the issue, (although this is about the news, it is relevant to any study of audience response) are important. Philo also concludes that an awareness of the construction of television programmes do not necessarily lead to an oppositional reading. The most relevant research for this project is that of the BFI on women audiences of violence in soaps (Schlesinger, Emerson, Dobash, Dobash, Weaver, 1992) and Brown's work on talk about soaps. (1994) Katz and Leibes (1985) study of *Dallas* encompasses audiences from different national communities and finds decoding methods related to national identity. Audiences view the messages differently and see different ideological themes. Curran (1990) argues that television texts are not infinitely open; and that there is always one preferred meaning. In this view there is a limit to the power of the audience to define meanings. In a more recent work Fogel and Carlson, (2006) reproduce the negative discourses about soaps from earlier decades and relate enjoyment of them to some form of cognitive impairment, concluding that soaps operas and talk shows are linked to poorer cognition in older women. This can be seen as a return to the 1950s analyses with soaps and popular culture associated with social and educational disadvantage. Their view, which does not acknowledge diversity or negotiations and talk of audiences, will be challenged in the thesis. The work of Barthes, (1977, 2000) particularly on intertextuality and the dispersal of the text informs many of these studies and will be used in later analyses of text and audiences. Thus, many relevant theorists whose work is not focused on soaps are important to this study. The research carried out by Hall, (1980) and Morley, (1981) on reading strategies, informs much audience research and will be used in relation to many of the soap theorists of audiences. Research on American attitudes to lesbians and gay men is interesting and possibly useful (Ratcliff, Lassiter, Markman, Snyder, 2006) in concluding that women are less prejudicial to gay men although this conclusion may be also heterogeneous and take no account of negotiation within Groups. Attitudes and practices of UK soap audiences are said to be capable of change by soap representations of 'healthy' behaviours (Verna, Adams, White, 2007) which indicates LGBT representations may change and cause talk about non mainstream sexualities and gender identity.

The earlier works which are referenced here were concerned with the soap opera text and the text's construction of the ideal viewer. Later works are more concerned with audience research; they combine textual analysis with research on how viewers interpret the text. The increasing emphasis on audience research as opposed to a view of the spectator as constructed by the text places them within media studies. Previously maligned as 'women's programmes,' soap opera as a genre became the focus of studies by these theorists partially because of this label.

This is not to designate *Crossroads* 'progressive' but to suggest that the skills and discourses mobilised by its despised popularity have partly been overlooked because of their legitimation as natural (feminine). (Brunsdon 1997, p18).

Soap operas have been analysed as for women, in the scheduling, the surrounding and intersecting advertisements, the narrative structure and content. The earlier soaps were more structured around women's lives in the home, very popular, and watched and talked about by women in the countries in which these studies took place. Many of them were shown in the daytime. The soaps analysed in this thesis all have prime time evening slots.

### **Multi Narrative Text**

Tania Modleski's *The search for tomorrow in today's soap operas*, first published in 1979, (reprinted 1982) was innovatory in its focus on soap opera. Influenced by post-structuralism and film theory, Modleski was most concerned to study the audience as constructed by the text. Her essay on soap opera refers to and in some ways answers Laura Mulvey's essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"(1975) in *Screen* 16, in which the narrative of classic Hollywood film is theorised to construct a male viewer who identifies with the hero and the meta-narrative. In Mulvey's work the darkened cinema, the projection of the image on the screen, create for the spectator a dream-like state like the unconscious. The context of the soap spectator/audience is a different one from the setting of Modleski's spectator, defined by interruption and distractedness. This setting is not conducive to producing a dream state. The soap opera narrative is structured

differently too. Modleski's careful look at the soap opera text of that time leads her to define them as multi-narratives, with the focus on women and the home, the scheduling to fit in with the viewer's domestic work, and never ending-ness. Modleski compares the spectator of Mulvey's analysis with the soap opera spectator thus:

If, as Mulvey claims, the identification of the spectator with 'a main male protagonist' results in the spectator's becoming the 'representative of power' the multiple identification which occurs in soap opera results in the spectator's being divested of power. (Modleski. 1979/1982, p91).

Soap operas may be in the vanguard not just of T.V. art but of all popular narrative art. (Modleski 1982, p87),

The extracts above illustrate two important aspects of Modleski's work. In her view, the non linear, postmodern structure of soap opera is a radical break from the classic text in film and television, and the multiple focus makes it a validation of women's experience. In Modleski's view then there is both recognition of the requirement for women to be aware of everyone else's point of view and at the same time to have no power to determine outcomes. This causes a tension which is sometimes implicit in her analysis. The spectator as constructed to continually take different perspectives because of the multiplicity of plots and characters' points of view, is both recognised and disempowered. Modleski sees the effect of the textual structure as comforting and pleasurable for the female spectator, and a challenge to dominant textual forms. Yet at the same time the disempowerment of the spectator re-inforces hegemony rather than challenges it.

The 'woman' in question is problematically universalised. While she is constructed as having many perspectives, she is generalized by Modleski's notion of an isolated mother at home with childcare responsibilities and distractions. Recognition of women's experiences as fractured is often cited as an example of postmodern identity, not fixed but multiple. A challenge to the western ideology of the Cartesian autonomous self,

women's experiences are seen as evidence of non-essentialism and a socially and/or psychically constructed self. While this approach can be a politically useful one, as Bondi (1993) points out however, the concepts of fragmented and multiple identities are used in different ways with different theoretical bases. For example, "fragmented subjectivities" are usually located in an "anti-humanist position" to signify that "coherent identities are only ever mythical constructs". (Bondi 1993, p96) "Multiple identities", Bondi says, are more linked to a notion of a 'real' identity which can be reclaimed, and thus can be used by default as a claim for an 'essential' identity. Hutcheon (1989) has illuminated the perceived tensions strains between feminisms' meta narratives and postmodernism's emphasis on multi-narratives. She concludes that postmodernism can be politically strategic in effect (Hutcheon 1989, p168) and this is perhaps helpful in addressing the tension in Modleski's analysis. Modleski's claim for a postmodern radicalism for soap opera based on multi narratives contrasts with feminisms' aim for women's ability to control events; feminist issues can however be strongly represented.

Since Modleski developed her thesis there have been important debates and theoretical positions taken about postmodernism, identity and the relationship to feminist interventions. Conflicts clearly arise with approaches which include defining oneself within an identity as if it is a pre-existing concept, and resisting universal notions of the self (white men). Use of "strategic essentialism" in utilising identity in a political context as theorised by Spivak (1988, pp. 271-313) is a useful concept and can make explicit the construction of identity and its necessary adoption for political ends. While there is no "universal 'woman'" or women's experience, there are strengths to be gained by uniting and identifying as 'women' in relation to campaigns about (some) women's experiences.

Modleski identifies specific issues within the soaps. The American daytime soaps of the 1970's being analysed, including *Ryan's Hope*, *Days of our Lives*, and *The Young and the Restless* represent the family as society, with threats to its continuance, often resolved, driving the narrative. Whether families in soap opera split up or not, (and they often don't, but are strengthened through conflict and pressure) the soap community provides an extended family for the isolated woman. Modleski locates the importance of



the family for women at that time, and gives an example of one of the causes and some effects:

For twentieth century woman, the loss of her family, not through death, but through abandonment (children growing up and leaving home) is perhaps another 'ending' which is feared because it leaves women lonely and isolated and without significant purpose in life. (Modleski 1982, p89)

Soap opera for Modleski provides women with validation that they provide an important function in 20<sup>th</sup> century American society. The family is constructed within soaps as always in some sort of turmoil and women are the support that ensures its continuity. The problematising of women's role in the family should be seen in context; while being aware of the ground-breaking work that she produced at the time, in terms of theorising a 'women's' genre, her universalising of woman and the family can now be seen as problematic. The viewer is similarly universalised. While the interpellated woman may be constructed by the text, age, race, class and sexual identity of the viewer is also important in the reception and negotiation of the text. The most relevant model of reader identification to apply to soap theorists and this thesis will be Stewart Hall's theories on "Encoding and Decoding" (1980). In contrast to a model which looks at media messages as either received or rejected by an audience, Hall gives three possible ways of responding. They are responses which read the text within the dominant hegemonic, the negotiated and the oppositional. While the subjective is not a private matter where the text can be interpreted in any way the viewer wishes, the meanings made of the text are varied and not always consistent with one code, since related to the viewer's own ideological position. Gender, sexuality, age, and political identifications become factors. Hall's methodology enables multiple readings to be theorised in relation to text and audience.

The emphasis on the family in day-time soaps is clearly an issue. The family-located text, the scheduling, in the afternoon when more women were expected to be at home to be able to watch, the advertising, for products aimed at the female consumer, which cuts into

and surrounds the soap opera, indicates that the ideal viewer, the interpellated, is the woman at home, involved in domestic tasks. Modleski sees her as a figure distracted by the work she is doing and the short segments of plot match this. (Modleski 1982, p101). The hegemonic narratives promote the family, the woman as heterosexual carer, and the structure of the soaps make it easy for women to watch them, distracted though they may be. At the time of writing, (the late 1970s) change was occurring in women's lives: more women were going out to work, and this structure can be seen as a nostalgic return to the 50s and 'women at home' ideology. There is a tendency in Modleski's work to reinforce the importance of family and universalise 'woman'; this can be seen, for example, when she says "for twentieth century woman" (1982, p89) that children growing up and leaving home is the most important concern. This ideology promoted the nuclear family as the natural goal for women. However, many did not live within it, some may not have been so concerned at children leaving home, some would have felt their lives changing in a positive way when they did. Others would have been older audiences in single households or residential homes. As Modleski points out, soaps provide a hegemonic view of the function of women in the family.

Misery becomes not, as in many nineteenth century women's novels, the consequence and sign of the family's breakdown, but the very means of its functioning and perpetuation. As long as the children are happy, as long as things *don't* come to a satisfying conclusion, the mother will be needed as confidante and advisor, and her function will never end. (Modleski 1982, p90).

While soap opera encourages identification with all the characters, there is one, she points out, who we are allowed to hate. She cites examples of the testing of the family, and identifies the villainess as one of the causes of disruptions and threats. (Modleski 1982, p94) The villainess is active in using her femininity to destroy the family and its patriarchal values. It is also possible to see her as constructed her within Freudian theory, because her femininity is pathological in its non-passivity. While conventional soap women are often constructed as comforters and acting in response to disruption, the demonising of the 'vamp' figure is due to her sexuality being not contained. She is,

however negatively, a challenge to dominant constructions of femininity of that time. Villainesses become popular and even cult figures, breaking out of their negative textual constraints. (Kaplan 1980). Although Modleski does not recognise intertextuality in soaps, when analyzing film noir she stresses the importance of audience knowledge and appreciation of villainesses in film noir thrillers, for example. The villainess can become a popular icon in soaps. Audiences may be encouraged to hate her but she may be a cult and glamorous figure with whom we can identify too, enabling women to identify with her anger and power. She can “transform traditional feminine weaknesses into the sources of her strength”. (Modleski, 1982, p95). Modleski sees her as fulfilling a function by repeating her attempts to destroy, and if she is doomed to fail, she is also doomed to keep trying. The threat she poses to the family is necessary in the narrative. Another one replaces her if she is destroyed. (Modleski, 1982, p98).

Heterosexuality dominated daytime soap opera at the time that Modleski was writing, in the early 1980s as well as the period she considers (1970s). Adrienne Rich (1983) describes the hegemony of “compulsory heterosexuality,” and challenges the assumption of heterosexuality as natural. For Rich and many radical feminists, the construction of heterosexuality and the structures which promote and keep it in place are the structural power of patriarchy. The logic of soap opera allows no ‘deviance’. In this sense heterosexuality is compulsory. Heterosexuality is ‘common sense’ in the soaps Modleski examines. She considers the possible effect a lesbian or gay narrative would have on the soap structure.

As a rule, only those issues which can be tolerated and ultimately pardoned are introduced on soap operas. The list includes careers for women, abortion, pre-marital and extra-marital sex, alcoholism, divorce, mental and even physical cruelty. An issue like homosexuality, which could explode the family structure rather than temporarily disrupt it, is simply ignored. (Modleski 1982, p93).

The tensions which are visible and can be resolved within dominant ideologies represent discourses concerning women’s roles and structural changes brought about partly as a

result of feminist campaigns in the 1970s. In 2006 the American campaigning Group *National Organisation of Women* (NOW) describes in its website campaigns around abortion and equal rights and “in 1971 NOW became the first major national women's organization to support lesbian rights. ... Over 15 years ago, NOW gave strong support to a landmark 1979 case, *Belmont v. Belmont*, that defined lesbian partners as a nurturing family and awarded a lesbian mother custody of her two children.” (2004).

Second wave feminism in the UK in the 1970s and 1980s also included campaigns for more women earning a wage outside the home, demands for abortion, lesbian campaigns, among many challenges to the nuclear family. These issues erupt, and are discussed or are silenced in soap discourses during the period of this study (late 1980s to 2002). Lesbians and gay men did not enter as explicit discourses until the 1980s and 1990s.

Inevitably, by emphasising the text and not the intertextual, and because her work does not include audience views, issues which may refer intertextually to non-mainstream sexuality are not visible within Modleski's framework. This would demand another analysis and it is not Modleski's aim to do this. There is a narrative logic within the soap operas which she studies which does not admit explicitly to lesbianism or homosexuality, since the heterosexual nuclear family is valorised. The issues of lesbian and gay sexuality within soaps were considered too disruptive by Modleski to be included in the soap narrative. There are however alternatives within Modleski's framework which could admit a narrative challenge to heterosexuality; a demonised lesbian or gay relationship would be possible, which could raise questions but be silenced eventually. The views expressed by Modleski can lead to a query about whether a lesbian could, in the future, be represented as a similar type to the villainess because she rejects traditional femininity and motherhood. That in actual fact from 1986 in Britain, within prime time soaps (when a gay man, 'Colin' was introduced as a main character in *EastEnders*) lesbians and gay men have not been demonised, and are constructed and represented within a liberal-humanist discourse, is an important area of research for study. The intertextual areas of relevance which are indicated here are many. They include campaigning by LGBT Groups, (in particular, the inclusion of 'Hayley', a male to female

transsexual character in *Coronation Street*). Other contextual issues are competition between soaps to attract wider audiences and include wider social issues, (Geraghty 1991) and “The street sweeps all before it; *Coronation Street*, Media & Marketing” (Frean 1994 *Times*, p22). An examination of the interventions by writers and producers, the effect of changing family structures on the representations of soap families, audience responses to lesbian and gay characters which continue to affect LGBT narratives and produce a circularity of discourses, are all rich areas for analysis, unavailable to Modleski.

Modleski’s research is situated within feminist politics and her outcome/conclusion is a call for intervention:

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As feminists, we have a responsibility to devise ways of meeting these needs that are more creative, honest, and interesting than the ones mass culture has supplied. Otherwise, the search for tomorrow threatens to go on, endlessly. (Modleski 1994, pp108-9).

Her ‘interpellated’ here are other feminists. This is honest, if problematic. She makes no claim for ‘objectivity’ and yet assumes feminists will understand and agree with her claims about mass culture being our “responsibility”. Ultimately her view of soaps is pessimistic, and she does not endorse the more radical structure of the narrative open to later theorists. Her vision does not appear to allow for feminist challenges to mass culture and promotes instead the possibility of feminist alternatives.

### **The Text and Construction of Femininity**

Charlotte Brunsdon’s work, *Crossroads: notes on a soap opera*, focuses on episodes of the British soap in the late 1970s (1981,1997). *Crossroads* was broadcast on ITV in the early evening and, she argues, clearly intended for female audiences. She places the soap opera in a political framework from the outset, and says that the ‘personal sphere’ is of importance to feminism.

The ideological problematic of soap opera - the frame or field in which meanings are made...is that of 'personal life'. ...In Marxist terms this is the sphere of the individual outside waged labour. In feminist terms it is the sphere of women's 'intimate oppression'. Ideologically constructed as the feminine sphere, it is within this realm of the domestic, the personal, the private, that feminine competence is recognised. However, the action of soap opera is not restricted to familial or quasi-familial institutions, but, as it were, *colonises* the public masculine sphere, representing it from the point of view of the personal. (Brunsdon 1997, pp 14-15).

Brunsdon is responding in many ways to Modleski's work, and finds that some of the characteristics of the British soap *Crossroads* are similar to the 1970s American daytime soaps. There are some changes in focus however. As Brunsdon effectively argues, while Modleski is concerned that the genre of soap is designed to appeal to the psychology of the 'ideal mother', Brunsdon understands these characteristics as being constructed by the soap which then interpellates the caring female spectator.

It is the culturally constructed skills of femininity - sensitivity, perception, intuition and the necessary privileging of the concerns of personal life - which are both called on and practised in the genre. The fact that these skills and competencies, this type of cultural capital, are ideologically constructed as natural does not mean, as many feminists have shown, that they are the *natural* attributes of femininity. (Brunsdon 1997, p17).

This is a marked shift, and one which draws attention to the construction of femininity within the soap. The soap does not merely represent femininity, but reconstructs it for the viewer, who recognises the skills required and valued for women. While Modleski has not claimed the 'naturalness' of the ideal mother figure, she has not explicitly defined her as culturally constructed.

One of the topics within the soap narrative that Brunsdon focuses on is child custody.

This can be seen to represent discourses circulating about single mothers and the 'right' person to bring up a child. A popular film, *Kramer vs. Kramer* (Benton 1979) presents a view which challenges the right of the birth mother to keep the child in a custody case, and constructs a new nurturing masculinity. It is the father's viewpoint which audiences are encouraged to empathise with. While this can be read as a negative comment on feminist discourses, it can also be viewed as a challenge to maternal ideology. However, the woman is demonized in both discourses for failing in her 'duty'.

In soaps, the family can break up, and the single parent is constructed and represented as almost a family. This could be seen as a move towards the possibility of a challenge to the hegemony of the nuclear family, and thus to the representation of non-mainstream sexuality. Here, though, the point being made by Brunsdon in relation to custody is that:

These knowledges only have narrative resonance in relation to discourses of maternal femininity which are elaborated elsewhere, already in circulation and brought to the programme by the viewer..... The question of what *should* happen is rarely posed 'openly' .... But it is precisely the terms of the question, the way in which it relates to other already circulating discourses, if you like, the degree of its closure, which form the site of the construction of moral consensus, a construction which 'demands', seeks to implicate, a skilled viewer.  
(Brunsdon 1997, p18).

Brunsdon emphasises the cultural knowledge required of the viewer and the relation between discourses in society and the soap's narrative. In this she uses a Foucauldian approach. The characters and the narratives are never fixed, but become part of the circulation of knowledge in culture. Her work stresses the skills of the viewer in understanding the genre and these discourses and thereby argues for the contextual importance of viewing. Her analysis reveals an alert and skilled viewer, not the permanently distracted one. (Modleski 1979). Brunsdon's could be argued as a reconstruction of the female audience as active rather than passive, negotiating the

narrative for themselves and finding meanings within it.

Against critics who complain of the redundancy of soap opera, I would suggest that the radical discontinuities require extensive, albeit interrupted, engagement on the part of the audience, before it becomes pleasurable. (Brunsdon 1997, p18)

Brunsdon's more positive view of soap opera sees it as a more complex and satisfying genre. While Modleski allows us to critique text and femininity Brunsdon further contextualises and allows for skilled rather than more passive female audiences.

### **Intertextuality, Melodrama, Audience Identification and Resistance**

Ien Ang's work *Watching Dallas* was published in 1982, a study of the American soap, *Dallas*, in the early 1980's. She takes an approach similar to Brunsdon, in emphasising the knowledge of the viewer, and she finds that there are different responses to and meanings made in the attitudes towards *Dallas*. Ang is a fan of the soap and takes a non-judgemental and overtly pleasurable approach to this work; embracing her pleasure in *Dallas* puts her close to her participants in terms of being a fan, while retaining a strong theoretical perspective. Ang researches and theorises the pleasures of the viewer. Thus the 'ideal viewer' as constructed by the text is not the focus of the work, but some of the actual viewers' responses to the text. Ang's focus on one soap, like Brunsdon, provides a more concentrated look than Modleski's and so can elicit rich textual material. *Dallas* began in America in 1980 and was about the domestic and business dealings of a rich white Texan family. Ang sees the viewer as an active consumer of *Dallas* (Ang 1982, p24). Her work allows this thesis to continue and develop Brunsdon's strategy, moving away from the soap text, to the audience as text. Part of Ang's research is a study of viewers' letters written to her in response to a published request. These letters are themselves analysed as texts, and she uses textual analysis to analyse them with the proviso that "they cannot be regarded as a direct expression of (the viewers') 'motives' or 'reasons' for watching *Dallas*". (Ang 1982, p26)



Ang, like Modleski, is interested in the genre of melodrama and audiences' identifications with its manifestations. Although this research focuses on British 'social realist' soaps it has found melodrama present in them; some LGBT characters especially can be placed within melodramatic moments or be contrasted with the melodrama of heterosexual narratives. The blurring of the narrative codes can be useful for audience research to examine whether there is identification with the characters. Ang's work is informed by Mulvey's essay on melodrama (1978) and applied to the soap opera text of *Dallas*. She finds that viewers express identification with melodramatic moments despite the settings being outrageous and unreal. The *Dallas* characters and narratives are, to some of her viewers, identifiable with because of the melodramatic and often tragic mode.

The 'psychological credibility' of the characters in melodrama is subordinated to the functioning of those characters in melodramatic situations, so that the emotional effect is pushed to extremes. That effect can be achieved because these imagined situations are socially and culturally surrounded by myths and fantasies which endow them with a strongly emotional appeal. (Ang 1982, p64).

Ang agrees with Mulvey that melodrama does not allow the characters to develop awareness of the structure of the conflicts they are faced with. (Ang 1982, p73) There is no possibility of structural change, and this, as Modleski makes explicit, ensures the reproduction of the problem. But where Modleski's viewer is seen to be constructed within this perspective, Ang's audiences are not so predictable. Ang adopts a Barthesian perspective which recognises the importance of myth and references to other texts (Barthes, 1972, 2000) in the soap opera narrative. She goes beyond this however as she finds that some of her viewers respond to melodramatic moments as identifiable with, because they accord with their own emotions and situations. She finds that "at a connotative level they ascribe mainly emotional meanings to *Dallas*. In this sense the realism of *Dallas* is 'emotional realism.'" (Ang 1982, p45) This is important because it places the emphasis on engagement with the text in a way which is not as a fantasy or escape from reality, but as meaningful and relevant to lived experiences. An example

from another text might be the reaction of some women to the press's melodramatic narrative of Princess Diana's divorce and later death, where their identification occurred in spite of vast life-style differences. Perhaps even, a feminist politics of identification was manifested because the power of the royal family was perceived as patriarchal. Valerie Hey, in 'Be(long)ing', in the collection *Mourning Diana* says:

the defining moment for me in the (quasi-feminist?) fairytale was her ruthless but elegantly understated expose of the sexual politics of elites in the infamous *Panorama* interview. Here was the number one sexual icon dramatizing dissatisfactions that millions of 'ordinary' women shared. (Hey 1999, p61).

Ang's examination of audience identification finds that there is a "constant to and fro movement between identification with and distancing from the fictional world as constructed in the text [which] characterizes the involvement of the letter-writers who like *Dallas*". (Ang 1982, p50) They are not wholly absorbed, unreflecting, in the text, but are at times critical and aware of its construction.

The model of viewer identification theorised by Stuart Hall (1980) can be utilised. The texts can be read within a dominant-hegemonic code, (which is often the preferred meaning) or a negotiated code, (which accepts the common sense hegemonic meaning but negotiates a different perspective) or an oppositional code. The oppositional reading would re-define the values, reading the text in a way which challenges hegemony. The audiences can utilize all the codes at different points in the text. Identities and experiences relating to gender, political beliefs, class, age, ethnicity and personal experience of issues being represented, are some of the factors which audiences draw on to decode texts. Ang's work is an apt example of the negotiational and oppositional codes viewers often adopt when reading soap opera. Ang shows that it is most common for a negotiational code to be adopted, and the awareness that rarely are dominant codes read uncritically and consistently in a text gives the reader/viewer the position of an active, rather than passive, definer of meaning. An active reader does not, however, mean that there is necessarily resistance. As Stacey points out however "Activity in itself is not

a form of resistance: women may be *actively* investing in oppressive ideologies.” (Stacey 1994, p47).

Ang’s findings reinforce Brunsdon’s view that audiences are not always in a state of abstraction, but can be intensely involved in the narrative. She finds her audiences as responding according to both cultural knowledge and expectation, and their viewing habits and their current situation. The “tragic structure of feeling as an umbrella meaning of *Dallas* emerges from the level of connotation, and not all viewers will ascribe the same connotative meanings to the programme”. (Ang 1982, p61). She concludes that the cultural orientations which affect the responses include the “expectations they have of the serial, their attitude towards the genre, and television in general, the place television viewing occupies in their life, and so on”. Indeed, “The tragic structure of feeling is not therefore contained as it were in the nature of *Dallas*. It is a complex of meanings which is central for certain groups of *Dallas* fans.” (Ang, *ibid*).

Ang looks at some issues current in *Dallas* in the early 1980s. These are of importance as they are the issues that fans refer to as ‘realistic’. These include: a woman’s alcoholism, and her fights with her powerful husband, and the centrality of the family for identity and support while being at the same time full of hostility and tension. The penalty of being ousted from the family is serious and can facilitate loss of identity. Ang sees the ideology of the family as central, yet constantly threatened:

The development of personal life *within the family* is set up as the ideological norm. The family is regarded as the ideal cradle for human happiness. At least, it should be. Family life is not actually romanticized in soap operas; on the contrary, the imaginary ideal of the family as safe haven in a heartless world is constantly shattered. (Ang 1982, p68-69).

Ang, like Gramsci (1971/1986) and Foucault (1976/1990) sees resistance as integral to hegemonic representations in that “the power of the ideology of mass culture is certainly not absolute.” (Ang 1982, p115) This informs her conclusions about the feminist

potential of *Dallas*. Ang's purpose is not primarily to measure the soap for its feminist content, but to investigate the pleasure it gives. She wishes to give pleasure not an instrumental function but a value in itself.

In terms of *content* the fantasy positions and solutions brought about by the tragic structure of feeling and the melodramatic imagination do seem indeed to incline to conservatism, and of course they can and must be criticised for this. The politics of representation do matter. But the fact that we can identify with these positions and solutions when we watch *Dallas* or women's weepies and experience pleasure from them is a completely different issue: it need not imply that we are also bound to take up these positions and solutions in our relations to our loved ones and friends, our work, our political ideals, and so on.  
(Ang 1985, p135).

Ang argues that women can find pleasure in the text, while also taking up negotiational readings. I would argue from my own findings of British soaps that the discourses which *Dallas* contains can be viewed as either conservative or feminist at times. For example, narratives which construct discourses about patriarchal power and represent women struggling against it need not be pessimistic and accepting of that position. They may question that reality within and outside of the text. Ang's work is relevant and important. Although *Dallas* is more melodramatic than the British soaps I will be studying, she allows me to examine the many melodramatic moments. Identification with the melodrama or social realism of LGBT narratives and characters will be an area of investigation.

### **Production Values**

In 1982 Dorothy Hobson researched British soap in a work entitled *Crossroads: the drama of a soap opera*. Hobson's detailed study of the soap (in the early 1980s) had access to the writers and producers, as well as interviews with viewers, and this gives the work a different dimension to the earlier textual analyses and audience research based

works. Hobson's access to the production team uncovers the power struggles over scheduling this soap opera had when competing against higher status programmes such as news broadcasts. The changes to the times of transmission made viewing figures oscillate, since regular viewers may have been prevented from watching it. Current British prime time soaps rarely have this problem outside of major sporting events, and so can target more stable audiences. Another important area she refers to is in relation to audience feedback. While there is a formal system for viewers to comment, an informal network is also described. (Hobson 1982, p46). Members of the production team, who lived in "various parts of the country," received feedback from friends, and more importantly, were known to viewers in the community who approached them. This is a meaningful area which may be relevant to representations of LGBT narratives and characters studied here. It also raises the possibility of the existence of consultations with campaigning groups on a more formal level and how much this influences the narrative. Hobson says that "many of the most socially aware and committed people in television are working in the area of documentary programme making and are often attempting to get over the exact messages which Jack Barton achieves so successfully in *Crossroads*." (Hobson 1982, p48) One of the points I make is that there is an "intervention of the intellectual" (Bourdieu 1993) in soap opera LGBT narratives which may challenge hegemonic constructions of sexuality. Hobson's view here partly addresses this, but also makes a possible distinction between the aims of producers within different genres. There may be similarities in the aims of producers of the documentaries and soaps which challenge and aim to bring 'social messages' to audiences. The areas which are of interest for this project are whether there can be such a distinction and whether the current British prime-time soaps, some known for their ambitions to air serious issues, have changed their audiences' perceptions.

The detail in Hobson's work is also useful because much of the theoretical work on soap opera does not detail production at the level of directors and scriptwriters, and the crew who work on the programme. Her access provides knowledge of interventions by audiences influencing soap narratives. Production values, pressures of deadlines, competition with other channels and programmes, were also made visible within her

narratives of the production team. Hobson's work coincided with the sacking of Noele Gordon, who played the main character 'Meg Richardson'. The event caused much anger and excitement, and Hobson's work revealed disregard of audience views, audience involvement with, and concern at, the loss of the character. Hobson's interviews with older viewers are also one of the first to give a voice to a neglected group of people. Her own views sometimes reinforce ageism; for example, she is concerned that some audience members believe that *Crossroads* and the characters existed in reality, but finds it more understandable if they "come from elderly people". (Hobson 1982, p103)

### **Discursive Social Audiences**

Annette Kuhn's article, first published in *Screen*, 1984, entitled "Women's genres: melodrama, soap opera, and theory" is a key text which confronts the tendency in studies of spectators and audience to date to assume that they are homogeneous and that similar theoretical perspectives can apply. Her work has been influential in examining the difference and concluding that they have different theoretical models. For example, the spectator has been constructed by Mulvey's model of the viewer of the classic Hollywood film, and is constructed within psychoanalytical theory. The audience on the other hand is a social audience, watching within a specific and social cultural context. Kuhn's work is helpful in finding a way to theorise them as both 'discursive constructs'.

Representations, contexts, audiences and spectators would then be seen as a series of interconnected social discourses, certain discourses possessing greater constitutive authority at specific moments than others. Such a model permits relative autonomy for the operation of texts, readings, and contexts, and also allows for contradictions, oppositional readings, and varying degrees of discursive authority. (Kuhn 1984/1997, p152).

In this way the context of the social audience is to be emphasised as much as the text, the latter which interpellates the ideal viewer but a reading of which does not examine the resistance or meanings audiences make of them. As Kuhn says, this resolves to some

extent the dualism between text and context which Brunson makes explicit in her essay “Notes on a Soap Opera” (1981). For the study of soaps I will be undertaking, this approach is of value. The soap opera texts which include LGB or T narratives will be a fundamental area of investigation in itself. However, equally important will be the meanings made of them. The contexts will include cultural knowledge and expectations, gender, age, sexual identity, racial identity, class, the context of viewing. A relevant study included in a BFI publication by Schlesinger, Dobash, Russell, and Weaver, (1992) is audience research on *EastEnders* in July 1989. Here divisions within audiences’ responses are evident when viewing threatening scenes of violence against women. Women who have experienced violence themselves are more likely to take the issue seriously, identify with the woman, think it realistic, and disturbing. The scene is enacted by a couple, an Afro-Caribbean woman and an English man. There are differences in intensity of feeling and Afro-Caribbean women viewers feel more strongly and are more critical of the handling of the issue. (Schlesinger et al 1992, p86). The findings challenge a view of audiences having a monolithic response, and also find different readings in relation to gender, age and ethnicity. This further breaking down of the audience reactions in relation to life experiences is a welcome addition to the enquiry.

### **Gender in the Soap Opera Text**

By the time that Christine Geraghty wrote her work, *Women and soap opera* in 1991 the context had changed radically. Soap opera had become a focus of interest within media studies, particularly in gender studies, and the status of soap opera as an academic study more acceptable. Soap opera theory was established and recognised as rich in both textual analysis and audience research. Geraghty’s work covers many issues and both British and American soaps. The issues she identifies reveal some of the changes in content, particularly in British social realist soaps, since the earlier studies a decade before.

These issues include the representation of community, career women, race and class, lesbians and gay men, and the masculinisation of soaps, particularly in relation to

*Brookside*. The family is still a major focus, but some of the soap families have changed their structure. There are more single-parent families, usually headed by a woman, (examples are 'Michelle' in *EastEnders*, 'Deirdre' in *Coronation Street*) which can be seen as changing the construction of what a family is, and as such challenging the nuclear family. For Geraghty it is soap 'community' which has become more important in the narrative, and this informs her analysis. She theorises that

the moments of acceptance and sharing on which the communities of *Coronation Street* and *EastEnders* depend have to be worked for...Nevertheless, soaps have successfully presented to the viewer a community which, if not perfect, at least seemed indestructible. (Geraghty 1991, p106).

They present a range of families and this is a meaningful shift. The community in this context can be seen in a functionalist way, with the conflicts which are resolved serving to strengthen rather than disrupt the community. This perspective will be useful in the focus on LGBT narratives, where Geraghty argues that the function of non-heterosexuality works to provide evidence of the "ultimate goodness" of the main characters.

Geraghty describes the career woman as increasingly present, reflecting the change in women's public lives, and the consequent discourses about women's dual roles and the ideological tensions resulting from this. The inclusion of black characters in some of the soaps is tokenistic, she says, unlike the 'career women' narrative, because "the women's issues essential to a soap are carried by a range of characters and are not all dependent on one figure". (Geraghty 1991, p143) Furthermore: "Black characters find it difficult to enter into this family/community". (Geraghty 1991, p147). They are very much 'other' in soaps, a viewpoint which can still be usefully examined at the time of this study.

Previous soap theorists have, as has been illustrated, remarked upon the construction of the heterosexual, nuclear family as the ideal in the soap narratives. Some have noted the absence of lesbianism or homosexuality and theorised the outcome if such characters



were included as 'shattering' to the soap structure. By the time of Geraghty's work, lesbian and gay characters had been present. 'Colin,' in 1986, was a key *EastEnders* character, with his boyfriend 'Barry.' In *Brookside*, there had been 'Chris' and 'Gordon', also 1986, and a lesbian was briefly featured as the ex-wife of 'Nick', a main character, in the same year. Geraghty examines these characters and the narratives they are represented within and driven by. She points out that *EastEnders* is the first soap to feature a gay man and a gay storyline. The narrative she describes began in 1986. 'Colin' is, as she says, constructed within "the liberal gay discourse" (Geraghty 1991, p160) and is a 'good' middle class person, with sensitive and caring qualities. His lover, 'Barry,' on the other hand, is 'a local East Ender' who is neither out to his family nor a part of any gay scene. Class conflict acts as a driving force to this narrative, and "Barry" fits in well with the *EastEnders* community, acting "as a bridge between 'Colin' and the rest of the community." (Geraghty 1991, p160-1).

The construction of 'community' as more important than family could, in fact, be seen to pave the way for characters representing non-mainstream sexuality. The community can accept some 'deviant' characters and also afford to lose them if they proved unpopular. "Because, as we have seen, *EastEnders* structure is based on the notion of a community in a way that *Brookside* is not, 'Colin' and 'Barry' are required to have relationships beyond their immediate circle". (Geraghty 1991, p161).

The representations of gay men are, according to Geraghty and richly illustrated in her chapter on sexuality, situated within a liberal discourse which is attempting to teach audiences about prejudice. The support the gay men get from the soap community strengthens this message and it can be said to work within a functionalist framework in allowing a certain amount of 'deviance' to exist. (Geraghty 1991, p162) The non-demonising of the gay characters is an interesting area which works to strengthen the community in the text, and represents changing discourses in society about non-mainstream sexuality.

The inclusion of non-mainstream sexuality by this time was a fundamental shift in soap narratives and has enabled the storylines to make homosexuality visible and an issue. Soap producers and writers were clearly attempting to effect change and respond to liberal and 'queer' discourses. However the pressure from some conservative organisations and educational establishments could counter this, as well as negative responses from audiences. Clause 28 produced homophobia and campaigns to challenge its progression to Section 28 as a powerful and discriminatory Local Government Bill. Geraghty applauds the efforts of soap producers to represent LGBT narratives, but believes that these narratives do not compare well to the

full-blooded drama of, for instance, those between 'Angie' and 'Den' or 'Billy Corkhill' and 'Sheila Grant' and that the extremes of passion, whether it be love or hatred, are hardly allowed to be expressed. In both programmes, therefore, it is not the gay relationship itself which is disruptive but the intolerant response to it expressed by characters whose opinions on a range of subjects are already suspect and whose views are themselves seen as deviant from the generally tolerant response which is presented as the norm. (Geraghty 1991, p163).

The melodrama of the heterosexual relationships is not equivalent to the problematising of the lesbian and gay storylines. Geraghty is correct in that within the soap narrative the response of some characters to the issue is initially negative, and this is seen as wrong, functioning to reinforce the strength of the tolerant heterosexual characters and community. The LGT characters are sometimes, 'Beth Jordache' for example, constructed within a melodramatic discourse, and some in a social realist code ('Colin') holding dramatic interest which often dissipates as tolerance overcomes conflict. The gay scenario is the narrative and this narrative is driven by secrecy, coming out scenarios, prejudice and liberal ideologies, rather than lesbian and gay characters having any other narrative to play out. It is of course true that all soap characters are faced with conflict, and there are few happy resolutions for passionate lovers, but the lesbian or gay relationship are always the problem. Lesbian and gay characters up to the time Geraghty was writing had been new and experimental in soaps. As she says, the producers of

*EastEnders* had pressure from conservative and other organizations, notably the *National Viewers' and Listeners' Association*, which attacked the gay storyline of 'Colin' and 'Barry' "for undermining family life, and "despite the care given, the couple were reported by teachers to be objects of derision in school playgrounds." (Geraghty 1991, p 163). Representations of these early characters were inevitably constrained, and perhaps passion between the characters was a casualty here.

Although Geraghty does not comment on this specifically, it is noticeable that the narrative ending for the two gay men cited has 'Barry' questioning his sexuality and deciding he may be heterosexual. This is a common theme for soap lesbians and gay men. This is the construction of a relationship between a 'real' homosexual or lesbian and a bisexual or straight and easily led partner who later returns to heterosexuality. This discourse is evident in much psychoanalytic and sexological theory, and erupts into 'common sense' narratives. The discourse of a 'real' lesbian or gay man and a possibly bisexual or heterosexual partner is a narrative which has been in *EastEnders* and in much of the later representations.

Geraghty sees the representation of lesbians at this time as less visible, not positive and refers to the episode when

*Brookside* had a rather unfortunate attempt at handling a lesbian relationship with Nick's ex-wife, who worked in a somewhat disorganised co-op which 'Heather' was required to 'audit'. The stereotype of inefficient, lesbian, left-wing activists brought criticism from viewers on Channel 4's *Right to Reply* programme and the soaps have largely steered clear of lesbian characters since then. (Geraghty 1991, p158).

Geraghty convincingly concludes that soaps cannot have a long-term lesbian character because their emphasis on close friendship between women is too disruptive. Although soaps may seem a likely setting for a lesbian affair or relationship she believes that it would be uncontainable and put into question all the female friendships, as

in the more traditional soaps, female friendship provides an important, stable element, forging strong bonds..... The entry of a lesbian couple into this shared female world would be genuinely subversive, implying that lesbians are not separate from, indeed had things in common with, other women. The sexualisation of female friendship, however, through the presentation of a lesbian couple, could reverberate through the soap, calling into question the basis of the relationship between other women in the programme. In addition, in the more recent soaps, the representation of the strong, career woman as a lesbian could remove her entirely from the family nexus on which soaps are based. (Geraghty 1991, p158).

The notion of the heterosexual 'family' was still unquestioned in the 1990's by Geraghty. It would have been possible to theorise whether the presence of single parents within the soap narratives enabled lesbian representations to be more easily incorporated. However the idea of a lesbian couple as family was not considered, unsurprisingly since the family structures were named as heterosexual and lesbian and gay couples were not seen as families. They could however raise questions about what the family means and how it functioned in soaps and in the wider social context.

The inclusion of lesbian characters is noted more by its absence. The lesbian described was a very brief presence; she can best be described as an absent referent. It was reasonable at this time to theorise lesbians and lesbian couples as main characters as radical in their implications for the genre. Geraghty implicitly attributes criticism of the negative and stereotypical representation of the lesbian in *Brookside* by "left-wing activists," as one of the causes of the continued absence in that programme. This is a useful pointer to further investigation of audience responses to non-mainstream sexuality, and campaigning groups' influences on the construction of the characters and the narratives. Geraghty's view of the radical implications of lesbian sexuality in soaps and its "reverberation" through the narrative can now be examined; since she wrote her book there have been lesbian characters in three of the British prime-time soaps, (*Emmerdale*,

*EastEnders*, *Brookside*) and each has contributed to their soap narratives in different ways.

Geraghty identifies a masculinisation of the prime time soaps during the 1980s. This has implications for the genre and its intended audience. “While personal relationships are still at the heart of the programmes, they have been supplemented by plot lines which deal more regularly with the public sphere and emphasise the male grip on themes of business and work.” (Geraghty 1991, p168). The changes these make to the soap narrative can be extreme. While the infinite nature of the narrative is necessarily present, the increase in dramatic storylines within crime/action genres interpellate different audiences. Men and young people are targeted as audiences. Geraghty sees *Brookside* as having more male storylines, and narratives within crime genres, especially during the late 1980s, and *EastEnders* as being constructed to appeal to men from its beginning. “The first shot of Den’s boot breaking down Reg’s door provided an indication that the supposedly cosy world of soaps was being broken into and turned upside down.” (Geraghty 1991, p173).

There is an increase in male conversations, storylines, thriller and gangster genres within prime time soap opera, which is well documented in Geraghty’s work. She refers to “changes in the 1980s and, in particular the introduction of new sets of issues (which)...have shifted the soaps’ areas of concern and the traditional appeal to women to take in other members of the family group.” (Geraghty 1991, p168) This is a major shift for the ‘interpellated’ in British prime time soaps are no longer only women, but a range of audiences. The effects of this are, as she has described, a move away from the domestic and women’s concerns, and inclusion of dangerous situations, for men and women. I would argue that while this may inhibit overt homosexual representations, homo-eroticism is increasingly present, particularly in the gangster-style narratives which refer intertextually to the Krays, their homosexuality and bisexuality. Attracting male audiences, and younger people, can however have the reverse effect on lesbian representation. Research for this thesis of reviews and articles about soaps and *Brookside* in particular, evidences the possibility that these efforts to reach a male audience increase

the representation of lesbianism. A *Daily Mirror* article is headlined: “*Brookside* looks to lesbian affair to win ratings war”, (Gibbs and Sky 1993, p17) and while there is no named quote from soap producers, discourses about heterosexual men as well as other audiences liking to watch lesbians are signified,. Many of the comments on lesbians in soaps construct them as for the male gaze. They are young, attractive, and the *Sunday Mirror* says, “There isn’t a dungaree, a cropped hairdo or a DM in sight”. (Turner 2005, p17). For this project, the links between lesbian representation and masculinisation of soaps, is an area of significance to be explored. Gay men’s representation is affected by different ‘gazes’; lesbians and gay men’s views are rarely heard in the articles which claim ‘titillation’ for men is the overall effect, and more complex meanings are unexplored.

Geraghty’s work is illuminating for the research on soap issues which is still very relevant. The representation of lesbians and gay men has increased and her theorisation about the effects of this, as with Modleski, is one measure of enquiry. An issue which affects all soap theorists is integral to the structure of soaps: the never-endingness makes it impossible to know what issues may be introduced. In the moment of analysis one may only theorise about future narratives and effects on audiences.

### **Talk Generated by Soap Opera**

Most relevant and helpful to the topic of talk is M.E. Brown’s *Soap opera and women’s talk: the pleasure of Resistance* published in 1994. Her research, based on Australian soaps is, like Ang’s, celebratory about the imagined community of soap audiences and the possible resistance to hegemony. Her audience research provides a rich source of material from which to analyse the forms of talk and the pleasure generated from watching soap opera. She addresses the talk about soap as a text, and her aim is to “chart the struggle for resistive pleasure for women whose everyday lives include the pleasures of watching soap operas.” (Brown 1994, pix) “This work is a validation of women’s talk: gossip, which has been trivialised and scorned in patriarchal societies as without positive meaning.” (Brown 1994, p174) She goes beyond the text and its meanings, although

these are clearly part of her study. Soap audiences are for Brown a community and a positive discourse. She rightly points out that the theorised 'gaze' has dominated feminist media criticism and, like Modleski, Ang, and Geraghty, Brown addresses the soap text as interpellating in different, multiple ways. Where she differs, is in her emphasis on talk about the text, which refuses hegemonic conclusions, and acts in a collaborative context. "I would suggest that such an act only becomes politically powerful when it becomes a collaborative act." (Brown 1994, p181) The interpellated in soap opera is woman, situated in a woman's place. For Brown, unlike Geraughty,

the place constructed for women [is] in patriarchal and capitalist discourse. Hence, in the cultures of which I speak, whether or not we live in this space, we are still hailed by it; that is, we recognise a kind of subjectivity, or space into which we are supposed to fit, constructed by our culture for us even though we do not occupy it. In Althusserian (1976) terms, the dominant social construction of women is a part of our consciousness. (Brown 1994, p174)

The context of the spectator as well as the text, and the possibility of importance of resistance for political action are the issues which Brown examines. Soap opera for her can be a site of revolutionary potential. Using Foucault, she agrees that all power relationships contain the possibility of resistance. (Brown 1994, p169). Looking closely at the text and the gossip about romantic constructions in *Sons and Daughters*, she finds that the "rich oral culture that Australian girls enjoyed' challenges the wedding ceremony as 'life goal'". (p161). She finds in her audiences an awareness and critique of the power structures and social construction of the narratives in the text. (Brown 1994, p161).

For Brown the major fundamental of traditional heterosexual narratives – the wedding- is being subverted. The text can contain resistance, and the audience can resist the dominant ideologies within the text sometimes even when the text does not explicitly include it. Brown emphasises gossip as a resistive practice for women. She names areas which are necessary for political action, and while gossip and the development of an oral

culture are important it is only the first step in a series of movements or activities which are needed.

There are four areas that are important in the generation of resistive readings: talk, boundaries, strategic knowledge, and the lowering of normative controls. There is *first* the necessity for the talk to take place. Not only are soap operas constructed in such a way that they elicit talk but it is also obvious that a large amount of the pleasure that women derive from soap operas is in talking about them. It is in this *spoken* text that most of the meaning generation concerning everyday life and the construction of identity for audiences takes place. (Brown 1994, p167).

Brown sees soap opera as being a facilitator for these events or understandings. Fandom provides a space with boundaries, and audiences use “humour and parody to mark social and stylistic issues within soap opera discussions through the examination of liminality, the carnivalesque, and laughter in soap opera gossip networks”. (Brown 1994, pxii). Brown utilises Bakhtin’s (1965/1984) theory of the carnivalesque and this is the most important aspect of her analysis. She sees the carnivalesque form as existing “outside dominant cultural practices, and ...based in laughter.” (Brown 1990, p191). Brown’s soap opera audiences, and the soap opera fans’ networks, fit with the carnivalesque and are placed in a resistive relation to dominant culture.

Brown’s work is important especially because of her construction of ‘gossip’ as positive and potentially radical. As soaps have been seen as feminine and therefore inferior to many other texts, feminine ‘gossip’ has not been constructed as a discourse to be taken seriously. The way that women talk about soaps to each other, using parody, the carnivalesque, forming groups and challenging hegemonic constructions of femininity, is graphically described and theorised by Brown. I will utilize her methodology and analysis for my project in this way: I am interested in the talk which results from the LGBT narratives, and will be interviewing viewers in groups. The areas of specific interest are: how they remember, and perceive these narratives; the discourses in the texts



in which the characters are constructed (how their sexuality is theorized) is one area; another is the audience perceptions. Group viewing is also an important element here. I will be looking for evidence of mainstream older groups and of older lesbians, gay men and transgendered people who may get together to watch episodes where there is such a narrative, or most relevantly, talk about it to others. Brown's work places the social audience in a theoretical framework which can be used to investigate possible challenges to social hegemony.

More recent soap opera theorists problematise the categories 'woman' and 'femininity'. The non-universality of 'woman' and femininities as textual constructions are some of the issues addressed. "From the Soap Queen to the Aga Saga: different discursive frameworks of familial femininity in contemporary 'women's' genres", an article by Janine Liladhar, (2000) "draws on recent feminist work in the fields of queer theory, cultural studies and media studies to counter notions of a monolithic or homogeneous femininity." (Liladhar 2000, p5). The interesting area for this project is her focus on the soap queen. The essay compares the two genres and draws attention to the popularity of the soap queen and her strengths, including independence, employment, active sexuality, and "their economic self-sufficiency and capabilities in the business world simultaneously offer a textual construction of an alternative possible mode of femininity." (Liladhar 2000, p10). For Liladhar, while the soap queen conforms to a particular traditional femininity, she can make explicit the performance and thus constructedness of femininity. "Soap queens have a highly constructed appearance which makes use of a great deal of make-up, hair dye and brightly coloured, tight-fitting clothes. Additionally, a hair piece or wig and false eyelashes are sometimes worn." (Liladhar 2000, p10). Liladhar goes on to describe the soap queen's femininity as "hyperfeminine" and signifying the image of the drag queen. She agrees with Butler (1990) who sees the drag queen as revealing that gender is "a kind of persistent impersonation that passes as the real...since his/her performance destabilises the very distinction between the natural and the artificial, depth and surface, inner and outer through which discourse about genders almost always operates." (Butler 1990, pviii). This opens up the possibility of resistance to femininity (Liladhar 2000, p11). Liladhar utilizes Judith Butler's (1999)

theoretical work on performance which is important in removing gender from an essentialist view. There is no corporeal site for gender; it is repeated acts of gender performances, which come to define gender and conceal the ‘unnaturalness’ of gender. Gender is therefore a “regulated fiction”. (Butler 1999, p180). Identity is constructed within the acts of performing gender. Butler concludes that strategies which make performance of gender visible can reveal the non-essentialism of gender. Parody is one way to do this. “Here, there is a subversive laughter in the pastiche-effect of parodic practices in which the original, the authentic, and the real are themselves constituted as effects”. (Butler 1999, pp186-187).

Butler’s emphasis on drag as a radical act can sometimes ignore the way that some drag queens have a disempowering effect. A perspective which emphasises a “hyperfeminine” appearance as a copy of a drag queen can give more status to the drag queen and less to women. The deconstructive potential may be missed. One view would be to celebrate the soap queen’s femininity, and power, and see it as a potential for making clear the performance of this femininity as one of many femininities. The conflation with drag queen makes clear that both are gender performances, but they need not necessarily be joined to make the performance of femininity evident. Since there are already different femininities evident in soaps, as the women are not all ‘soap queens’ but represent a range of feminine performances, there is not one essential femininity being shown. This does not make gender a focus in the way that a male drag queen can foreground both genders at once and can potentially question femininity and gender more effectively. It can however be problematic using the two categories, gender and femininity in this way, although the study is valuable. Marjorie Garber in *Vested Interests* (1992) challenges the “tendency to erase the third term, to appropriate the cross-dresser as one of the two sexes, [which] is emblematic of a fairly consistent critical desire to look away from the transvestite as transvestite, not to see cross-dressing except as male or female manqué, whether motivated by social, cultural, or aesthetic designs. And this tendency might be called an *underestimation* of the object.” (Garber 1992, p10) She is talking about cross-dressers, not drag queens, but this work is used by and supports Liladhar’s in that Garber sees the transvestite challenging binary notions of gender and so should not then be

theorised back to be seen as reinforcing them. The “third term” here, the transvestite, is not a ‘man’ or a ‘woman’. Garber’s work is an innovatory and queer reading, which challenges hegemonic notions of gender.

The possibilities of making apparent the construction of femininity can be compared to LGBT representations and the way that femininity is transcribed on to the gay man or seen as absent in the lesbian representations. In particular, the representation of ‘Hayley’, the transsexual character in *Coronation Street*, can be deconstructed in order to see how successful ‘femininity’ is performed.

Liladhar’s focus is the soap queen but she also addresses lesbian representation in soaps.

...as Ros Jennings’ (1998) ethnographic study of lesbian soap viewers highlights, the appearance of the lesbian characters often conforms to heterosexual, rather than lesbian, notions of femininity: one respondent noted that ‘Beth Jordache’ of Channel 4’s *Brookside* does not ‘look like a dyke’ as, ‘she is so conventionally feminine (p.7). Secondly, as Nickie Hastie (1995) has pointed out, when lesbian women *are* introduced, scriptwriters often fail to develop their storylines or their characters and thus their presence in the programme is short-lived. (Liladhar 2000, p9).

Lesbian representations in soap operas are, as cited here, ‘femme’ in appearance, young, and conventionally attractive. The one exception in the soaps I am studying is a ‘butch’ character who was a lorry driver, ‘Frankie’, ‘Zoe Tate’s’ *girlfriend* in *Emmerdale*. The actress was replaced after a few months by one with a softer boyish look who was more conventionally ‘attractive’. Liladhar’s research quoted above raises questions about the intended audience, the view that men like to see lesbians and the attempt to reach a wider audience, and the potential for researching the lesbian constructions and narratives. I would question the view that there are ‘lesbian’ notions of femininity which are necessarily different to ‘heterosexual’ notions however. The issue of ‘femininity’ is a problematic one, especially if limited to ‘appearance’. “Looking like a dyke” would not

be seen to be attractive by soap producers or by many male audiences. Soap lesbians are usually constructed as attractive young women, but lesbian styles and identities are varied. It is not clear what “looking like a dyke” would be; the respondent makes a valid point which reinforces the evidence that lesbian representations in soaps are similar. The view that there are different lesbian and heterosexual notions of femininity is an interesting research area which would examine how diverse lesbians see this and what the performances would be.

The issue of performativity is relevant to this thesis. The representation of non-mainstream sexuality in soap opera is integral to my analysis, and I will read the way LGBT identities appear to be performed. For Liladhar the visibility of performance has a deconstructing effect and reveals the non-essentialism of gender. For the LGBT characters, the narratives and the performed sexualities may construct meanings which challenge, or re-inforce essentialist discourses. Possible meanings will only be made clearer after textual analysis and when the researcher has interviewed audiences.

*Fans, feminisms and ‘quality’ media*, by Lyn Thomas, (2002) is a research project which looks at fans of *Morse* and *The Archers*. Influenced by the research on *Dallas* by Ang, emphasis is on audience views although narratives are discussed, particularly in relation to gender relations and community. Thomas can also be seen as following on from Brown (1994) in that the ‘cultural capital’ of her audiences is an important factor, and also Liladhar for her emphasis on the performative element of ‘masculinity and femininity’. Thomas’s research on *The Archers* is useful for this project, particularly the methodology and theory of identity in relation to fandom. Using Bourdieu (1993) particularly concepts of cultural capital, in which knowledge of a particular area and in a specific context gives status and some amount of power (Bourdieu 1993, p45) and hierarchies of knowledge, she analyses fans’ views of narrative reality, identification with characters and storylines, and responses to constructions of Englishness. These are usually framed within an area of enquiry of feminist thought and media effects. She aims “to assess the influence of feminism on mainstream media texts produced by

dominant players in the media industry and attracting large audiences.” (Thomas 2002, p173).

In relation to this project, the interventions of feminisms and queer theory on LGBT representations in the British prime time soaps will be an important area. Views on gender constructions and the effect on performance outside of the text is an area which Thomas identifies. The potential for transgressing conventional masculinity is, she says, present within camp texts and enabled one male fan to have “access to a ‘feminine’ culture, while his academic background allowed him to participate in feminist analysis of the programme”. (Thomas 2002, p176). She sees the potential of camp to disempower dominant constructions of masculinity and femininity although she does not fully endorse a “Butlerian paradigm to describe this version of masculinity, or attribute to it quite the level of subversive potential which she has claimed for ‘gender parody’ in some of her writing”. (Thomas 2002, p176) Butler’s (1990) claim for the subversive potential has arguably been exaggerated and popularized in unhelpful ways but Thomas’ comments have resonance. The ‘camp’ gay men in soaps have potential for audiences to see ‘femininity’ written on a male body and biological men with less powerful gender relations. The heterosexual male who enjoys camp in Thomas’ research is arguably more challenging however; the destabilising aspect of camp performance does not necessarily transfer to heterosexual performance.

One of the participants in the study reveals a critical attitude to feminist academia, which Thomas sees as cultural capital, and this leads Thomas to question the value of textual analysis and its “contribution to political social and cultural change.” (Thomas 2002, p177) However as previous soap theorists have made explicit, (Ang 1982, Brown 1994) many soap audiences gain pleasure from the text, from discussing it with other fans, from knowing the codes and narratives of the genre, and using this knowledge for subversive readings. Thomas is also keen to emphasise the role of pleasure, and the talk about the soap which reveals playfulness and subversion; she finds that the fans construct their own narrative “such as lesbian romance in a village setting dominated by families.” (Thomas 2002, p176). The issue of lesbian sexuality is created here by the participants as an

intertextual intervention. Playfulness and camp humour are evident in her interviews. The issue of Englishness however is not responded to in a critical or ironic manner. Thomas is surprised by this and sees a more ethnically diverse group of participants as preferable, in order to gain a complex and critical response. (Thomas 2002, p177). The nostalgic and uncritical response to these representations is perhaps useful as material in itself. This is also pertinent for the study of prime time television soap opera, as the British soaps are all set within specific geographic locations with local 'signifiers'. A question about the community represented will have interesting results for identity regarding non-mainstream sexuality. Identity as a category for research purposes caused both problems and interesting issues in Thomas's study. The unease which can be created by the researcher's categorising of participants became apparent when one of them commented unfavourably to being named as 'Irish'. She felt "ambivalence about national identity" (Thomas 2002, p180) which Thomas properly reports. This raises questions about the method of categorising. If participants are asked for self-definitions, and it is not clear if this happened in the research being looked at here, they can be perhaps more flexible and inventive than the researcher's categorising system. Thomas has identified an ethical issue which can arise when draft chapters of research interviews and descriptions are shown to participants before completion. The role of the researcher, the power to define, the skills required, need to be articulated in the research process. The dilemmas and contradictions are not easily or, sometimes ever, resolvable. Thomas questioned her own role in the research process in trying to keep everyone happy in "truly feminine mode." (Thomas 2002, p182). Her awareness of the distance between her role and the participants is useful and has been influenced by earlier feminist researchers. The researcher on soap opera is never participating as a respondent, however much she likes the soaps. Thomas's awareness does however ebb and flow, and a particularly jarring note is struck when she describes one respondent's reaction:

Louise's response generally was the most challenging. She questioned my interpretation of her nervousness at the start of the interview (substantially rewritten in the light of her comments). She also reacted to the fact that I had marked out the interview with her as different from those with the other

participants in the chapter. “I’m not sure that I would consider myself less intellectual than other *Archers* listeners! I just listen for entertainment...I’ve wondered about this and about how I am different from other contributors....I think sometimes the analysis forgets this was a fairly short interview, we had never met before and I do not engage in discussions about *The Archers* in ways that some of your contributors do.” Again, there seems to be a reaction here against being ‘categorised’ by a researcher. (Thomas 2002, p181).

The reaction is not surprising, given what the status “less intellectual” can signify. The respondent’s remarks are critical of the research methods, and it is right that Thomas includes them in the publication. Thomas’s final conclusion emphasises the importance of identity, and she suggests that much postmodern and post-structuralist theory does not give it the importance it holds for some. It is unfortunate that “identity” has sometimes become an essentialist concept, at odds with rather than usefully interlinked with performance. Clearly identity is an issue, and in her work her participants are happier having the power to name their own identities rather than having one given to them by the researcher. (Thomas, p182). Classifying participants in this project will have the same problems however; there will be little opportunity to ask the participants to define their class as it is anticipate it would lead to lengthy debate which would encroach in the limited time available. Decisions made about their class identity will be less definite than Thomas’s in that they will be based on their narratives and speech style but they have the same effect; participants often do not have the choice to define themselves.

## **Conclusion**

The talk generated from *The Archers* in Thomas’s research is important for continuing the project, begun so positively by Brown, about the pleasure and subversive potential and is key to this research. This analysis of soap opera theorists has indicated the importance of both textual and audience research. Earlier work which focused on the text (Modleski, 1979) correctly identified soaps as interpellating women and contributed much to the status of soap operas as postmodern in their multi-narrative and infinite

structure. Her pessimism permeates her analysis however as she universalises 'woman', her isolation and her powerlessness. Subsequent studies which have taken both text and social audience as their focus have enriched the debates. Ang's (1990) theory of "emotional identification" and Brown's (1994) theorising of the carnivalesque and audience pleasures provide more potential for active, varied and resistant readings. Lesbian and gay narratives are sparse in the periods they studied so only a theorising is possible by earlier writers. Modleski's pertinent and Foucauldian approach is relevant when she theorises that only acceptable issues are addressed in soaps. The later 'acceptability' of the lesbians, gay men and transsexual can be textually, intertextually and in relation to audiences, investigated. This also applies to Geraghty's prediction of the transgressive possibilities of lesbian narratives. The concept of performativity (Liladhar, 2000, Butler, 1991) in relation to all sexualities and transgender performance relate to textual analysis and readings and whether these reinforce or deconstruct essentialist ideas about sexuality. Audience research carried out by Thomas (2002) illustrates the importance of audiences' rights to define their own identities and the interviewer to be non-judgmental. Utilising these theoretical positions on soap analysis the following chapter will be focused on close readings and intertextualities of representations of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transsexuals in the soaps identified.



### **CHAPTER 3. CLOSE READINGS OF KEY LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER REPRESENTATIONS**

This thesis argues soap representations create a space for talk and cultural negotiations both in Mainstream and Campaigning older audiences. This chapter focuses on how the soaps have represented sexual minorities/alternative sexualities and the texts surrounding those productions from 1984-2004 and asks whether they are real challenges to the hegemony of heterosexual representations or simply momentary sensations against a stable structure. These textual readings do not preclude more diverse audience receptions.

This Chapter includes close readings, intertextualities and conclusions of lesbian, gay and transgender representations, with three main sections each ending with a conclusion. The ordering of the close readings into respectively, lesbians, gay men and transgender is not chronological; but is used here as the title for the chapter and ordering of analyses to reflect and endorse those used by campaigning and support groups; a feminist perspective placed women first to address previous invisibility of lesbians or subsuming within 'homosexual'. In chronological terms, 'Colin' in *EastEnders* was the first major representation of LGBTs with a main character and a prominent storyline. In relation to bisexual representations, it became apparent that representations and analyses are problematic. During the specific periods and prime time soaps studied, there were no stated bisexual identities; some of the lesbian and gay relationships can however be read as bisexual within the soap context. There is a discussion about the problematic representations of bisexuality in the final section. The term transgender is used to describe the soap representation and Transgender Group interviewed; this reflects changing categorisation of trans (the current term to include transvestite, transsexual transgender and some 'queer' people).

Gramsci's concept of hegemony (1971/86) and its use to produce discrimination as 'common sense' is employed to examine if soap narratives reconstruct heterosexuality as the dominant ideology and the extent to which LGBT representations challenge this. Audience numbers of these soap operas are large: from 10 to 20 million, so soap opera's

representations of LGBTs are of cultural significance and worth examination. This thesis focuses on the representations that had the most social impact, measured by newspaper coverage, reviews and previews. The chapter seeks to analyse how the textual representations set audiences up to receive and decode the representations and how older audiences are set up differently. There are close readings of these soap representations, using cultural and intertextual analysis, followed by criticism and arguments. A Foucauldian approach is used to examine the discourses in which the LGBT narratives are produced and placed. The methodologies used by Barthes (1957/93), (1974/2000) are central to the analyses, illustrating explosions and discourses of the narrative. As seen in chapter 2, theorists have identified questions of concern including narrative and intertextuality; it is therefore important to investigate the context in which the lesbian, bisexual, gay man and transgender person appears, examine the construction which is able to be represented in soap opera, and also the “reverberations” (Modleski 1982, p93) or containment of the representation. Creed’s (1993) theory of the monstrous feminine as empowering but dangerous is used to analyse ‘othered’ sexualities.

## **LESBIANS IN BRITISH PRIME-TIME SOAP OPERAS**

### **Previews**

Previews function to encourage audiences to create a controversy around particular episodes to increase viewing figures. They encode themes which audiences are set up to receive and decode. The *Brookside* lesbian storyline chosen for study is the most written about and is referred to when issues of soap lesbians are discussed. Photographic representations of the ‘lesbian kiss’ are iconic and are usually reproduced within the text, still, in 2008. Codes of performance, spectacle and secrecy are dominant concepts encoded within the previews as well as the *Brookside* lesbian narrative.

The episode of *Brookside* transmitted at 8pm on Channel 4 on 1 January 1994 (a high holiday when big audiences are expected and eventful narratives constructed to capture

audiences) had as one of its themes same sex desire between two of the main characters, the young women 'Beth Jordache' and 'Margaret Clemence'.

An article in the *Daily Mail* illustrates the dual function of articles to work as both previews and information about competition. The headline is 'Close encounters: *Brookside* looks to lesbian affair to win ratings' and the article includes the statement:

A *Brookside* source says, "The series has always prided itself on its realistic and topical storylines and they felt it was time to include a lesbian theme. It is a very brave step for a popular soap because it could outrage a lot of viewers. But *Brookside* has never been afraid of being controversial. 'Beth' and 'Margaret'...were thought to be just right for the affair because their friendship has been growing in the past few weeks. And both girls have gone right off men after having disastrous relationships." (Gibbs and Sky 17.9.1993, *Daily Mirror*, p17).

The preview presents a clear indication of an explicit lesbian affair, exciting and 'raunchy'. It is claimed it will "outrage a lot of viewers", implied as 'conservative' and shocked. While not explicitly addressing older in this "brave step" there is implication that the risk is losing traditional (older women) audiences and hoping for new younger ones. The casualness of the tone can be read as saying that fans are unimportant, as well as not in touch with 'new' sexualities. The motivation is described as part of its liberal aim to present realistic and controversial issues, and at the same time as an effective way of winning competitive soap wars. The lesbian affair is described as 'common sense', since their friendship has been growing and, more importantly, they have "gone right off men". They are not meant to be seen as unable to attract men, but become 'lesbians' as a reaction to disappointment with heterosexuality. Thus lesbianism can be reclaimed for the heterosexual erotic, firstly through being objectified to the male gaze, and secondly as constructed within heterosexual discourse.

Previews announce the inclusion of a lesbian storyline, and although the preceding scenes between 'Beth' and 'Margaret' are situated in a narrative of romance and unrequited love,

there were expectations of more to come. There is little information about the details of the October 14<sup>th</sup> episode in that week's edition of the *Radio Times*, however, and the preceding and following episodes are briefly and tantalisingly described:

13.12.1993: "A candlelit dinner awaits 'Margaret'."

22.12.1993: "'Sinbad' is left jaw-agape by 'Beth'."

24.12.1993: "Make or break time for 'Margaret'."

14.1.1994: "And 'Margaret' is left with a lot on her mind."

21.1.1994: "An unexpected arrival leaves 'Beth' and 'Margaret' with some explaining to do"

24.1.1994: "'Margaret' is terrified that 'Beth' will reveal their secret."

28.1.1994: "'Margaret' is set for a rude awakening when she goes out with 'Beth'."

Shame and fear of exposure are the contexts for this lesbian relationship. Previews are careful to construct the actresses as heterosexual, with 'Margaret's' real-life romance to an actor in *Brookside* (Gibbs, 23.09.1993, *Daily Mail* p19) and 'Beth's' fear "that people are going to shout " 'lesbian' " at me" . (Malins 14.12.1993, *Daily Mirror TV Daily* p1). 'Margaret's' preview argues the affair is "torrid" and sleazy (Gibbs, *ibid*) while 'Beth's' represents it as both frightening and disgusting, to "scare the pants" off one, and ending with a mix of pity and disgust for lesbians. "Ultimately, I hope people will feel sympathy rather than disgust for 'Beth'". (Malins *ibid*). Many other previews repeat the construction of lesbianism as shocking behaviour. The negative previews contradict the producer of *Brookside*, Mal Young, quoted in Hastie *You Never See Lesbians* claiming, "We were very lucky to have sat on that [storyline]. There were rumblings and people heard things, but we actually kept it out of the press." (1994, p5)

Friel distances herself from lesbianism and the previews produce lesbians as victims swept up by circumstances they cannot choose or control, fearful of exposure. One week before the kiss, the *Daily Mirror* published an article headlined "Kissing is Hell:

*Brookside's* Anna Friel talks about her lesbian role". The text is not however as negative as this implies, saying that Anna Friel "fell to pieces during the scene" and "giggled. In the end, Nicola (Stephenson) had to ask me what I'd prefer – kissing her or a really ugly boy. That helped me get through it." ( 7.10.1994 *Daily Mirror* p15). The headline is alarmist, and the text continues a narrative which constructs the idea of same sex kissing as repugnant, or something to be 'got through' rather than enjoyed. "Giggling" is ambivalent however, a childlike response which can signify pleasure or embarrassment.

These previews name the issue as lesbianism, not bisexuality, and construct it as 'controversial', 'raunchy', and problematic. The actresses who play the lesbians anticipate problems in real life and both distance themselves from the roles, to restate their heterosexual identities. The meanings which these previews give to lesbianism are as a shocking spectacle. These women have become fictional lesbians, not bisexuals, despite their both having had soap heterosexual relationships. Bisexuality could be seen as in some ways a more dangerously fluid sexuality, although they would be 'available' to men. However the unstatedness of the bisexual performances in the soap places it in an interesting and taboo space.

As Hastie (1994) illustrates, by the time of the broadcast the *Daily Mirror* (on the 14<sup>th</sup> January, the day the kiss was transmitted) informs the readers: "It's the Clincher" in a headline and showing a photograph of 'Beth' and 'Margaret' kissing. The article opens with the lines: "Here is the picture that says it all. Beth Jordache loves Margaret Clemence." The article describes "a really hot snogging session" and that "producers are expecting a big reaction, including protests. The lesbian affair between the two attractive girls is one of the most controversial issues the programme has ever tackled".

(14.1.1994, *TV Daily*, p1) It goes on to explain that the kiss will be edited out of the Omnibus edition because it is considered by "Channel 4 programme chiefs" that "it is too early for the kissing scene as there will be too many youngsters watching". The implication is that heterosexuals kissing are unremarkable, but that a lesbian kiss will corrupt, perhaps convert but certainly disturb young people. Young people's views are not expressed. A conflict between getting more young viewers, some of whom enjoy

lesbian representations, and protecting the television companies from charges of corruption, is evident. As written texts using material distributed by the publicity department of *Brookside*, these newspapers articles can be seen as promoting hegemonic narratives about the normality of heterosexuality, the awfulness of being mistaken for a lesbian but also the excitement surrounding the spectacle of lesbianism..

### **The 'Lesbian' Scenes in relation to the Episode.**

The narrative which drives the scenes culminating in a kiss between the two women is one of many. Soaps are defined by multi narratives (Modleski 1979; Brown 1994) The episode is made up of 16 scenes, some of them long. A summary and timing of each scene and the close reading of the key segment can be found in appendix 1. The programme is preceded by a male voiceover, in a seductive tone: "On Four, [pause] it's a date, [pause] for 'Terry' and 'Simon'". This gives no indication of the coming scenes with 'Beth' and 'Margaret', and instead indicates that there may be homoeroticism between the two men. In fact, there are some scenes with these two men which parallel heterosexual romance.

The selected 'lesbian' scenes temporarily disrupt the heterosexual matrix. The 'lesbian' scenes are long, but not longer than the ones which address 'Ron' and his dying son. These latter dominate the narrative and are full of the melodramatic moments. Heteronormativity and machismo masculinity are the context in which 'Margaret' and 'Beth' are placed. They are surrounded by signifiers which place them as different from the other characters and from each other. The first long scene in which they appear is situated in a middle class home, and they are studying. The other themes in this episode are set within the shop, the garage, the bar, a club. 'Beth' and 'Margaret' are therefore in a domestic setting, with the kitchen visible behind them. 'Beth' is learning, studying to get herself out of the community and to be a doctor, while 'Margaret' is the helper, and the caretaker for the 'Farnhams'. In the previous episode, 'Margaret' has expressed ignorance of 'Beth's' work, saying she doesn't understand a word of it. 'Beth' is

'different'; she is middle class, clever, she has seen her mother beaten, has been raped by and helped her mother kill her father, and now she is acting out taboo sexuality. The comedic and also frightening scenes with 'Terry' and 'Simon' can be seen as parallels to the scenes with 'Beth' and 'Margaret' and like them, contain an element of danger and are constructed as abnormal. Homoeroticism is signified by the earlier voiceover, and the scenes in which they appear are of seduction, with 'Simon' lying to and charming 'Terry' into a dangerously religious cult. One killing, one dying son and two 'abnormal' relationships are represented in this intertwined episode. The final scene is intense; 'Ron' is upset and angry. 'Jimmy' may be revealed as a killer. Much of the episode has taken place in the club. The scenes with and about 'Ron's' son are more dramatic than the 'Beth' and 'Margaret' scenes. This is presented as serious, more serious than lesbianism. There are lots of other secrets and tensions about discovery in this episode, including 'Trevor's' body, 'Margaret' and 'Beth's' relationship and kiss, 'Jimmy's' role as a liar and a killer, 'Simon's' plan for 'Terry'. Thematically there are links: lying and hiding of abnormal secrets so that the 'kiss' is part of the monstrous hidden being revealed. The body is central; 'Simon' desires 'Terry' in a monstrous way; the body of 'Ron's' son is evidence of murder, the dead 'Trevor' rots under the patio, and 'Beth' desires 'Margaret'. Lesbianism is allied to dangerous and damaging acts and bodies. Within the episode, however, taboo sexuality is heavier in significance, and can be more intense by the withholding of passion. The previews and articles about 'Beth' and 'Margaret' give these scenes power, and there is innovation with this 'first kiss'. While there is more explicit emotion in the scenes with 'Ron Dixon', it can be argued that the lesbian scenes have more impact because of the understated emotion, and the more unusual outing of the repressed and more interesting to a lesbian gay and bisexual audience. Tension created about whether they will kiss, and then whether they will resolve the situation after 'Beth' rushes out. The threat of discovery, and the expected reactions of other members of the community, is more loaded than the potential discovery that 'Jimmy' is a killer, because killing by men is not unusual in *Brookside*.

### **Analysis of Close Readings**

## Scene 1.

Social realism and romance with melodramatic moments, are the dominant narrative codes in this scene, but there is gothic horror present as the ever threatening 'Trevor' is imagined under the patio. The avoidance behaviour which 'Margaret' adopts can be explained later within the romantic code as evidence of her desire. Modleski describes this as the romantic hero's function in English novels, enabling a female readership to get revenge because of superior knowledge of the textual codes and the inevitability of the hero's fate. (Modleski 1982, p41).

'Margaret' and 'Beth' meet in the Close, first acknowledging the woman who is interested for her friend to view the house where dead 'Trevor' is buried. The woman represents a threat to 'Beth' and 'Mandy', her mother, and there is a possibility of the dead emerging and causing destruction to them, and the two potential lovers. The secrets are linked: the outing of 'Beth's' sexuality and 'Trevor's' body are interwoven, and we are reminded of both, and the grotesqueness of one leaks into the other. The grotesque dead body which signifies horror is, as Bakhtin says, 'looking for that which protrudes from the body, all that seeks to go out beyond the body's confines. Specific attention is given to the shoots and branches, to all that prolongs the body and links it to other bodies or to the world outside.' (Bakhtin 1965/84 p. 317-8 ). Barbara Creed, using Kristeva's concept of abjection, argues that Kristeva:

suggests a way of situating the monstrous-feminine in the horror film in relation to the maternal figure and what Kristeva terms 'abjection', that which does not 'respect borders, position, rules,' that which 'disturbs identity, system, order. (Creed 1993, p8).

Textual lesbianism as grotesque, queer theory argues, can signify the lesbian's excess of femininity (de Lauretis 1993, pp149-50). 'Beth's' desire for 'Margaret' is about to go beyond the boundaries of heterosexual bodies and fixed identity, and has the potential to disrupt the 'natural' order of the narrative. 'Beth' and 'Margaret' are tense, and refer to



their previous meeting, during which 'Beth' had told 'Margaret', with embarrassment, that she was attracted to her. They talk about it edgily, not looking at each other directly, and 'Margaret' is nervous, while 'Beth' gets angry, mostly with herself. The setting normalises and universalises lesbianism; a lesbian is in the shopping area, not a disco or a club. The clothes they are wearing are stylish and fit well. They are desirable and 'feminine' young women, and so they signify a representation different from popular culture's 'lesbian feminists', unable to get men, ugly and unstylish. However 'Beth's' history as a victim of violence and rape by her father reconstructs a discourse which explains lesbian desire as a consequence of male violence within the heterosexual relationship and so therefore still within the heterosexual matrix, seeking a 'safe' space with women. 'Beth's' dialogue initiates the confrontation of her feelings, and describes herself as frightening to 'Margaret' ("I don't want you to be scared of me"). She is 'scared of herself', and can be read as split, within psychoanalytical discourse, afraid of the 'repressed' coming out, (as the dead grotesque body might). They are outdoors, in daylight, in public and the public/private split is signified and blurred, since they can be seen. Secrecy and furtiveness are strongly present, related to 'forbidden pleasure's of pornography.

In the scene which follows (Appendix 2.1) 'Beth' describes her desire in a bisexual framework; however it is referred to as "like" her desire for a man: "I fancy you in the same way I fancied 'Peter Harrison'", while 'Margaret' says if she herself was a man she would fancy her, assuming male desire as active and speaking from a firmly heterosexual viewpoint which places women as objects of desire. The kiss signifies the taboo, repressed, and is understated in terms of passion. However, the build up, the previews, and the potentially disruptive narrative signify a moment that will have enormous and probably terrible repercussions. This kiss is full of significance and sexual longing because of intertextual references and the previous scene. Yet it can be seen as "a tender kiss, rather than sexual", as Sandra Maitland, the actress who played 'Mandy Jordache' describes the kiss in a discussion in the video *Brookside: The Women* (Redmond, 1994). The shot and frame is the same and their reactions can be seen at once; there is no need to wait for the counter shot. 'Beth' can be seen as insensitive at first as she doesn't pick up

on the horror on 'Margaret's' face. 'Margaret' initiates the second kiss, yet 'Beth' takes responsibility for it. 'Beth' has been tricked; 'Margaret' is devious, a heterosexual discourse of women as seducers who then claim they've been forced into sexual acts. Yet 'Margaret's' body has shown desire and then recoiled, for we see she is performing disgust, with herself, or 'Beth', or both. 'Margaret's' actions can be read as if her 'conscious' mind is suddenly aware of what she has done.

The previews, reviews, intertextuality refer to 'lesbian' sexuality. The intertextual references coded within 'lesbian chic'; these two characters are constructed within that discourse and 'Beth' as damaged by an evil man and turning to women for safety. As the reviews show, the characters and their narrative are able to function to de-fuse potentially transgressive narratives. The bisexual imaginary remains unspoken. There is a short scene, towards the end of the episode, where 'Beth' is alone and looking sad, and 'Mandy' comes in. 'Mandy' tells her that the house will be bought and everything is over. There are codes of horror and tragedy and audiences are set up to be afraid for them both because the discovery of the body is imminent, and perhaps of 'Beth's' sexuality too. There is no expectation that 'Mandy' will support her daughter in the latter so they are divided while in danger.

### **Reviews and Intertextuality**

Reviews of the episode in the tabloids construct and represent 'Beth's' lesbianism as connected within the grotesque and horror of her soap family situation, and real lesbianism as a target for abuse. In a *Sun* article (Green 1994, p4) titled "Anna gets taunted for going gay", the writer says "She has been sexually abused and involved with murder. And last night she shared a screen kiss-with another woman. Anna Friel, 17, who plays *Brookside's* 'Beth Jordache', is bracing herself for the flak." As with the previous, the article is keen to assure its audience that the actress is "happily straight with a boyfriend", claims that people have abused her in the streets for being a lesbian and claims that while she has had one proposition from a woman the majority have been by men.

The anti-lesbianism existing within compulsory heterosexuality is not addressed as an issue for 'real' lesbians, but as a problem for Anna Friel herself. "Happily straight" can either as a comment by the writer that Friel is lucky not to be a lesbian, or as confirmation that "straight" is acceptable and so connotes contentment and happiness. Men find lesbians a "turn-on" but only if fictional, as they "think it's a shame" if it excludes them. Male desire thus re-inscribes lesbianism as objects of the male spectator. This is similar to the narrative in an article in the *Daily Mirror*, alarmingly called: "Stalker calls me three times a day says *Brookside's* Anna", with sub headline: "I'll haunt you for the rest of your life." ( Sutton 4. 2. 1994, *Daily Mirror*, p17).

Reviews giving information about the way the storyline will develop also define the 'Beth' and 'Margaret' affair as short-lived. This informs audiences that this is not a grand passion at all, and will end unhappily for 'Margaret'. Lesbianism is confirmed as unacceptable and dangerous for heterosexual women and cannot be seen to work. The television listings give brief but clear indicators of continuing problems. (*Sun*. TV super guide. 17.1.94, and TV listings 29.1.2004). However, although problematic and tragic, lesbianism is constructed as trivial and a side-issue, lesbians as minor characters with no potential audience identification but largely as objects of the male gaze. While "The bosses were thrilled how the first lesbian storyline went down" (Sky and Gibbs. 17.2.94, *Daily Mirror* p15) the *Daily Mirror* reveals 'Margaret' and 'Beth' move on to "another lesbian romp" with 'Beth's' university lecturer.

The tone of the article is different from the previous because the new affair is a "romp", language which places lesbianism as trivial, and the relaxed tone is due to the lack of "flak" that has resulted. *Brookside* producers and Channel 4 place this as a positive move, attracting audiences and advertising revenue and the reference to "top" soap indicates that *Brookside* is now succeeding in the ratings "war". A *Times* article further comments on the issue of ratings wars between the soaps and the use of controversial topics to grab new viewers and gives useful statistical information about viewing figures; claiming that *Coronation Street* attracted 14.9 million viewers while *EastEnders* only had 8.1 million, (Frean 20.4.94, *Times* p22). The article points to new, youth-orientated

focus as the reason for the upsurge, in the ageist context of ‘youth driven’ media. Although the *Times* article is not directly about *Brookside*, the text has been included because it is a method of reviewing *Coronation Street* negatively which claims success through avoiding lesbianism in the narrative.

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*Coronation Street's* studied avoidance of the kind of issue-led storylines which have dominated *EastEnders* and *Brookside* also play an enormous part in its success, according to Carolyn Reynolds, head of drama serials at Granada. “It would be very dangerous for me to say that we would never introduce a story about something such as lesbianism”, MS Reynolds says, “It could only happen, however, when our writers felt it was right for the development of the characters. The street has no function to educate or inform society; its aim is entertainment.” (Frean 20.4.1994, *Times* p22).

The view of other soaps as “issue led” education is contrasted with a view of them as properly pure entertainment. Lesbian representation is chosen as the epitome of such ‘preaching’. The nostalgia of *Coronation Street* is represented as unremarkable and reassuring, as common sense. The ideology which it promotes, presumed to appeal to older people, goes unnoticed. Heterosexuality is compulsory in *Coronation Street* at this time.

‘Beth’s relationship with her college tutor, ‘Chris’, is referred to in a *Daily Mail* article about inappropriate relationships between tutors and students, as an example of abuse of power which problematises lesbian relationships. Interestingly, the gender of ‘Chris’ is given as ‘he’. “Kiss-and-tell. Dons and lecturers must confess affairs with students to avoid favouritism....In the Channel 4 soap *Brookside*, ‘Beth Jordache’, played by Anna Friel, asked her lesbian lecturer lover ‘Chris’ to doctor an exam so she would pass. He [sic] refused”. (Scott 1994, *Daily Mail* p30).

In September 1994, 9 months after the *Brookside* lesbian storyline, *EastEnders* introduced a lesbian narrative with ‘Binnie’ and ‘Della’, and *Emmerdale* have an ongoing

storyline with 'Zoe' and 'Emma'. Some of the comments however reference the *Brookside* storyline, and also manifest a view of lesbian representations as corrupting the young and demonising heterosexuality. Jane Gordon in *The Mail on Sunday* in February 1995 promotes heterosexual couples as superior and healthier for bringing up children, and airs the view that lesbian representations are swamping popular culture and British society. Using academic language to validate these claims, she writes, under the alarming headline "Dressing up. Life is a Dangerous Game" and reports "startling sociological changes taking place in the population." She continues:

Dressed up in borrowed frocks and high heels, my daughter and her friend strutted round the house at half-term talking in strangulated accents and referring to each other as 'Binnie' and 'Della'. Initially, I was rather shocked by this new variation on the old dressing up game of 'mummies and daddies'. Because 'Binnie' and 'Della', to those not in tune with popular culture, are the lesbian couple in *EastEnders*. But later, when I watched the programme, I understood exactly, why these two women appear so attractive to young girls. They are not only strong, pretty and fashionably dressed, they also enjoy the one upbeat, harmonious and positive relationship in the series. The parallel heterosexual storyline - that involving the odious 'Bianca', her moronic boyfriend 'Ricky' and his affair with her best friend 'Natalie' - is as unappetising to young girls as calve's liver and onions are to animal activists. (Gordon 1995, *Mail on Sunday* p33)

The view that soaps 'corrupt' young children is presented as common sense, and there is no theorisation of the split between make believe, fiction and reality. 'Playing' 'Binnie' and 'Della' as "mummies and daddies" serves to masculinise and feminize them, re-constructing lesbians as butch and femme, and as 'pretend families'. Playing thus "mummies and daddies" is normalising, so that any other kind of family structure is abnormal. Gordon goes on to chart what she sees as the preponderance of lesbians in the current soaps, from 'Beth' in *Brookside* to 'Zoe' in *Emmerdale*.

The soaps' multi storylines are ignored and only the lesbian narratives focused on. They

are the ones which are seen as significant, and they stand out to the writer because they appear to challenge dominant discourses. She is addressing a heterosexual readership, which it is assumed will agree. A view of lesbians becoming all pervasive references the 'swamping' metaphors made to indicate the 'other' as a threat, to Englishness, or heterosexuality. Gordon goes on to develop a thesis about the power of soaps in relation to the 'vulnerable' young, that while welcoming the challenge to stereotypes, still sees alternatives to heterosexuality as threatening and pernicious, corrupting as it bleeds from representation into reality.

My daughter's fascination with the *EastEnders* characters 'Binnie' and 'Della' has, of course, little to do with sex. She doesn't understand the nature of their relationship, she is merely responding to the sympathetic and politically correct way in which lesbians are represented. Television has always had the power to make us rethink our prejudices. Often to our own good. It was time that we threw out that clichéd old image of lesbians - all bover boots and serge suits. But in replacing those tired stereotypes with these exciting, glamorous and frighteningly distorted view of the world to our children, in putting such a dark and negative slant on heterosexual relationships while openly glorifying homosexual unions, we are, surely, as much in danger of losing the plot of our own lives as *EastEnders* is in losing touch with its once much heralded view of reality. Call me old-fashioned, but isn't a society that holds at its heart the roles of 'mummies and daddies' infinitely preferable to one that promotes 'Binnies' and 'Dellas'?

Single parents are also implicated in this dismissal of all but "mummies and daddies". In spite of using liberal humanist language by denouncing the "clichéd old image of lesbians", she makes it seem reasonable to be anti-lesbian (and anti-gay or anti single parent) in the claims that such "distorted reality" is "frightening" and "dangerous". The article addresses an assumed "old fashioned" readership which agrees with anti lesbian attitudes while the author universalizes motherhood.

A view in the *Sunday Mirror* which is also critical of 'lesbian chic' but with a different focus theorises its lack of reality as due to its pandering to male fantasy.

The kind of lesbianism that we now see in print has absolutely nothing to do with reality. There isn't a dungaree, a cropped hairdo or a DM in sight. This is not liberation for an oppressed minority. It is a sanitised, air-brushed, totally fake vision of women who love women. But if it doesn't reflect reality, what is the real motivation behind its sudden explosion into the public area? Simple, it's a chance to roll out an age-old male sexual fantasy. Men never had much against lesbians – as long as they can watch. A sizeable chunk of the output of top-shelf magazines is devoted to such scenarios. It is no accident that many of those producing the current wave of stylish Sapphism, David Bailey for example, are men. Mr. Bailey gets to re-work what is evidently one of his fantasies, gets paid for it, gets a pat on the back from the PC lobby and gets the last laugh. Which is more than you can say for poor old Hufty, who used to co-present Channel 4's *The Word*. About the only genuine lesbian to have been seen on TV over the past 12 months, butch, shaven-headed Hufty's face didn't fit and she was sacked from *The Word*. (Turner **2005**, *Sunday Mirror* p17).

The writer sees the "genuine" lesbian in contrast to fashionable "air-brushed fantasy". 'Butch' lesbians are not seen as attractive within the masculine libidinal economy. However Turner produces another stereotype, in being unaware that lesbians can look 'femme' too, and therefore 'pass' as straight. Turner's view also ignores the pleasure of viewing, particularly in relation to lesbian or bisexual audiences. The reviews reinforce many dominant discourses of lesbian sexuality. They assume a heterosexual audience and reader, and in this way reconstruct absence or deviant nature of 'other' sexuality. Age difference in relation to 'Beth' and her tutor, 'Chris' is used to illustrate older predatory lesbians using power inappropriately; lesbianism is seen as corrupting young women and children. Other reviews take a perspective of protecting lesbians from images which are seen as bearing no relation to their referents. Identification with and interest in these lesbian or bisexual performances are not represented as positive. The denial that such

representations are realistic is always linked, one way or another, to their input in heteronormativity.

The effects of Section 28, from 1988, had placed lesbian and gay issues in discourses in campaigning, academic and popular culture. The key parts of the text were that local authorities should not “intentionally promote homosexuality” or “promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship”. Although many newspaper articles said that it had had no effect, there was strong feeling by lesbian and gay organisations that lack of evidence of silencing of LGB was not proof that many lesbians and gay men and organisations had been stopped from speaking or holding events. There were ongoing reminders about Section 28 and therefore lesbian and gay issues, in the press. In 1990 the BBC ran a three part serialisation of Winterson’s *Oranges are not the only Fruit*, an adaptation of a lesbian novel; the reception was very positive. The script was witty and appealed to a wide audience. This was however presented in the drama slot where ‘controversial’ issues are traditionally found.

The introduction of lesbian and gay representations in soap operas can be seen as an intervention with various motives: as “intervention of the intellectual,” (Bourdieu, 1993) linked with a desire to bring change and discussion of ‘controversial’ issues; and as part of increasing competition with other soaps to gain more and wider audiences, especially men and the young. Advertising revenue and viewing figures were important factors with commercial channels; however the BBC had also come under increasing pressure to compete. The context of the episode was one of intense competition between British prime time soaps, and a number of articles in magazines and newspapers about ‘lesbian chic’, constructing a new lesbian representation which was fashionable, young, attractive and white. While these representations had been initially predominantly American, the high profile of these ensured they were circulating in popular British culture. They constructed an ‘acceptable’ lesbianism which was not an identity but a performance.

In the last two years it has become possible to read "lesbian" in seemingly more



places than ever before. Apparently lesbians are now "fashionable" and "lesbian chic" is debated throughout a range of popular texts, from the August 1993 *Vanity Fair* front cover featuring Cindy Crawford and Kendall to Joanna Briscoe's recent article in the *Sunday Times* ("Lipstick on her collar" 5 June 1994). (Hastie 1994, p1).

Lesbianism as fashionable visual spectacle was part of the background to lesbians in soaps. Known in popular culture as 'lipstick lesbians' this was an important construction which identified lesbianism largely as a fashion accessory. The unpopularity of real lesbians at the time can be seen by the newspaper responses to Jane Brown, the head of a school in Hackney, East London, who became the focus of a hate campaign, allegedly because she refused to allow her class to see a performance of *Romeo and Juliet*. The *Sun* wrote about her at the time that the 'Beth' and 'Margaret' storyline was evident, with the headline "I watched as the Romeo ban head kissed woman pal in garden." (Thompson 22.1.1994, *Sun* p7). Jane Brown was older and was represented as one kind of stereotypical lesbian, which meant 'feminist', not feminine, anti-men, and unattractive.

Soap articles indicate that television companies and soap opera producers were attempting to increase viewing figures, and by doing so increasing male and young people audiences. As Christine Geraghty, (1991) has documented, a change from soaps 'for women' from the 1980's to broader narratives to attract male viewers has been noticeable in all of the prime time British soaps, thus including more constructions and representations of male environments, and sometimes gangsters. This latter could have the effect of decreasing the possibility of lesbian representation, and was more intertextually linked to homoeroticism. *EastEnders'* *Kray* narrative is an example of this. There is evidence from popular pornographic imagery and lesbian performances for male audiences that lesbian representations of young conventionally attractive women would be expected to appeal to male fantasies and to have a titillating effect.

The *Daily Mirror* claims that "Street is soft soap say kids. Survey shows that teenagers dislike Coronation St." (Pauley 28.1.1993, *Daily Mirror*, p19) implying that 'Bet

Lynch' was too old and without style. Nine months later the *Daily Mirror* published an article headlined "Like Cindy, It Just Grew Up" reporting an increase in four to nine year olds regularly watching *Coronation Street* and *Blind Date*. (Phillips 27.10.1993, *Daily Mirror* p7). While the two categories, teenagers and young viewers, are not comparable, there is information about increasing competition to gain numbers of young people watching. Teenage audiences would be more valuable as audiences because of consumer power and as designating fashionable status, but juvenile viewers would be valued as identifiers with new younger characters, and potential adult viewers.

*Emmerdale*, transmitted at 7pm on ITV, another British soap had introduced lesbianism in 1993 and this can be seen as an incentive to introduce this controversial and therefore publicity-gaining issue. Many of its previews also constructed lesbianism as shocking and troubled sexual behaviour. *The Daily Mirror* describes it in this way: "Viewers Give Gay 'Zoe' a Boost. Leah Bracknell, star of the TV programme *Emmerdale* talks about her character, the lesbian 'Zoe Tate.'" The actress playing 'Zoe' "was worried how viewers would react when the pretty vet revealed the shock secret of her troubled sex life" but goes on to reveal, "I have had some moving letters from women in the same predicament who are pleased to see the subject tackled in a soap", she said. (*Daily Mirror TV weekly* 26.6.1993, p6).

Again the article seeks to reassure us that "Zoe is very feminine-not the stereotype." The aim of both *Brookside* and *Emmerdale's* lesbian narratives is clearly to be controversial, and by predicting the soap community's negative response, the expectation produces tension for the audience and the common sense hegemonic construction of lesbianism as problematic and unpopular. Bracknell's view that "not all lesbians" are stereotypes is helpful in not generalising, although she implies that "short hair and Doc Martin boots" are unattractive to everyone.

The ethical claims are sometimes explicitly contradicted, as with the *Sunday Mirror* article headlined, "Vet's Secret: Lesbian Storyline set for *Emmerdale*. The script is part of a campaign by Yorkshire Television to boost ratings by introducing controversial

topics.” (23. 05.1993, *Sunday Mirror* p32). While *Emmerdale* had introduced lesbianism in 1993 this was the first lesbian representation which was about a regular, core character, ‘Zoe’, in the prime time soaps, a major intervention which received some publicity but not on the same scale as the later *Brookside* storyline, seven months later. There was no kiss, and the issue was introduced as an idea rather than being represented. The photograph of ‘Beth’ and ‘Margaret’ kissing provided a dramatic and explicit message for publicising the narrative, while ‘Zoe’ talking to ‘Archie’ was not a memorable visual event, and had no titillation factor. The power of the photograph is effective in making the issue more real, (Barthes 2000) and is an effective form of publicity. The photograph of ‘Beth’ and ‘Margaret’ kissing has become a signifier of *Brookside*.

## **Arguments**

Modleski’s thesis, informed by the qualifications of Geraughty and Thomas, is seen to have relevance here because the genre contains many storylines which require identification with sympathetic characters, in spite of efforts to reach more younger and male audiences. Audiences know more than the other characters and are ‘in the know’. They are aware, after this *Brookside* episode, that there is sexual attraction between the two women, something none of the other characters yet realise. The outing of the issue has happened but only to us and we can expect more explosions of the knowledge, which we are privileged to view. This is pleasurable. Kosofsky Sedgwick (1991) theorises that the ‘closet’ is a fundamental framework in twentieth century Western thought which constructs ideas about lesbians and gay men. From this episode, some of the issues about ‘outing’ are raised. There has been no ‘coming out’ speech to the *Brookside* community but ‘Beth’ has, ‘come out’ to the audiences, the major interpellator as viewer, and ‘Margaret’ may be about to. Sedgwick theorises that the words are necessary, for a public announcement means claiming a public identity. As she points out, ‘ “I am out, therefore I am”, is meant to do for the wearer, not the constative work of reporting that s/he *is* out, but the performative work of coming out in the first place.” (Sedgwick 1991, p4). ‘Beth’ has come out partially but not to the fictive community. Sedgwick

emphasises the problem with the concept of the 'closet', because no lesbian or gay man can come out once and for all; the words which are also a performance have to be said repeatedly, to everyone encountered, and the possibility of not coming out at any time is equally likely. The private and the public are referred to in the same moment and audiences are voyeuristically witnessing a private moment. .

Theorists of soap opera have commented on an increasing masculinisation of the genre. (Geraghty 1991). At the time of the episode under discussion, there was drug taking, gangsters, and the insane cult leader. The prime time soaps were all aiming to attract wider audiences, and *Brookside* was from its beginning, crossing genders in being about men's and women's experiences, produced by a left wing writer who was committed to bringing issues of men and work to the soap. However, as Brunsdon theorises, the "ideological problematic of soap opera - the frame or field in which meanings are made...is that of 'personal life'... Ideologically constructed as the feminine sphere, it is within this realm of the domestic, the personal, the private, that feminine competence is recognised." (Brunsden 1997, p17). Women are skilled as readers of these texts, Brunsden explains, and while she makes explicit that these skills are not innate but constructed, this makes it likely that women will continue to be the biggest audience. However a 'controversial' issue such as a lesbian narrative, with young, conventionally attractive actresses, could be appealing to both male and female audiences.

Lesbian audiences are also theorised, (Hastie 1994) skilled at recognising the signs of a lesbian affair, and the parallel production of *The Journals of Beth Jordache* (Braverman 1994) ensured a first person lesbian narrative. Resistance to hegemonic constructions in soaps Brown (1994) and the pleasure for women audiences as groups which celebrate and share knowledge can be seen to be a fruitful area. The interpellated soap audience for most of the reviews are heterosexual. However as Hastie (1994) shows, a skilled viewer would have been able to 'read' the lesbian affair developing between 'Beth' and 'Margaret' from a signifier in an October episode before the affair was publicised. "The model reader for this scene is someone who can recognise a book by its cover and come up with the Virago edition of Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*, and then go

beyond this to interpret the book as a code word for "lesbian".' (Hastie 1994, p6). The issue of negotiated readings (Hall 1980) will be central to audience research.

This is the first performance of a lesbian kiss in a British prime time soap opera, and it is loaded with significance, multiple meanings, and the possibility that:

The sexualisation of female friendship, [however] through the presentation of a lesbian couple, could reverberate through the soap, calling into question the basis of the relationship between other women in the programme. (Geraghty 1991, p 158).

Geraghty's thesis proposes the possibility of a challenge to compulsory heterosexuality through the effects of lesbian relationships in soaps. This does not however take in to account the context of the relationship, intertextual perspectives or duration. The *Brookside* narrative for was intricately connected to the threat of 'Trevor's' body being discovered and fear of the 'Jordache' family being caught for the killing. This affected the way that female sexuality was constructed. As theorised within the close reading, lesbian sexuality is here written within concepts of horror; the grotesque (Bakhtin 1965) and the 'monstrous feminine'. (Creed 1993). As the horror is resolved, lesbianism too becomes absent. 'Beth' is not herself grotesque but set within codes which construct her as a victim in a gothic horror. 'Beth' and 'Margaret's' affair is short-lived, 'Beth' becoming impatient with 'Margaret's' possessiveness, and 'Beth' becomes involved with her tutor, older than her, and represented as in control. 'Mandy Jordache' reacts furiously when she discovers her daughter's affairs. Their arrest and trial for 'Trevor's' killing leads to publicity about domestic violence and campaigns to free the fictional pair. 'Reverberations' are to be seen in the after effects of 'Beth's' outing. Gossip, and prejudice are shown to be present, although education of the ignorant and bigoted becomes less of a function of the television lesbianism than with gay men. (Geraghty 1991, p159). Young lesbians as spectacle is the more common representation. In *Brookside* 'Jean Crosbie,' an older woman whose marriage to 'David' is always represented as problematic, defends, then re-claims lesbianism from her own past. Within

months however she is an absent referent, having met her old friend and lover, and moved out of the area. Older lesbians are not often represented in soaps, which allow older heterosexual women the dominant position, though represented as a comedic sexuality.

Geraghty's theorisation of the possible reverberations of lesbianism in soaps (Geraghty 1991, p158) can be examined in a broader way because there have been several soap lesbians since her analysis. *Emmerdale*, in 1993, introduced the issue of lesbianism into the narrative when 'Zoe' confides in her boyfriend that she thinks she is a lesbian, and this is to erupt later into the main narrative. The reviews and comments are not as sensational as *Brookside*'s narrative at the introduction, and there are no visual materials for audiences to see. The absence of a partner, or sexual performance for 'Zoe' when the issue is first introduced, contributes to the lack of comment compared to *Brookside*. 'Zoe' has a 'marriage ceremony', several lesbian relationships, and becomes pregnant while having a schizophrenic episode. Linking lesbian identity with mental illness, especially one that implies a 'split mind' in the popular imagination, makes her lesbianism too seem monstrous. The reverberations from her activities, until her affair with 'Charity Dingle,' have little effect on the wider community beyond a cause for gossip. The 'Charity/Zoe' affair is more explosive and transgressive although open to a normative reading ultimately although the 'ultimate' is not possible in soaps, and this narrative could explode again at any time. The affair is much previewed, teasing audiences with a puzzle to find out the identity of 'Charity's' mystery lover. The absent referent is always referred to as male. (*Inside Soap* 25.5.2001, front cover). Some audiences may guess the secret, lesbian gay and bisexual ones in particular, but the normative conclusion is to predict a heterosexual liaison. The result is to increase the shock when it comes, and to challenge assumptions of heteronormativity. They are conventionally attractive, glamorous, stylish, young, white, central characters. Closure has not been possible, because no final resolution occurs. 'Charity' chooses 'Chris', 'Zoe's' brother, but this does not make lesbian desire disappear, because the reason for her choice could be desire for a normative lifestyle and/or money. 'Zoe' remains a lesbian, 'Charity' potentially bisexual. 'Zoe' becomes the only lesbian remaining in a British primetime soap.

Shortly after, the 'Binnie' and 'Della' narrative, introduced in *EastEnders* in September 1994, explodes with a kiss in the Square. Gossip and prejudice follow this event, which is a narrative device to make all the characters aware of their relationship at the same time. 'Della' is black, 'Binnie' white, both young, attractive, 'feminine' and fashionable. 'Della' has been having a relationship with 'Steve', and so potentially bisexual. 'Lesbian' desire is present; 'Binnie's' white lesbianism appears to signify western decadence. For a few months the narrative has importance; eventually they become absent referents. In the early twenty-first century, lesbianism is less about desire and closer to friendship in 'Kelly' and 'Zoe's' brief kiss in *EastEnders* (31.12.2003) and 'Lindsay's' lesbian relationship with 'Shelley' in 2001. However, where 'Kelly's' kiss is normalised by her belief that 'Zoe' is dying, 'Shelley' is shown to be dangerous and probably insane. Intertextually referring to the film *Fatal Attraction* she becomes obsessive, stalking 'Lindsay's' mother. Like 'Beth's' murderous aspect, and 'Zoe's' schizophrenia, the lesbian is seen as excessively grotesque, deviant and the problem. The reverberations are used to explode the 'Corkhill' family. This example, which can be read as the ultimate threat of lesbianism exploding the heterosexual family, is based on a 'madwoman's' skewed vision and seen as a tragic mistake.

There are few reverberations in Geraghty's terms, either within the narratives to challenge the heterosexual matrix, or in bringing women's friendships into question. However reverberations across the soaps can be seen, as 'controversial' issues increase profiles and ratings and that the success can be measured by the clusters of lesbian narratives which occur around the same time frame. 'Zoe' in *Emmerdale*, preceded 'Beth' and 'Margaret' in 1993 and 'Binnie' and 'Della' came in to *EastEnders* shortly after.

In her interview with Mal Young, the producer of *Brookside* at the time of the 'Jordache' narrative, Hastie (1994 p7) is interested in his claim that Beth's 'lesbianism' developed organically and was not imposed unrealistically in the narrative. This was made difficult, as Hastie points out, because as Young said, "most of the audience won't understand someone just saying "I've got this thing about my sexuality". They need a very clear

black and white plotting.” This emphasises the dominant heteronormative narrative which demanded explicit signification of ‘other’. However, the manner in which the affair developed was organic in the sense that audiences knew the two women as main characters, especially ‘Beth’s’ troubled history, and the soap structure helped audiences identify with them. This was a process which would work to include lesbianism as a sympathetic issue instead of introducing outsiders, who would immediately be seen as ‘other’. They were both likeable characters and audiences arguably invested emotional identification with them. As Ang (1990) in her analysis of *Dallas* illustrates with her study of audiences, emotional identification with the characters and the issues is important, despite the melodramatic manifestations.

It is possible to theorise that many of the audiences respond to the narrative’s ‘emotional realism’. (Ang 1990). Although *Brookside* has been described as a social realist soap, there are, still melodramatic moments, horror, romance, and violence, within a single episode. The ‘Jordache’ narrative of domestic violence, rape and child abuse generates discussions about these issues and creates a point of identification for many women. Sandra Maitland who played ‘Mandy Jordache’ describes women waving their fists at her and shouting “Yeah. Hope you get away with it” after the episode where she stabs ‘Trevor’ has been transmitted. (Redmond 1994, *Brookside: The Women*) Identification with ‘Beth’s’ experience as a lesbian can be read as a continuation of this.

## **Conclusion**

The construction of lesbianism or bisexuality represented in the ‘Beth/Margaret’ narrative is of a previously heterosexual, attractive young woman becoming attracted to her attractive best friend, who after some fear of her own feelings and the response of the community, responds. A code of romantic love conflicts with desire and the body; they are friends and like each other and then passionate, making them powerless to deny their feelings. The extent to which the representation challenges dominant views of lesbianism can be considered. They are not ‘butch and femme’, being both ‘feminine’, and they attract men easily. They do not fit essentialist theories of lesbianism, because they are



both previously (and later) attracted to men. The conversation they have when 'Margaret' claims that if she was a man she would find 'Beth' attractive, is undermined when they kiss. They can be said to challenge fixed identities, because they are seen to change as we watch. However 'Beth' is a 'damaged' woman and can easily be fitted into the discourse of a woman abused and vulnerable, looking for a 'safe' relationship.

A variety of readings are possible. A dominant reading is 'lesbian chic' intertextually unavoidable. The performance of 'lesbianism' for men linked to male sexual fantasy is the popular representation, reclaiming it for heteronormativity, because it is neither bisexuality nor lesbianism, and as such cannot be disruptive within the narrative unless it becomes one or the other in an explicit and lasting narrative. 'Beth' and 'Margaret' can be read as a spectacle, especially if audiences have read previews and articles stating that this is part of a plan to increase viewing figures. However close readings of their conversation reveal a bisexual discourse ignored by the labelling of it as lesbian. 'Beth's' 'I fancy you like I fancied Peter Harrison' is a bisexual statement. Framing it within heterosexuality and setting up identification with a heterosexual audience constructs 'Beth' as not really perverse. Their desire for each other in relation to their histories and their discourse is of bisexuality, but this is not named by them, or by the previews and other texts. This raises the question of whether bisexuality can be more disruptive in the soap text if it is named and represented as an identity, as it is not possible to place within the dualistic framework of either/or hetero/lesbian discourse. Fixity allows for an essentialist reading; process leads towards performativity. Bisexuality can be read as transgressive in constructing a shifting centre of desire irrespective of gender. The representation of women as unpredictable may be threatening; they may be seen as mad.

Modleski, writing in 1979 argues that only transgressions that can be "pardoned" are possible in soaps and that same sex desire "which could explode the family structure rather than temporarily disrupt it, is simply ignored." (Modleski 1982, p93) This continues to have relevance. The issues which can be tolerated change historically, and the form in which they are included in the soap made acceptable. 'Lesbian chic' and the discourse of the damaged woman can make lesbianism unthreatening, driving them to the

logic of safety with another woman. 'Beth's' family isn't disrupted by it because it has already exploded. The family here is psychopathic, lesbianism one of the outcomes.

Signifiers of insanity are present across most of the lesbian representations. The soap lesbians are often young, inexperienced, and frightened of discovery and child-like in their behaviour. The fear which the soap lesbians live with inhibits a reading of transgression; such focus on discovery of guilty behaviour belies a threat to normative sexuality and challenges the liberal educative claim of producers and actors. Much energy is put in to hiding identity, and then appealing to the mercy of the soap community. The outing of lesbians is framed within codes of self-confession and accusation, of charges of guilt which are accepted and placed within a liberal humanist framework.

The lesbian representations in the period of study and specific soap operas are complex; for example 'Beth' is a sympathetic character who is an established in the soap, not an outsider. Her narrative is bound up with her rapist father and this dominates the text so that ultimately her lesbianism is connected to being abused. The soap narratives allow moments of 'otherness' that are however framed within heterosexual discourse and resist a perverse reading. The infinite structure is suited to responding to audience views and ratings and can introduce transgression and equally restore 'normality'. Previews and articles about production of the soaps under discussion indicate that the emphasis on introducing lesbian characters is to increase audience ratings. The 'coming out' performances illustrate the issues involved and the problems with the 'closet' as a philosophical idea. (Sedgwick 1991). The need for continuous performances of coming out and the impossibility of a final statement and action are made clear. Audiences are interpellated by most previews, reviews and articles as shocked, or guilty for watching lesbians being 'exploited' by misrepresentation. These audiences are interpellated as heterosexual; the most shocked as older, and there is no awareness of pleasures of the text, either of lesbian or wider audiences.

## **GAY MEN IN BRITISH PRIME-TIME SOAP OPERAS.**

The aim of this section is to examine whether the representations of gay males in the soaps identified are a challenge to hetero-hegemony, the cultural niches already available and gender issues. The ordering of the section follows the lesbian representations: previews, close analysis of a key scene, reviews and intertextuality, and argument. The methodologies and theorists are consistent and the most commented upon gay character is foregrounded.

The gay male character most discussed, noticed, and constructed as ground breaking in a British prime time soap up to 2003, is 'Colin', introduced into *EastEnders* in 1986. *EastEnders* was transmitted on BBC1, twice a week, then at 7pm. Contextually, 'Clause 27', the precursor to section 28, which made 'promotion' of same sex relationships illegal within local government organisations, was being drafted and debated by the conservative government, passed by the House of Lords, and was finally adopted at the end of 1987. Other key issues include the 'AIDS crisis' which in Britain targeted gay men as both the cause and victim, because of perceived lifestyles. The introduction of a high profile gay character in a mainstream soap may have had many intentions, and increasing viewing figures is a major consideration, but it is clear from the narrative that the character has an educative function, and this involves making the character likeable and sympathetic. Although 'Colin' in *EastEnders* is not the first gay man in the prime-time British soaps, ('Gordon' in *Brookside*, Channel 4 1985, caused some tabloid comment, situated in a narrative of response of parental horror) the tabloid response is more emphatic and the character is referred to since as memorable.

### **Previews**

Previews construct audiences to receive the gay narrative as confessional. and 'outing' with the threat of danger to gay men themselves. 'Colin' is a good person with ethical views and good manners especially with women. He contrasts with the 'hard men' of the Square, including his boyfriend 'Barry'. Exposure of secrets, including 'Colin's' gay

sexuality, is a key theme in the soap narrative and the previews. 'Angie' and 'Den Watts', two central heterosexual characters are having violent arguments and 'Angie' fakes cancer to stop 'Den' having an affair. 'Den' is a hard East End criminal, attractive to women and constructed like the Kray twins as protective of those he cares about and some of the local community, and violent and unfaithful to his wife. 'Den' is powerful. The exposure of his secret empowers him and adds to his masculinity, while 'Colin's' secret makes him vulnerable to abuse and physical attack..

Tabloids 'outed' 'Colin' and 'Barry's' relationship before it happened in the soap narrative. A *Sun* article in August 1986, headlined 'Eastenders' continues: "gay men to stir up tv soap."

The second gay will enter the action next month. The name of the actor who will play him is still secret. BBC chiefs have already covered rape, mugging and drugs in their determination to keep the Cockney saga true to life. And one *EastEnders* insider said last night "like it or not, gays are part of the community. "it will be interesting to see how the rest of the characters respond to the newcomers". Actor David Dale recently played a gay drag artist who became a star 'queen' at 'Dirty Den's' Queen Victoria pub. But the show insider said "Obviously, an over the top drag artist doesn't reflect what the average gay man is like." But hopefully, 'Colin Russell' and his boyfriend will. "We hope that they will show the viewers that homosexual males are not necessarily limp-wristed and effeminate". (O'Sullivan 1986, p1).

The headline is alarmist, though the article is more nuanced. There is an ethical tone of challenging stereotypes of "limp-wristed" and "effeminate" appearance and behaviour. The text is complex; partly sympathetic and not within the same anti-gay discourse as the headline. Sameness and not difference is the emphasis, offering both normalising and queer readings. However, "rape, mugging and drugs" are the context within which the issue is placed, and this marks it as bad and controversial, almost illegal. There is a distancing from confusing "limp wrested gay drag queens" who are not "like the average

gay male". Masculinity is confirmed as within gay men and normalising gay men and not making them "effeminate" gives this a reassuring tone although there is an issue of not being able to tell by performance or appearance; this is threatening as well as a comfort. The article continues:

*EastEnders* scriptwriters are taking a serious look at developing the gay romance. ... when they emerge as an ordinary couple who just happen to be gay. The insider said, "We want to show that homosexuals are like everyone else and not something from another planet". There is no suggestion that actor Michael Cashman is gay in real life. He is simply playing a role. (O'Sullivan 1986, *Sun* p1).

Readers are informed that they know where they are with these men who are homosexual and do not confuse audiences by cross dressing or appear ambiguous. While being reassured there is another unnamed concern - that of previously heterosexually identified men 'becoming' gay. Contradiction and tension are evident; the "stirring up" of the soap is to be done by introducing a gay couple. Like the actresses in *Brookside*, Michael Cashman is represented as heterosexual, which marks him as 'normal' and concerned to educate the audience. Later publicity reveals him as gay; in retrospect 'passing' revealed the need for subterfuge and undermined the liberal human discourse. The claim there is "no suggestion" of Cashman being gay is within constructions of gay as abnormal and alienating.

The social context of the narrative means that AIDS is a threat to gay men and that any sign of illness can be read as potentially fatal. Tabloid articles predict this (wrongly) with certainty. When 'Barry' has flu', the intertextual references are HIV, whether named or not, a dominant reading. A *News of the World* article states "Colin the gay *EastEnder* is to be killed off by AIDS in a shock episode. He will be rushed to hospital in a sudden death drama." This constructs HIV rather than being gay as shocking and cause for isolation although it is not a sympathetic response. (*News of the World* 15.11.87, p5).

When 'Colin' and 'Barry' are established within the text, one episode in particular is the focus of comment in the *Sun*.

A new *EastEnders* gay storm erupted last night as the top soap filmed a bizarre party thrown by Albert Square's limp-wristed lovers 'Colin' and 'Barry'. 'Colin' and 'Barry' caused a bust-up last week when BBC men banned *EastEnders* from showing them in a loving cuddle. (*Sun* 17.11.1987, p11).

The issue of performance of physical contact signifying same sex desire is a discourse of gay sex and lifestyle as horrific and corrupting. Headlined "Rumpus over *EastEnder* poof's rave-up," the text continues:

A BBC insider said last night "we've had mincing twits in leather all over the place, and what they're filming is silly and out of place. Some of the stars have been trying to persuade the bosses that the poofs' party should be shelved. Who will blame parents if they complain that their kids shouldn't watch this kind of thing. Camp guests will be dressed in outlandish tight leather and metal stud costumes...and some will wear women's clothing and make-up". (*Sun* 17.11.1987, p11).

The tone is of common sense understanding that gay men kissing, gothic clothes, and transvesticism are unacceptable. Gay men are reinforced as "mincing, limp-wristed poofs"; there is no challenge to stereotypes in the *Sun* and there is an assumed readership of familiarity and tolerance of these negative descriptions. The tone is overtly homophobic and constructs this as acceptable and common-sense and it is notable that this scene was not aired.

### **Analysis of Close Readings**

An early episode (*EastEnders* 9.10.86 Episode 172 ) in which 'Colin' appears, features him 'coming out' to 'Angie' in a manner which makes it unclear whether she

understands him. As Sedgwick (1990) theorises, the 'in or out of the closet' metaphor is problematic, and re-inforces dualistic ideology. Private and public are made separate categories which promote sexuality as a private matter and this has been demanded by some lesbian and gay campaigns as an ideal. However the concept of 'private' as outside of ideology is unsustainable. 'Colin's' attempt to tell 'Angie' about his sexuality illustrates the impossibility of being out completely and to all. He talks in code and she responds similarly. 'Colin' can tell 'Angie' explicitly but he will only be 'out' to some audiences who read the text in that way. They are drinking at the bar of the 'Queen Vic' He is watching her intently throughout the scene; she smiles lovingly at him and they appear to flirt. Audiences know she's drunk however thus unreliable and the middle class 'Colin' would not socialise with these people out of this site. The pub signifies white working class and lower class 'salt of the earth' types, including criminals but confers on 'Colin' a belongingness and other middle class characters in this episode are not sympathetic. 'Angie' has a lot of makeup on: eye makeup, lipstick, pencilled eyebrows, more emphatic than the other women characters. 'Angie:' says (Close up on her face) "You ain't the only one with troubles in your love life. Men. If I could kick the habit I'd be free as a bird." 'Colin' replies: "Wouldn't we all. I mean if we could steer clear of relationships". 'Colin's' face is in the frame. He looks startled and serious after realizing what he's said. She says : "It's alright I know what you mean. It's funny you know, we used to have a couple of gay blokes in here. Smashing fellas they were." The camera goes to 'Colin', looking polite and interested, and she says, "Always telling me their troubles".

Colin's face is in shot through much of this and it is his reaction that audiences see. Signified here is whether 'Angie' knows or is unconsciously aware of Colin's sexuality. She is alert to his situation and shows sensitivity; she has been a confidante to other gay men. She says: 'Some people think they're off another planet don't they but they're just the same as me and you.' The tension is back again because it does not seem she knows but then 'Half the punters didn't even know really. You've gotta be discreet haven't you. But your secret's safe with 'Angie' and she may know.

Richard Dyer notes:

A major fact about being gay is that it doesn't show. There is nothing about gay people's physiognomy that declares them gay, no equivalents to the biological markers of sex and race. There are signs of gayness, a repertoire of gestures, expressions, stances, clothing, and even environments that bespeak gayness, but these are cultural forms designed to show what the person's person alone does not show that he or she is gay. (Dyer 1993, p19).

The narrative possibilities that this makes possible are many, particularly the ability of non-mainstream sexualities to be secret. Lesbian and gay audiences may read the 'truth' before others but it will be unravelled slowly and with some blame attached to the secret-keeper: the gay man. Being 'out' creates danger and violence from unsympathetic people in the soap community once the secret is out.

The narrative context in which 'Colin' is initially placed is a hegemonic narrative of two main heterosexual characters. The scene described is a very short scene in the total episode and there is much more dramatic action elsewhere. The 'Den' 'Angie' and 'Jan' triangle takes up a lot of space and energy. (Geraghty, 1991 p163) Most of the men are cruel or unpleasant to women while 'Colin' and 'Lofty' are kind. 'Lofty' is constructed as nice but too gentle, with signs of a learning disability, unsuccessful with women and dependent. 'Colin' is attentive to 'Angie', wants to confide in her and seems to like talking to women. One reading is that he wants to tell 'Angie', but is afraid to and the narrative plays with the question of whether she knows. 'Colin' as potentially "in bother" and having a secret others don't notice to a more ambiguous assumption of his heterosexuality similarly raises the tension of the closet. It may be necessary for repeated 'coming outs' but gossip and the *EastEnders* community creates a narrative of whispers and fear. The problematic of being gay is emphasised; tension is created and fear for 'Colin' who cannot fight like the true male *EastEnder*. The episode sets 'Colin' and 'Angie' up as 'dysfunctional'. A queer reading can be argued that sees them as having something in common in their unhappiness and 'Angie' offers solidarity to 'Colin'



against men. 'Colin' is chivalrous yet feminine; feminised he becomes like her. He is set up to be liked by women audiences.

The 'kiss' episode (Appendix 2.2)

*EastEnders* 17.11.1987. Transmitted on BBC1 at 7.30pm.

This episode includes a kiss between 'Colin' and 'Barry'. Later references to this episode include claims in a television programme that a "gay snog" was intended but pulled. (*Seven Days that shook EastEnders 2003*). The programme is described in more detail in the review section following the close reading. The earlier article quoted suggests that a 'snog' was planned. The transmitted kiss was a peck on the cheek from 'Colin' to Barry'.

The opening scene implies crime and secrecy; a long white car draws up outside a cream house. A black man gets out ('Darren'), carrying a can of alcohol.. 'Mary', a punk, usually with lots of black makeup and now less made-up, and 'Rod', her boyfriend talk to him. It's very late or early in the morning. 'Darren' has a cockney accent. They talk about the custody battle for 'Mary's' daughter 'Annie'. Suspicion is cast about 'Darren's' activities; he infers he has been to a club but it's received with suspicion.

In the scene in which 'Barry' and 'Colin' kiss, difference and variations are signified. 'Barry' is unwell and 'Colin' is looking after him. They are asexual in this scene and 'Colin' like a parent with a petulant child. The working class culture which 'Barry' comes from is the same as the *EastEnders* constructed community; he 'belongs' in the Square. 'Colin' is the outsider and not aware of Barry's identification with his stall. Colin is both fond and patronizing but later when 'Colin' covers the stall for 'Barry' he is robbed and humiliated. 'Masculinity' resides within 'Barry' although he is here like a child, whining and petulant. Masculinity showing vulnerability in illness is not however challenging or unusual. Dominant discourses frequently represent men as like babies when ill and women caring patiently, exasperatedly or indulgently for them. 'Colin' can be seen as the 'mother' and as he is arguably often a 'feminised' character he can be read

as challenging masculinity. There is an ‘othering’ of ‘Colin’ which he can make ‘normal’ only when caring for his young lover, and only then if sexual activity is never referred to.

### **Reviews and Intertextuality**

The programme described and analysed in the opening of this section was transmitted much later but is a meaningful contribution to placing the ‘kiss’ as a dangerous act, and as evidence of continuation of the reverberation of the gay narrative.

*Seven Days that shook EastEnders*, was transmitted on 13.10.03 on Channel Four. One of the ‘shocking’ issues featured is a ‘kiss’ between ‘Colin’ and ‘Barry’. The programme plays to the sensational rather than a serious analysis and shows a range of articles from different times and made it appear that they are in response to a kiss which never actually occurred. The narrative describes a sexually explicit kiss in the episode described earlier in this chapter, by using silhouettes and shadows of actors, and soundtrack of a pulsating beat to indicate a shocking climax. It is claimed that the promotion of a gay kiss boosted ratings and Michael Cashman describes the production company tipping off the press as a “Faustian pact” by “insiders”. An air of corruption and conspiracy is built up. The self-referential tone of this programme is exemplified by leading up to the kiss and then exposing it as a mere peck on the forehead. A similar style is used to repeat the build up to the kiss, pastiching the actions, and then exposing the hyping of the episode and claiming the pulling of the “controversial” performance. Some clips are shown of members of the public answering unknown questions with “it’s not natural”, and “they should be sent abroad”. It is not clear what the question is and if this is linked at all to the *EastEnders*’ episode. Many references are made to the “scandal” of showing two gay screen lovers before the watershed. Michael Cashman says that on 15 November the papers “went berserk” and talks about his feelings of fear. Negative articles are shown which appear to be contemporaneous. Cashman reports that a newspaper printed everything but his street number, resulting in a brick through his window, and that the publicity caused his boyfriend’s parents to find out that he is gay. The actor who played

his lover 'Barry' says that he has been beaten up and his career ruined, causing him to lose work, and expresses his view that being connected with a gay character made this understandable. There are shots of the word "filth" from tabloid headlines. The producer is described as being prepared to pull the episode and the narrator of the programme says that the BBC "imploded".

The presenter of the programme, Matthew Wright, talks about gay men as victims and as an "easy target". He describes the mid 1980s as a time of much gay-bashing, referencing and showing what is claimed to be film of an 'Outrage' march., (a lesbian and gay campaigning group) and then anti-gay slogans of "burn in hell". There are no dates given for these events and the effect of this programme is to re-construct danger and fear for gay men. The historical context described by the programme both dramatises and alarms, while constructing a self-satisfied distance in the present from this re-constructed past. The "kiss" that is referred to is a kiss on the forehead; the articles and films are unsubstantiated and undated but the effect is to make gay sex seem both dangerous and unimportant simultaneously. The re-construction of what is acceptable is emphasised. 'Dirty Den's' character is hard and dangerous. The actor who played him (Lesley Grantham) is 'exposed' as a murderer of a cab driver years before. No attempt is made to distance the character from the actor, as this enhances an acceptable masculine image.

Gay men represented in the three mainstream soaps begins in 1985 with *Brookside's* 'Gordon Collins' (Channel 4), one year before *EastEnders*. Teenage 'Gordon' falls in love with an old school friend and becomes the object of his parents' horrified and snobbish dismay. 'Simon', in 1996 is gay character to 'Albert Square'.

*Inside Soap* explains

Tiffany's' big brother, 'Simon', and his bisexual boyfriend, 'Tony', got together during a trip to Blackpool, with a boy-on-boy kiss which sparked another media frenzy and outrage amongst viewers. (7-13 February 2004, *Inside Soap* p31).

In this narrative it is not class which makes these two different from each other. 'Tony's' bisexuality is problematic for the couple, (as 'Barry's') as well as from others who are horrified at the idea that they are gay. Both of these narratives have a gay man and a bisexual, but a bisexuality enabling a return to heteronormativity and not a challenge to dualism. Bisexuality is named to describe the soap sexuality much later, as the article illustrates, yet much of the narrative and intertextuality at the time of transmission is the pressure on 'Tony' to decide whether he is gay or heterosexual. Bisexual discourse is not being able to decide and to be letting others down, echoing political movements of the 1970s and 1980s. 'Simon' is honest and reliable, with his sister 'Tiffany's', a popular character's, support. 'Tony' is unreliable but worldly, and his bisexuality reinforces this in a similar representation to that of 'Colin' and 'Barry's'.

'Lance' is a gay man in *Brookside*, transmitted on Channel 4, from 2000 and remaining for two years. He is an earnest and vulnerable character, like 'Colin', the acceptable representation of a gay man, with a vicious sister, 'Leanne'. He is camp in manner, and plays within tragedy or comedy, often within the same scene. There is pleasure in watching him, connected to his goodness, which is usually taken advantage of, while his lines of sharp camp humour give an edge of wit which disguises sentimentality, and make him acceptable. He is serious, and looks worried all of the time. This becomes his persona. The *Guardian*, "Last Night's TV", ironically reviews: "The big question now isn't, will 'Jacqui' get 'Harry' back? Or, will 'Max' ever shave again? Or even, what vegetable has 'Lance' lodged in his person to maintain so pained a look (my money's on a big red onion)? Rather, it is how will 'Susannah' be dispatched to Soap Heaven?" (McLean 30.11.2000, *Guardian*) The review has the tone of 'Lance's' narrative: tragedy and comedy. As unthreatening male he nurtures 'Bev' and her son when they need support, a temporary measure while 'Bev' waits for another male partner. Some episodes (week ending 11.2.2001) where he is attempting to desire 'Bev' so that he can be more than a sperm donor with her questions heterosexuality as essentialist. He recoils from kissing her, saying, "No offence, girl, but that can't be natural!". Heteronormativity is scrutinised for a moment within 'Lance's' perspective although "natural" is not questioned; the idea of nature may be comically defined more broadly. The scene is

reviewed sympathetically, a coded reading linking tragedy and humour and setting up audiences to reassess the scene and value it for its wit and heavier themes. Audiences are appealed to as recognising themselves as sensitive and humorous.

The cleverness was in Lance's real desire to be a proper father rather than just a sperm donor as a favour to Bev. It was very, very funny, but also very moving in extended scenes that dealt with the nature of parenthood, love, loss and loneliness. (Stephen 11.2.2001, *Mail on Sunday*).

'Jason Kirk' came into *Emmerdale* in 2001 on ITV., a gay man in his early twenties and white, as the other soap gay men described, he was cousin to 'Paddy' already working with 'Zoë', the village lesbian and therefore surrounded by non-mainstream sexualities. 'Jason's' openness about being gay, causes 'Paddy' embarrassment. As with 'Lance' in *Brookside*, 'Jason' too becomes the support for an abandoned woman and her child, the cruel 'Latisha'. There is shared discourse of 'nurturing' gay man as substitute for a male lover.

The same year as 'Jason', another gay man. 'Derek' appeared in *EastEnders*, unusual in being an older man, in his fifties or early sixties, the first of this generation in a British prime-time soap. He was introduced initially as a member of a pantomime on 29 November 2001, with a 'camp director of the pantomime and using language in a pantomimesque way, greeting 'Derek' with "I take it we're unfamiliar with iambic pentameter. Ooh, 'Derek'. Decided to grace us with your presence?" spoken in a high voice. 'Derek' is part of a different world, not that of *EastEnders*. He is 'other', and it seems unlikely he will become part of the community. The pantomime setting, the performance of camp and homosexuality is a carnivalesque site. This is a textually appropriate site for gay representation, separate from the 'real life' of the Square, an 'artistic' middle class space of escapism and fun. 'Derek' is not performed as camp. This enables audiences to understand 'Pauline's' mistake in being attracted to him, because he can 'pass' as heterosexual. This representation challenges popular discourses which place all gay men as 'effeminate' and camp. However difference is signified

initially by site and performance without being explicit about the presence of gay men. The creation of pantomime represents playful meanings, pleasure and the fun of cross-dressing, and of sexualities not easily read.

'Pauline' knows 'Derek' from their school days, and now becomes attracted to him after their reunion. There is comedic misunderstanding until 'Derek' explains that he is gay, and has a partner. 'Derek' reappears later and becomes a regular character in the soap. The role he plays at this time (April 2004) is of friend and support to 'Pauline', with whom he lives, and father figure to 'Martin', her difficult teenage son, a similar representation to that of 'Jason' and 'Lance'. 'Derek' is also constructed as sensitive, reliable, and intelligent. His arrival and existence in the narrative is the least remarked upon of gay male characters. He is older than all the other gay characters; he is not a conventionally attractive spectacle and he has had few relationships, all in the past except for one night spent with an ex partner. He is constructed within an ageist discourse, sex and attractiveness being seen as past, and he functions as support to 'Pauline'. Few reviewers mention him. The gay press is not positive.

Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the water...*EastEnders* fans thought they had seen the last of Ian Lavender, who played camp theatrical producer 'Derek' in the Walford panto at Christmas. But no. The actor who once served as 'Private Pike' in *Dad's Army* is coming back. He's going to referee the Walford football team when the World Cup starts. Video recorders on! (*Pink Paper*, 17.5.2002).

The context of the football team places him in a masculine scene but he is refereeing, not an active player. The reference to the film *Jaws* constructs him as monstrous; the LGBT reader is assumed to be young and interpellated in common sense terms to be disgusted at representations of old gay men. Older audiences are addressed in complex ways. All *EastEnders* fans are placed together as wanting to see the last of him; if they liked him they are not real fans or too old to matter. 'Derek' is represented as asexual because he is older, and kind to women; he is understanding with Pauline's son and performs the care-

giving skills shared by the previous gay male representations. It was not until 2004 that a gay storyline became part of the *Coronation Street* narrative. Many characters have been coded as gay in the past in this soap but no explicit gay male character has ever been part of the community. The narrative which 'Todd' and 'Karl' are set within is of a sensitive young white man, faithful, honest, kind to his pregnant girlfriend, becoming attracted to men. He is also represented as an 'intellectual' because he is accepted for Oxbridge. He doesn't go, choosing to stay with his girlfriend 'Sarah' and become a romantic hero. His initial attraction to her is not addressed in terms of bisexuality in the text. His first attraction to a man is to 'Nick' his brother-in-law, heterosexual and disgusted by 'Todd's' kiss. 'Nick' is represented as pretty and vulnerable rather than macho and the possibility of him actually being gay is an expectation in the text which some audiences will have recognised. The *Independent* published an article headlined "Soap Ratings war pushes watershed to limit". Although the text was about violence in *The Bill* and *EastEnders* and 'teen horror' in *Buffy*, a photograph shows 'Todd' and 'Nick' kissing. This was a passive kiss but 'Todd' kissing 'Nick' while the latter is asleep is not mentioned. The photograph signifies desire forbidden before the watershed and is contextualized within violence and horror. The article is not a preview but places gay men as unsuitable and corrupting for younger viewers. (Beard, 7.10.2003, *Independent* p17) 'Todd's' narrative continues by him being seduced by the openly gay 'Karl', leading to the collapse of his heterosexual, nuclear relationship, the miscarriage of his child and ostracism from his family. The encoded message is clear. The broadsheets rarely comment on soaps but this storyline has been noticed. The *Guardian* television previews describe it in ironic style. "Things have not been at all easy for 'Todd Grimshaw' of late". (*Guardian* G2 26.04.2004, p24). The ironic tone, although using understatement to make the opposite point ("slight problem" for example) makes light of the gay issue and the effect on others. The code of farce is often used to herald the arrival of a gay male character, as described with 'Derek' in *EastEnders*. These gay men are mistaken for heterosexual by female characters who pursue them, ultimately making themselves appear deluded. Audiences are in the know enabling double meanings and puns. Mistaken sexual identity has sometimes been the focus of previews rather than the gay issue itself. The threat to an existing relationship by 'Katy' being attracted to gay 'Karl' enable her heterosexual

relationship to be re-stabilised when he is made explicitly gay, and her lover is able to be reassured. This device is also used in *EastEnders* when an absent gay referent is used to shake 'Jamie's' trust in 'Sonia', (November.2001) but she knows he is gay and has cultural knowledge. 'Cultural capital' and the lack of it by not being able to read the codes, as Brown (1994) argues in her analysis of soap audiences, is part of the pleasure of female audiences and talk about soaps. There has been less dramatic and overtly hostile reaction to gay men in soaps since 'Colin' in *EastEnders*, until the later *Coronation Street* narrative. Soap gay men have longer storylines than the lesbian characters and while some are camp and comedic, they are no longer merely 'outsiders'. This latter has been commented on and reviewed and placed within a liberal humanist discourse by describing the absence of sensation. However the tabloid and broadsheet interest places the issue as noteworthy and shocking both by using photographs of the (non) kiss between 'Nick' and 'Todd', drawing attention to the change in *Coronation Street's* narrative, and bringing into discourse the issue of gay men as transgressive. The claims of normalisation in the episodes are belied by the attention given to it by the press. Placing the issue in the forefront of television previews and reviews make it remarkable and unusual. Lorraine Kelly claims not to take this approach. Headlined "Corrie gay kiss won't shock more than Ken and Deidre in bed", she says we should wait and see the context of the kiss between 'Todd' and nurse 'Karl'. The text continues:

Look at the way *Corrie* has made transsexual 'Hayley' one of the most engaging, likeable and genuine characters in Weatherfield instead of a clunky 'bloke in a dress' stereotype. One in five voted in a *Sun* poll to say they didn't want to see the gay kiss. I don't particularly want to watch any Corrie characters play tonsil tennis. I am still haunted by the scenes of 'Ken' and 'Deidre' in bed together which were screened years ago. *Todd* and *Karl* will really have to work hard to be as disturbing as that. (Lorraine Kelly, 20. 03. 2004, *Sun* p33).

An acceptable non-mainstream sexuality/identity is more positively represented than the spectacle of 'Ken' and 'Deidre' in bed together which is seen as 'disturbing'. It is assumed that the readers including older readers will agree that older people should not



be seen in a sexual context. Older people are constructed here and in culture as unattractive with no sexual activity. The conclusion is that a gay kiss is not quite as disgusting as older heterosexuals.

Foucault (1976) theorises that the saturation of discourses about sex in the 19<sup>th</sup> century disproves 'repression' theories. The discourses which claim acceptance of lesbian and gay sexuality may help to construct this in some cultural spaces but also make them remarkable and 'other' by their focus. This is a dilemma for campaigners but for broadcasters it can only attract viewers/listeners. As shown by some of the previews and reviews, there is intense competition between soaps and evidenced by ratings 'wars' and narrative changes to include more 'male' storylines. Lesbian and gay narratives often compete in similar time frames and male script writers claim superiority for their own. "Corrie comes out of the closet" is a headline in a *Guardian* article (Flynn 1.03.2004, *Guardian* p1) The competition and desire for youth and good looks is made explicit, with claims that only 'Zoe' in *Emmerdale* is a credible character and "Gay men have not been portrayed much better, says Little. Gordon Collins? Ugh. Those two gay boys in *EastEnders*? I can't even remember their names. I just did not want to look at them." 'Todd Grimshaw', however, is described as "both easy on the eye and a well-drawn model of Mancunian teenage sensitivity." Little ends with "I think there'll be a gay character in *Coronation Street* forever." Discourses of the desire for beautiful and sensitive gay men are reconstructed. Competition between soaps is individualized to become focused on which has produced the most attractive and memorable gay men. When Little says of other soaps' gay men, "I can't even remember their names" his readership will be encouraged to see 'Todd Grimshaw' as a superior representation, heralding a never-ending representation of gay men in *Coronation Street*.

Some gay audiences are more critical of the episodes, particularly 'Karl's' manipulative behaviour. The *Pink Paper* publishes a letter which expresses this.

I am concerned that the soap writers are portraying a gay man preying on a young lad in order to get him into bed. We know very well that 'Todd' is confused and would give in to his true sexuality eventually, but am I being oversensitive, or do others agree that this is showing gays in a bad light? (Duncan 7.5.2004, *Pink Paper* p15).

Issues raised here are the codes available to audiences in their reading of the text. (Hall 1980). The writer has negotiated the text, taking an oppositional approach to the dominant code which makes 'Karl' at this point manipulative and devious, and suggests instead a sympathetic role which he believes would be a positive example to audiences. An essentialist construction of 'Todd's' sexuality is unquestioned, which is the dominant code up to this stage in the narrative, despite 'Todd's' previous heterosexual performance/behaviour.

### **Arguments**

Discourses about these gay men in the soaps, within the text and intertextually, are predominantly coded within shame and acceptance, reconstructing confessional codes of Britain in the 1950s and 1960s. Transgression as with lesbian representations is contained within fear of exposure but unlike soap lesbians these gay men are kind and sensitive, transgressive qualities particularly within *EastEnders*' masculinity. Dualistic discourses of gay and heterosexual ignore bisexual possibilities although queer readings are possible. Some queer discourses evident in other genres, including drama, show a more fluid sexuality. Although the soap gay men, once identified as gay, do not show desire for women, intertextualities make this a possibility as a reading. Dramas such as *Bob and Rose* (9.9.2001) represent a gay man who becomes involved with a woman and still identifies as gay. While 'Jason' in *Emmerdale*, 'Lance' in *Brookside*, and 'Derek' in *EastEnders* are the gay representations in soaps, in drama rigid boundaries are seen to be shifting. Russell T Davies, who wrote *Bob and Rose* as well as *Queer as Folk*, is dismissive of a perspective which places gay and straight as fixed identities. Distancing himself and other intellectuals from readings which are in his view simplistic, and from

“stupid” people he says “We need a vocabulary that will fit the sheer complexity of ordinary men and women”. (Davies, 9.09. 2001, *Observer* Review p9). The interview published in *The Observer* is introduced in language which re-inscribes dualism “Bob is gay, Rose is straight...and they’re a loving couple. That’s the premise of a new TV series from *Queer as Folk* writer Russell T. Davies”. Tensions and misrepresentations between ‘queer’ theory and ‘popular culture’ and possible overlap is evident however. It is easy to read gay as a ‘phase’ within dominant discourses. The prominent gay men in soaps are constructed as gay, or gay now and heterosexual later; possible bisexual, and queer readings are possible but the heteronormative structure of the soaps makes challenges problematic. While many queer theorists and campaigners reject terms such as LGBT, it is necessary to name them when represented in a hetero-normative text. The tension of writing for popular culture in previews, writers’ intentions, and many queer perspectives can be identified within this text. Davies identifies with an intellectual elite with knowledge to read more skilfully, identified within queer perspectives and constructing opposition as reactionary. Feminisms and lesbian and gay perspectives that theorise a hegemonic reading are dismissed. The title of an *Observer* article about Jackie Clune, a former out lesbian and stand up comic, now with a man and babies, is titled “Nowt so queer as changing your mind”. (Czyzseleka 15.9.2002, *Observer* p4) The text reveals different views on identity politics, and concludes: “If there is more fluidity between identities and sexual behaviours among lesbians, it mirrors a similar shift among heterosexual women”. The title frames the article in such a way that LGBT identified people are portrayed as old fashioned and not radical, yet much of the text constructs a dualistic reading. This ‘changing mind’ theory leaks in to both radical and conservative texts, including soaps, but sits uneasily with heteronormative texts.

### **Older Gay Men**

The one representation of an older gay man is ‘Derek’ in *EastEnders*. He is introduced within a pantomime scene and there is misunderstanding about his sexuality, providing comedy. ‘Derek’, being much older than the other gay men, is not required to perform his sexuality as older people are not considered to be sexually attractive or active, and this

requires that the narrative usually reminds us of Derek's 'deviant' sexuality in other ways, including family conflict and homophobia of other characters. When there is no reference, there is the possibility that 'Derek' will be seen by audiences as heterosexual by default. 'Derek's' sexual performance is limited to one night when he revisits an ex lover; the framing for this is the past and it is ignored. Like some 'reminiscence' discourses, 'Derek's' attractiveness and value is seen as in his history when he was young and 'attractive', and he shakes his one night stand off as if it was his last chance at sex and romance. Older gay men are rarely seen and as with lesbian representation, there is a danger of becoming an absent referent although 'Derek's' soap life is much longer than 'Jean Crosbie's' as a lesbian in *Brookside*.

## **Conclusion**

The gay male characters discussed in this chapter are coded as often sympathetic, romantic and supportive to women. The masculinity of the soap gay men is softer, and the body is coded as lean, cared for. 'Derek' is the exception as he is older and age is a signifier of unattractiveness. The transgression of soap gay men is to be non-macho and good carers. They are often better at caring than the mothers they support, and they are kind and reliable, best friends to women. They present a more sensitive masculinity; but these performances are limited to gay men and occasionally heterosexual men coded as naïve. This separation reinforces gay men as abnormal where 'real' heterosexual men are hard. Dyer theorises a more challenging possibility whereby gay men adopt codes of masculinity.

By taking the signs of masculinity and eroticising them in a blatantly homosexual context, much mischief is done to the security with which 'men' are defined in society, and by which their power is secured. If that bearded, muscular beer drinker turns out to be a pansy, how ever are they going to know the 'real' men any more? (Dyer 1981, p61).

This would make masculinity less of a signifier of heterosexuality, but would not challenge the codes themselves. The soap gay men under discussion tend to perform codes of 'femininity'. This points to a problematic area: by using 'masculinity' and 'femininity' in this way the terms become more real even while using a social constructionist perspective. Analysing the performances of masculinity and femininity can omit asking whether these are categories which exist outside of gender and the possibility that who is performing them changes the perception and the term. As Brunsden agrees, the 'skills' and 'competences' of femininity practiced by women are not "the *natural* attributes of femininity" and so available to gay men as well. (Brunsden 1997, p17).

Class conflict can act as a driving force to the narrative, as Geraghty says. (Geraghty, 1991, pp160/1) . Middle class is linked to a different masculinity which is not able to fight and maintain positions of strength in a male community which uses violence as currency. Where the gay men are middle class; this makes them doubly 'other' in the working class soap communities. "Masculinity" resides mostly in the working class characters; sensitivity is given to women and men who are unambitious and supportive ('Lofty' in *EastEnders* and 'Sam' in *Emmerdale*) and gay men.

Geraghty applauds the efforts of soap producers to represent lesbian and gay narratives, but argues that these narratives do not compare well to the "full-blooded" heterosexual drama, "it is not the gay relationship itself which is disruptive but the intolerant response to it expressed by characters whose opinions on a range of subjects are already suspect" . (Geraghty 1991, p163) As with the lesbian representations, much is made of the threat from exposure, and Geraghty has made an important contribution to the analysis. However, the relationship between 'Colin' and 'Barry', 'Todd' and 'Karl' and a number of others are dramatic, and fraught with tension not only because of the threat from others, but the instability of the relationships themselves.

It is noticeable that the narrative ending for 'Colin' and 'Barry' is the latter questioning his sexuality and deciding he may be heterosexual. This is a common and common sense

discourse of soap lesbians and gay men, the construction of a relationship between a 'real' homosexual or lesbian and a bisexual or straight and easily led partner who later returns to heterosexuality. This discourse is evident in much psychoanalytic and sexological theory. Soap narratives are not coded as 'queer', so there is difficulty in reading fluid sexualities into the representations and dualism is re-inscribed. The threat of exposure and the confessional tone, is a reconstruction of 1950s lesbian and gay discourses. However, the readings by particular audiences may be within queer perspectives.

Soap opera for Tania Modleski (1982) provides women with vindication that they provide an important function in 20<sup>th</sup> century American society. The family is constructed within soaps as always in some sort of turmoil and women the support that ensures its continuity. Her assertion that homosexuality can "explode" the family structure is as relevant here as the examination of lesbian possibilities. The gay men are crucial in British prime time soaps by supporting the new 'family' of single women with children. They can be seen to be fulfilling 'women's' roles in soaps. Questions about women's roles as workers and mothers have been addressed recently in popular culture as selfish desires to 'have it all'. The gay men studied can be viewed as the ideal support, often better than women at caring and obviating the need for heterosexual men to be more helpful and take more responsibility for childcare and running a home. This is the acceptable representation of gay men in soaps and an alternative reading to Modleski's supposition that homosexuality could explode the soap family structure; instead gay men can be seen as the family's vital support. Recent developments support this further. 'Sean' in *Coronation Street* in 2007 is donor and father to a single woman's child; he is shown as panic stricken but wanting to be responsible and a new family structure is created. Civil Partnerships have brought LGBT issues into the mainstream and out of the confessional. This storyline problematises gay relationships by placing a heterosexual woman in between the gay men and charting a gay man's desire for fatherhood. Changes in representations are visible; in 2007 'Sean' in *Coronation Street* and 'Paul' in *Emmerdale* are not frightened of discovery and are completely out about their sexuality. The 'closet' is no longer the main discourse for gay representation. Far from disrupting

heteronormativity, they support and complement it. Continuity is provided in their role as gentle and caring and the problematic is their involvement with men who appear heterosexual and are bisexual. It is the latter's secrets which are about to be exposed. Bisexuality is the threat; the bisexual men are represented as dishonest and hurting women, while the gay man is naïve in his vulnerability to desire.

The detail in Hobson's work (1982) is also useful because much of the theoretical work on soap opera does not detail production at the level of directors and scriptwriters, and the crew who work on the programme. Her access to them provides knowledge of interventions by audiences, and other influences on narratives. Production values, pressures of deadlines, competition with other channels and programmes, are made visible within the narratives of the production team.

The interventions of feminisms and queer texts on lesbian gay bisexual and transgender representations in the British prime time soaps are an important area. Views on gender constructions and the effect on performance outside of the text is an area which Thomas identifies. Gay men can be seen to be constructed for the gaze of straight and bisexual women, gay and bisexual men. Lyn Thomas (2002) notes

However, perhaps the most striking aspect of his mode of talk about *The Archers* was the element of camp performance, which seemed to allow Ben to transgress at least some of the boundaries of conventional heterosexual masculinities. (Thomas 2002, p176).

The pleasure of audiences' readings which soap theorists have examined (Brown 1994, 1997; Hobson 1982, 1990), are relevant to *Coronation Street*. Before the explicit homosexual narrative some characters are coded as gay ('Norris') but not identified as such. The pantomimesque style is a suitable genre for the knowingness of cultural capital, and 'in jokes', raising the question whether the introduction of a non-camp gay man takes away some of that pleasure. The 'realism' code of 'Todd's' dilemma sits

uneasily with the exaggerated tragedies and comedic moments which make up the narrative of *Coronation Street*. 'Sean' (2010) however remains comedic.

Scopophilia and voyeurism is part of the pleasure for audiences. Young gay, conventionally attractive men can be pleasurable to watch audiences. Looking at the images is important for representations of both gay men and lesbians. The gender of the looker and looked at is however historically and contextually paramount. Images of women and women as objects are relevant for audiences. Lesbian representations have frequently been for the male viewer.. Gay male images have been associated with 'art' and with homoeroticism, assuming male and female audiences. Qualitative audience research would be of more use than the theorised 'interpellated'.

The contrast with lesbian representations is marked. The gay men who are the ones audiences are set up to sympathise with are unlike the lesbians in that they are supportive of women especially mothers with caring responsibilities. Audiences, especially women, are set up to like them. Representations of gay men in popular and 'artistic' culture have been more prolific. There are well known actors and writers in British culture while 'famous' lesbians are hard to name. A familiarity with gay men is more likely. As seen in the previous chapter, interviews with women who play lesbians (Leah Bracknell and Anna Friel) reveal discrimination against them as if they were 'real' lesbians. Violence against him and his friend are also revealed by Michael Cashman when 'Colin' is first introduced as gay. The 'ground breaking' nature of LGBT storylines has passed and there is now less attention given to gay male characters in reviews, while lesbian representations in prime time soaps are currently (2010) absent..

As with the lesbian narratives, the silence about bisexual possibilities enables the narratives to set up dualistic sexualities and ignore queer readings which may be threatening to heterosexual constructions. The way that lesbians and gay men enter soap narratives in this study is similar: their arrival or transformation from previous 'heterosexuality' is greeted with wonder and horror as though no-one has known a lesbian or gay man before. Their constructed isolation makes overlap and mixed



communities difficult and only partly successful within the later narrative. Strategic alliances as with other cultural issues signifying 'difference' are not within the frame of reference. 'Todd's' boyfriend 'Karl's' appearance in Manchester's gay village is an exception to this as he is seen as part of a wider group, but 'Todd' is not part of that. This is however a context of potential support which has no lesbian equivalent. Audiences are set up to see lesbians as isolated with no support; gay men slightly less so as the "Manchester village" signifies social networks. The social and cultural effect is to represent society as unwelcoming to lesbians and gay men unless they are very helpful in the mainstream 'community' and that there is little support outside of it.

The gay men focused on in this chapter can be read as representing a 'new' masculinity. The gallant behaviour is however mostly limited only to gay men, reinforcing discourses that gay men are different, and heterosexual masculinity insensitive and prone to violence. The soap narratives conflict with some drama and queer storylines; they mostly embody hegemony in terms of lesbian and gay issues and yet often have more feminist content and challenge middle and upper class superiority. Because they are nostalgic the challenge is muted. The confessional tone of homosexuality, as Foucault theorised, is a dominant discourse in popular culture and remains so in soaps during the period studied. Later representations in soaps are less confessional and problematise bisexuality; gay men continue to be sensitive and caring.

### **THE TRANSGENDER REPRESENTATION IN *CORONATION STREET***

The aim of this section is to examine the sole transgender character introduced during the period of this study with particular focus on the extent to which dominant and essentialist ideas about gender and sexuality are questioned. Previews, reviews and other intertextualities will be analysed with regard to how audiences are set up to receive and decode the scenes, there will be close analysis of a scene which caused much comment, reviews and intertextuality, criticism and arguments. As with lesbian and gay representations, theorists used include Foucault, Barthes, and Gramsci.

'Hayley' came into *Coronation Street*, the longest established soap set in the north of England, on 26 January 1998, twelve years after the first gay character and four years after the first lesbian. The context of the narrative in relation to other prime time soaps and 'soap wars' is noted in the *Times Media* here:

Soaps are now producing some of the most challenging drama on television, says Carol Midgley.....life in soapland has been tense of late. Viewers have seen the death of a meningitis stricken baby, a wrongful imprisonment, a confession of transsexualism, a surrogate pregnancy, a massive gas explosion, ..and a narrowly averted leg amputation. (Midgley 24.04.1998, *Times Media* p39).

The existence of 'transsexualism' is among a list of sensational disasters and the term 'confession' creates a code of 'guilt' and secrecy surrounding transgender issues, and can be seen to set up to the viewing in a similar way to the fear of exposure of the lesbian and gay characters. However it is placed as "drama" and "challenging". Soaps are seen as both worthy of attention and popular.

The style of *Coronation Street* is comedic and pantomimesque alongside its nostalgic realism, at times containing a minority of camp men who can be read as homosexual ('Norris') although overtly heterosexual within the text. 'Hayley's' representation and the readings available in reviews can sometimes be seen as challenges to and at others reinforcement of essentialism and dualistic constructions of gender, masculinity and femininity, and sexuality. Her earlier manifestations are as a pre-operative transgendered person and later as post-operative. Readings of her enable her to be seen as a man, a woman, a woman trapped in a man's body, and as a third sex. Confusion about how to read her became a major part of the narrative and reviews and thus she is variously represented as a gay man who desires 'Roy', a heterosexual woman, a man who desires women and as a lesbian. Her transgender ('transsexual') status makes her gender identity slip so that her past is referred to and 'Harold' becomes present; fluidity and boundaries of the body are framed. 'Hayley's' past brings her in touch with her previous wife who is then seen as confusingly representing a same sex relationship.

## Previews

The soap narrative does not describe 'Hayley's' transgender identity until she tells her potential partner, 'Roy Cropper' on 27 February 1998, although some audiences are informed in advance. The *Daily Mail* writes,

*Coronation Street* is to court controversy by introducing what is thought to be the first sex-change character on British television. 'Hayley Patterson', a timid transsexual awaiting the final surgery which will complete her final transformation from man to woman, will become ITV's latest weapon in the ratings war. The character, to be played by an unknown 27 year old actress, is the latest example of the Granada producer's efforts to spice up the soap by introducing a touch of gritty realism. (Judd. 16.1.1998, *Daily Mail* p37).

This sets audiences up to read the character and the narrative as controversial and ground-breaking and the character as frightened and old-fashioned. These readings characterise much of the early 'Hayley' narrative and responses, as with the selected lesbian and gay representations, and fear of discovery and negative responses from soaps' communities become dominant. The news that 'Hayley' will be attracted to 'Roy Cropper', a naïve, unfashionable train-spotting character who no-one else desires sets her up as strange. The preview describes the narrative as a ratings "weapon" and raises expectations that this will attract viewers because this is cutting edge, giving the soap a transgressive and more contemporary feel. Readers are invited to be part of this, to be 'in the know' and culturally enriched. As with the lesbian and gay characters, the producer claims an ethical aim as well, thus presenting this as a guilt-free spectacle, not merely created for sensationalism but to educate. The impression is given that 'Hayley' won't be a permanent character and this contradicts the previous claim, constructing her as a means to enliven 'Roy Cropper's' storyline. Linking her with him marks her as unthreatening; she is not going to desire more glamorous characters, and indicates that two old-fashioned and odd people can make each other happy. The article gives audiences key information: that the "final" operation is yet to happen, and that "the character develops

before we know she's transsexual". Placing 'Hayley' in a confusing place, she can now be read as male, female, transsexual, or a third sex, but not as a 'biological' man or woman and her identity is unfixed at this point. This contradicts the claim that audiences won't know about her 'transsexual' status as this is the topic of the article. Tension between public and private and problems of 'closet' concepts are made explicit. (Sedgwick, 1993). The article continues:

Producer Brian Park, whose new broom swept out some of the soap's more traditional characters, denied he was simply trying to boost ratings with sensationalism "The character came out of a desire to bring a new dimension to Roy's life' he insisted. "The issue has never been tackled before in a soap and we felt it was a challenge. We are approaching it sensitively". (Judd 16.1.1998, *Daily Mail* p37).

The article presents 'Hayley' as new, modern and groundbreaking, as in the early gay male storylines. The article explains that the part is to be played by a woman born woman and not a transgendered person, which can be read that the latter would not be acceptable or believable and challenges to this from transgendered communities may be expected. The actress refers to representing transgender issues as burdensome. The *Mirror's* preview has a more comedic tone throughout, which used a pun as headline "All change in the Street". 'Hayley' is, it continues "waiting for an op to become a woman. Julie, 27, who will be seen in the top soap in two weeks, at first did not relish the part. She said; "I'm short and pear-shaped. I've got narrow shoulders, a bust and a bottom." (16.1.1998, *Mirror* p14). The role is described as an undesirable one. The article makes the acting a worthy and frightening task, reinforced by the idea that the actress's shape is incompatible with a 'real' transgender person. There is a universalising of male to female transgender 'shapes' which is seen as not 'feminine' and unnatural. A physical shape for 'Hayley's' ultimate manifestation is described in terms of what the actress is not; (Althusser, 1971) so the opposite of that description is tall, thin, broad shouldered, no bust and no bottom. An essentialist, particular male shape is described as 'Hayley's' ideal appearance. This is playfully presented; audiences may be tricked and this is both

fun and deception. Referencing dressing up and masks, a narrative of drag is a possible reading: a woman playing a pre-operative transsexual who may be a man, who is to become a woman.

The episode in which 'Hayley' describes her identity and her physical stage within transgender surgery was transmitted on Valentine's Day, 28 February 1998. She tells 'Roy' because he desires her and he will find out. Her character is an ethical one and telling the 'truth' is an integral part of that. Audiences are set up to understand that she has to tell him but that she would anyway, two opposing narratives but which form part of her code. Previews of the episode make light of the revelation without stating it precisely although much had been written about this event. The *Daily Mail* refers to it mildly as a "surprise" which is anticlimactic, and a church reference is comedic, blunting the power of the church to forbid, at this time, any kind of union not based on biologically born sex and heterosexuality.

The big surprise of the week is on Friday, when newcomer 'Hayley' has a surprise revelation for 'Roy'. Without giving the game away, let's just say that he won't be booking the church just yet. (Jaci Stephen 21.2.1998, *Daily Mail* "Soapwatch Weekend", p35).

The writer of the preview adopts an ironic tone for all her soap reviews; it is not that 'Hayley' is singled out. That the issue is a serious one for transgendered people is not addressed here and the viewpoint is 'Roy's'. One week later the preview is more detailed.

Poor old 'Roy'. He pulls a woman for the first time in his life and she turns out to be someone who is 'not a female by birth but by choice'. 'Hayley' is the first soap transsexual, which is something of a comfort for those of us who were beginning to think she was from the planet Zog. The whole thing throws 'Roy' into a bit of a depression on Sunday, but on Wednesday 'Alma' proves a sympathetic listener when 'Hayley' opened her heart to her. It's opening those

high-necked blouses that is going to be the difficult bit but then as 'Roy' has confessed to never having been intimate with a woman he could find an army of frogs nesting there and be none the wiser. (Jaci Stephen 28.2.1998, *Daily Mail*, "Soapwatch Weekend", p25).

The writer constructs transgender as the explanation for odd behaviour which 'Hayley' is seen to display. There is no sense of what the experience is like for 'Hayley' as this is from the heterosexual 'Roy's' viewpoint; 'Hayley' is othered. Locating her with strangeness makes her a 'freak', which the character manifests in terms of sincerity and naivety. This contrasts with ironic delivery and deviousness, which most of the other characters in this soap, except 'Roy', display at some time. "High necked blouses" signify part of 'Hayley's' character, nun-like and old fashioned, but she doesn't have a 'real' woman's body yet so she is seen as split, in her identity and how audiences can view her. The matter of 'Hayley's' body is a mystery to audiences and to 'Roy' who doesn't appear familiar with any. An "army of frogs" refers to witches and curses, and the disturbing otherness of the transgender body, grotesque and contrasting with the goodness that 'Hayley' embodies. There is a contrast between 'inner' and outer' identities, not performative but essentialist.

The Close Reading of the scene in which 'Hayley' tells 'Roy' she is a 'transsexual is in Appendix 2.3

### **Analysis of Close Reading**

The two are seen in the context of the heterosexual matrix. Two seduction scenes are featured around 'Roy' and 'Hayley'; one reciprocated and threatening to a stable relationship, the other unreciprocated and within a non-nuclear family. 'Roy' and 'Hayley' contrast with the deviousness and seduction elsewhere: for example 'Sam's' behaviour is set up to make us see her as villainish for deceiving her partner. 'Fiona' is hard to 'Steve' and he is trying to be a good carer to the baby. 'Maxine' has earlier expressed support to 'Fiona' and then leaves her to cope. None of them can be trusted,

especially the women. Again it is the woman who defines the theme, however. 'Hayley' takes control.

'Roy' is earnest about his dinner preparations and there is never any hint of him being dishonest or devious. 'Hayley' has a secret but cannot keep it from 'Roy' because her character would not actively deceive (although she has had to keep her transgender status from the rest of the community; she cannot help but be read as guilt-ridden and open to ridicule and violence). Desire in this context is a challenge to heterosexual readings. 'Hayley' explains she was once physically a 'man'. She can be read as a man or a woman and her desire for 'Roy' read as homosexuality. She can equally be read as a heterosexual woman behaving 'normally'. We do not see her desire however; she is the recipient of Roy's desire and we see only his for her. A third sex is a possible reading, although this is not so easy when the man/woman trope is continually referenced. Audiences are set up to read her as a man, then a woman, then a man and so on. This oscillation can be seen as a challenge to biological sex and gender determination; a woman in a man's body is not reducible to biology. There is a dualism here however: gender must be either one or the other; desire is then explicable in terms of gender identity which is heterosexual. It is only because of desire that the 'truth' will come out. Bodies must be 'normal' for gender behaviour; 'Hayley' must explain herself. If she had not desired 'Roy' the need for 'outing' would not be there. Again the idea of being 'out' or 'in' the closet is a key concept (Sedgwick 1991) and can be used in soaps to reveal secrets to individuals while 'outing' the person to entire audiences. This creates cultural capital (Bourdieu 1993) for audiences 'in the know'.

The clothes and styling of both of the characters signify conventionality and restrictions. They wear old-fashioned clothes and these two appear old compared to the rest of the characters in this episode. They are coded with bad fashion sense and out of touch with modern life. This sets them up to be comedic as with the other older characters; this contrasts with the serious way they approach issues and their conversation in this scene in particular. The characters are constrained and covered; they are not flirtatious but respectable. The polo neck sweater that 'Hayley' wears covers her Adam's apple, a

pronounced one in popular culture signifying an original male body when dressed as a woman. 'Roy's' clothes are unfashionable. The romantic setting is stage-like and leads to expectations of a declaration. What follows is not the usual romantic narrative; it is no surprise for audiences familiar with the previews however. Part of the pleasure of watching is having this knowledge. The shots are close-ups and focus on facial expressions so signifying intensity, seriousness and honesty. The close-ups reveal no dissembling although 'Hayley' looks away before making her identity explicit, signifying guilt and fear of rejection. When she tells him, "I mean I'm not a female by birth 'Roy'...but by choice" there is a close up on 'Roy'; she has her head on one side, which makes her look child-like and vulnerable. We see 'Roy's' dismay and the attempt to reconcile her identity for his comfort; at the same time she shows that she is brave and will go to extreme lengths to get what she wants, in this case drastic surgery. These characteristics are part of 'Hayley' to date. They are often seemingly incompatible, making her conventional, timid and polite, yet capable of heroic or reckless acts. These include rescuing 'Wayne' from cruel parents and running away with him in August 2001, and trying to take 'Tracey's' baby in 2004 after 'Tracey' had lied about having sex with 'Roy'. The earlier appealing 'Hayley' was arguably more acceptable to audiences and she needed to have a sympathetic style.

### **Reviews and Intertextuality**

As with reviews and articles of lesbian and gay soap representations, there is an interpretation of 'otherness' as overwhelming 'norms' and 'going too far', seeing 'political correctness' as in opposition to the popular imagination.

Last week I caught up with *Coronation Street* for the first time in ages. I didn't expect plots to centre around the price of warm stout and worries over the racing whippets' cystitis but I was still surprised to find Sunday evening at the Rovers no longer responding to *Songs of Praise*, but to the lurid details of a harpie's sex change operation. There was, I read later, a complaint from the transsexual lobby.



'Corrie' was apparently guilty of wrongly portraying the character as a 'gender bender' figure of fun. Personally, I could not keep a straight face as one 'Hayley Patterson' struggled to tell her flummoxed boyfriend that she was singing from a different song sheet. But the portrayal of sexual minorities in mass audience soaps is now considered essential if not obligatory. It's deemed 'everyday life' by the high priests of good taste who write the scripts. (Dobbi, 8.3.1998, *Mail on Sunday*, p10).

The article contrasts the transgender storyline with imagined nostalgic 'reality' of the show's narrative code, making the 'Hayley' story appear more dramatic. Describing her as a "harpie" and the operation "lurid" is in opposition to the conventional 'woman' audiences are set up to be sorry for. The "transsexual lobby" is dismissed because the performance is comical and the article is set within a discourse of soaps being controlled by left wing ideologues. *The Mail on Sunday* says:

It was inevitable that gorgeous 'Samantha' and hunky 'Chris' would end up together in *Coronation Street*, as happened last week, and the stage also seemed set for nerdy 'Roy Cropper' to have his unworldly way with 'Hayley Patterson'. (Viner 8.03.1998, *Mail on Sunday*, p4).

This review does not differentiate between the two couples except in terms of style, until the reader is reminded that 'Hayley' was a man. The readings seen in the reviews of the episode under discussion contain confusion and contrasting discourses. 'Hayley's' innocence and sincerity cannot be reconciled with gender and body confusion; she is seen to be hiding something monstrous. There is some admiration for the storyline and the acting. The review continues:

Sex between them would have been like two anoraks getting their zips tangled, and it was enthralling to watch 'Roy' close in, only to find out in the nick of time, that 'Hayley' was born 'Harry'. I don't know how thrilled the all-feminine Julie Hesmondhalgh was to be cast as a male to female transsexual, but she is

absolutely brilliant as 'Hayley', matched all the way by David Neilson as 'Roy'. Helpfully, the writers have been on cracking form, too, and 'Roy's' bewildered response to the revelation "I don't like talking about things I don't understand. I'm interested in stamps and aircrafts and trains; I sort things into columns. I like lists" was immaculately in character. On the other hand, it seems out of character for *Coronation Street* itself to feature a transsexual storyline. *Brookside*, yes. *EastEnders*, maybe. But just as there's a little bit more to 'Hayley' than meets the eye, so there is to Corrie. (Viner 8.3.1998, *Mail on Sunday* p4).

The 'femininity' of the actress is seen to be at odds with male to female transgender issues, as though her own femininity is questioned. However the writer reevaluates *Coronation Street* and pronounces it changed. Readers can imagine the competition between soaps for ratings has been won by this soap. A radical moment has happened yet there is the 'two anoraks' metaphor: the two characters are from the past while confronting a postmodern dilemma. These two discourses re-appear in the readings of the text; they are irreconcilable yet enable 'Hayley' to be acceptable to the community in the soap, reviewers and some audiences. There is an absence of engagement with identity politics which would examine the complexities of the issue but would not have the comedic effect. The situation is viewed within a discourse of dualism and essentialism, thus cross dressing and bedroom farce can be the referents. They are, because cast as 'older', placed within comedy and any sexual performance becomes farcical.

It's good news that 'Roy' has forgiven 'Hayley' for being a man (if you haven't been following it give up now), and on Monday he and 'Hayley' enjoy a foursome with 'Gail' and 'Martin' at the café. It will be a great moment if and when they break 'Hayley's' news to 'Gail'. Heck, she can't accept that her son's a red-blooded male; goodness knows how she'll react when 'Hayley' produces her jockstrap. (Stephen 14.3.1998 *Daily Mail*, "Weekend Soapwatch" p25).

Signifiers of masculinity such as the jockstrap are 'Hayley's' 'natural' referent as 'she' is really a 'he'. 'Hayley' is referred to as masculine in many of the previews. These are comments and not reflected in the soap narrative; they go against the efforts of scriptwriters' attempts to engage with the desire for a 'woman's body' and take extreme and out of place signifiers of masculinity to create farce and tension. Julie Hesmondhalgh's interviews construct a discourse of a noble attempt to challenge prejudice at personal cost; her own 'femininity' put at risk. Headlined "I'm proud of my Street sex-swap role... it's helping to beat bigotry" one article continues

When actress Julie Hesmondhalgh was told she had been chosen to play a transsexual in the most sensational storyline in soap history she could have been forgiven for feeling a bit miffed. What woman likes to be told she'll be playing a woman who is actually a man but who dresses up as a woman? But for the struggling actress, who just a few weeks before was working as a cleaner and behind the bar in a London pub, the role of 'Hayley Patterson' was a dream come true. "I wasn't the least bit insulted they cast me as a man" says Julie – who looks 10 year younger and 20 times prettier than her screen character. "I don't have delusions of grandeur about the way I look. But I DO know I look like a woman so it really wasn't a problem for me." (Malone 8.3.1998, *Sunday Mirror* p24).

The emphasis on normality and 'real' women help to distance her from the role and to give the producers of the soap an ethical intention. The role is seen as an opportunity but the comparison with being a cleaner makes it a doubtful claim. Being a cleaner is seen as the lowest form of work, re-inscribing class, gender and cultural hegemony. Later in the article reference is made to "Britain's Transsexual Lobby" and criticism of the 'portrayal'. The actress denies the claim that 'Hayley' is made a 'figure of fun'. She cannot however control the way the soap narratives place older people and there is an inevitable comparison with the farce of 'Derek' and 'Pauline' in *EastEnders*.

Hesmondhalgh goes on to explain, "It's always been my dream to play a character in a popular soap that carries this kind of responsibility, the kind of role that makes people

think and maybe changes their attitudes. Someone even said to me the other day that their ten year old son and his friends couldn't talk about anything else, and that's fantastic." (Ibid) Here it would have been fruitful to have known how their talk was framed. There is acknowledgment of the criticism that 'Hayley' should have been played by a transsexual/transgender person and the response Hesmondhalgh makes re-inforces prejudice by describing it as inevitable and goes on to generalise about transsexual people.

But we wanted the character to live and breathe a bit so that people could get to know her without prejudice. We didn't want people to be fearful of her for the wrong reasons. Even before I got this part I had total empathy with transsexuals.....All the transsexuals I've talked to are strong, gentle, calm people, and they wanted this issue to be tackled on television because they thought a sensitive portrayal of their predicament might help. If they want to know what I think about them personally, I have always believed that as long as people aren't harming anyone else, they should have the freedom to live their own lives. (Malone 8.3.1998, *Sunday Mirror* p24).

The reviews are frequently admiring of the producer and the actress and confused about gender identity, using humour and irony as a way of distancing the discomfort and confusion, and also discriminating against women and transgendered people. Titled "Was it worth it chaps?" the article defines male to female transgender people as male:

The issue of transsexuals has received such sympathetic media coverage. The relationship between 'Roy Cropper' and 'Hayley Patterson' in *Coronation Street* has done a lot to raise public consciousness - and a BBC2 documentary offered a sensitive look at Councillor Rosalind Mitchell, New Labour's first serving transsexual politician. But while I can see why someone like Dana International (winner of this year's Eurovision Song Contest) might have felt like 'a woman trapped in a man's body' I am not convinced about Rosalind or 'Hayley'. I'll be accused of appalling insensitivity, but who would want to go through all that

surgery, emotional turmoil and public humiliation...only to come out looking like a cross between Jo Brand and Ann Widdicombe? (Gordon 12.7.1998, *Mail on Sunday* p39).

Ideals of femininity as predominantly about sexual attraction are here both sexist and ageist. Male to female transsexual people in the popular imagination are supposed to desire to be ultra 'feminine', and often confused with transvestites in appearance. Serano (2007, p41) explains that film and other media representations often reinforce this and desire to 'capture trans women in the act' of creating femininity. 'Hayley' is a challenge to this view, but often judged as not successful as a 'woman'. The tension appears in many reviews; the representation of 'Hayley' is frequently measured against an ideal of white femininity or a transsexual who is seen as unconvincing as a 'woman' and is found inadequate in relation to both. 'Hayley' is seen an unconvincing transsexual because she is too 'womanly' but not 'attractive' enough as a 'real' woman, only managing to attract the most old fashioned and pedantic male character. Femininity is judged by successful attractiveness in the male mainstream gaze.

'Hayley' became an established character in the soap and less was written about her after the opening dramas. The storylines became less explosive until later in 2001 when she wanted to adopt an abused child, ran away with him (described as kidnap) and visited her ex girlfriend, a scene which was re-read as lesbianism. In the first year of her manifestation the reviews commented on tragedy as well as comedy, but also the missed opportunity to cast a 'man' in the role. The issue of 'passing' became meaningful for lesbian and gay representations and of actors wanting to distance themselves from the role. (Friel and Cashman's earlier silence about being gay) There was not a popular debate about 'real' lesbians and gay men being more appropriate however. Desire can be viewed as able to be performed convincingly while gender, so identified with the body, is seen as fixed and obvious.

So why do I feel guilty for enjoying it so much? Soaps handling of social issues mustn't be a cop-out, that's why. It's exploitation, not illumination, if the whole

thing is played for laughs - which this is. The problems of 'Hayley' (ne 'Harold') are real. There are 20,000 transsexuals in Britain, for goodness sake, so she should have been played by a real man. (Kingsley 15.8.1998, *Daily Mail* p25).

The naming of a 'real man' and not a transgender woman to play the part illustrates the confusion of readings of gender identity, bodies, and transgender. Signifiers of masculinity are seen to be necessary for a 'truthful' representation. It is also representative of a view that there would be no transsexual actors capable or willing to play the role. The same article represents older viewers as barely able to accept the 'reality' of transgender and as cocoa drinking bigots.

Actress Julie Hesmondhalgh is trying valiantly to portray awkwardness. But she is femininity itself. No big feet, bony elbows, hints of facial stubble under make-up or the hard-to-lose male ways of walking and sitting. The producers could have created the small shock they wanted (without putting older viewers off their cocoa) if they' placed a young, slightly built actor to play 'Roy's' girlfriend. (Kingsley 15.8.1998, *Daily Mail*, "Life's a drag", p25).

Older audiences are not addressed directly but othered. They are assumed to be easily shocked and old fashioned with no knowledge of transgender issues.

Issues for transsexuals were brought into popular discourse because of 'Hayley' and this created a link for writing about current issues but also reinforced fear and secrecy. A transsexual was thrown out of a women's meeting of the Labour party and 'cold-shouldered' by some men, the article explains.

'Hayley' in *Coronation Street* would be wise to keep her sex change a secret. People can be very unsympathetic about that kind of thing as real life transsexual Rosalind discovered in *Home Ground* (BBC2). The documentary showed the heartache behind the bra and the bravado. (Purnell 8. 7.1998, *Daily Mirror* "TV Review", p24).

The same reviewer writes in comedic code about 'Hayley'. The ease with which both tragedy and comedy codes are used indicates the ways that audiences are set up to see her. It seems difficult to sustain a serious approach to 'Hayley' as an older and old-fashioned character, without using irony and humour, creating a distance between discrimination and audiences.

Lynne Jones, Labour MP, is named in a *Daily Mirror* news article. "*Coronation Street* chiefs were praised in the Commons yesterday for their 'sensitive' portrayal of a sex-change character. Labour MP Lynne Jones hailed the soap for its depiction of transsexual 'Hayley'...Dr Jones urged the government to guarantee transsexuals full civil rights." (Bird 21.10.1998, *Mirror News* p21). The tone is serious and contrasts with the reviews; government business is treated with respect. Tragedy is the code for describing civil inequalities, individualising 'Hayley's' 'plight':

MPs in Real Life Plea Over *Street* 'Hayley's' Heartache: The plight of *Coronation Street's* 'Hayley Patterson' has prompted MPs to call for equal rights for transsexuals. Ten MPs have tabled a House of Commons motion, urging ministers to give transsexuals full civil rights including being allowed to marry. (Bird 21.10.1998, *Mirror* "News", p21).

'Hayley' becomes the accepted face of 'transgender' and as an eccentric individual until she breaks out of the enclosed relationship with 'Roy' and acts out other taboos in public which require legal recognition: getting married, rescuing an abused child, wanting to adopt. 'Hayley' cannot be a mother. Reviews describe it in terms of horror: "*Street's* fear as sex-swap 'Hayley' adopts a child" (Roberts. 19.5.1999, *Mirror* p17), and a letter from a viewer finds the discourses of transgender adoptions, and *Coronation Street's* narrative code incompatible. "Married couples who wish to adopt find it very difficult, never mind a woman who used to be a man, living with another man who is a weirdo himself. (Roy is strange). Corrie must get back to its roots - the sooner the better." (Hall 26.9.2000, *Mirror*, "Features"). The confusion of 'Hayley's' gender is never fully resolved within

the text, giving reviewers an opportunity to reinforce 'Hayley's' masculinity. Headlined "What a Gay Day" Stewart reads this as homosexuality.

Meanwhile, it became obvious that even a few tons of hot tar won't hold 'Roy' and 'Hayley' together..... As if describing his partner as "more of a misfit than I am" isn't bad enough, 'Roy' then questions 'Hayley's' femininity. "If I'm honest then I suppose no, I don't see her as a woman". Needless to say, she's not very cock-a-hoop about that. (Stewart 2.09.2000, *Mirror* p21).

Transgender issues have become more visible in popular culture since 'Hayley's' appearance, continued existence and often acceptability as a member of the soap community. Campaigns for rights have been given publicity and at European level have been successful. The transgender campaigning organisation *Press for Change* became involved in the representation of 'Hayley', stating on their website that their initial critical approach was changed after consultation with the production team. In 2006 the website shows letters from members of *Press for Change* which cover critiques of her representation and point to trans actors being ignored for the part.

A television programme which features female to male and male to female transsexuals titled *Make me a Man* (Channel 4, 31.07.2002) treats the issue sympathetically and is trailed non-sensationally. The claim of one female couple who still want to be together is not so sympathetically presented; if they are to be re-constructed as heterosexual this will be more 'normal' in hegemonic discourse. A review in the *Independent on Sunday* is titled "Make me a man" and placed loosely and perhaps accidentally within a feminist discourse. It questions the meaning of gender by noting performances required to 'become' men or women.

If gender can only be defined in terms of whether you play with dolls, whether you talk about football, and whether you like farting, then gender itself begins to look like a kind of mistake - one made by culture, not nature. (Sweet 4.08.2002, *Independent on Sunday*, "Television" p21).



The review questions gender; if the performances required are simplistic and the labels automatic, there is a critique required to examine what gender means and if there is a reality behind the labelling. Complex discourses about transgender are created in popular culture and the representation of 'Hayley' can be seen as an early and wide reaching contributor.

ITV trailed a *This Morning* (9.9.2002) programme with pictures of two young girls with the invitation to watch and find out how they had become "two young men". The programme features them in the studio as young men, with their supportive mother, answering questions about how they had felt as girls (examples were tomboys, liked girls, and didn't like frilly dresses) and how they experience pre-operative and post operative interventions. The two presenters are polite, not intrusive, and the woman presenter flirts with them and says that any father (absent referent here) would be proud to have such handsome sons. Their mother expresses pleasure that they can get married and have a family. A 'popular' programme like this, which is seen to promote a normalising approach to transgender issues, is likely to change perceptions of some audiences. Gender ideologies are at the same time re-inforced or made explicit, and no discussion is encouraged about the conditions (living as a 'man' or 'woman') imposed by the medical professions and the power these have to ensure or deny pre-operative transgender people access to surgery.

## **Conclusion**

Popular discourses do not have the depth and questioning about a fixed identity present in some transgender people's own stories and analyses in queer academic writings. In popular culture there is also the construction of, and more taboo, a new 'other' 'transsexual', the one who does not 'become' heterosexual after surgery, but desires same sex and becomes 'queer'. Transgender people are placed in several discourses: of individual suffering and in need of help and sympathy, of radical campaigners who challenge gender and 'nature', as re-inforcing essentialist gender constructions. A 'transsexual' character in a primetime soap is a radical move, and one of the aims of this

thesis is to analyse how 'Hayley' and the *Coronation Street* community represents and attempts to resolve these contradictions. 'Hayley' has become part of the popular imagination and has brought campaigning issues into the mainstream. She contradicts other popular representations of male to female transgendered people (a man in drag, a theatrically glamorous woman) which have made her less confrontational and more conventional than other women characters. Her seriousness and old fashioned manners make her tragic and pleasant, helpful to all and capable of heroism. This tends to be for 'Roy' and for them as a family. She is 'maternal' and this makes her a 'normal' woman (sometimes more than the other women in the soap) and she encompasses both old-fashioned values and postmodern identity issues.

'Hayley's' appearance and lifestyle rather than biological age, which is never made explicit, mark her as older, like 'Derek', the gay man in *EastEnders* and 'Jean Crosbie', momentary lesbian in *Brookside*. Not being sexually active is 'normal' for older characters, and there is often comedy in their desire, especially older women seen as chasing older men for sex. Age is a factor in the representation of LGBT soap characters; while older people's sexuality is often unmentioned or comedic, older LGBTs are rarely seen as sexually active. 'Hayley' is problematised because of her desire for 'Roy' and the bodily implications of her pre operative state. They are going to see each other naked and have sex but it is not a part of their ongoing narrative once 'Roy' and most of the community accept her, and it is never made a spectacle for the audience.

Modleski (1979) theorises that soaps play an important part in (problematically) validating women's lives and their roles as carers within the 'family'. 'Hayley' has the characteristics which Modleski would see as being encouraged: selflessness, ability to see everyone's point of view, family values, subservience to her male partner. She provides a model of a loving family with solid values. She is a radical departure in terms of representing the 'other' and also the acceptable transgender figure "As a rule, only those issues which can be tolerated and ultimately pardoned are introduced on soap operas". (Modleski 1982, p93).

Geraghty (1991) argues that gay men in soaps are frequently used to educate the audience. Similarly 'Hayley's' narrative is informative about transgender surgery and issues of discrimination, including attitudes and legal issues. The soap community are tested and only the bigoted ultimately retain their hostility. This enables occasional transphobic remarks which can be debated and opposed by the more sympathetic characters, especially when new characters require educating. Audiences can forget that there is a transsexual in the community as 'Hayley' behaves like a 'real woman' and there is need for constant reminders; the default position is non-trans, and for 'Derek' it is heterosexual. Unlike lesbian and gay representations which Geraghty argued have the potential to 'reverberate' through the soap and question heterosexuality and the 'family' within the narrative, this representation has reverberated least to date. The talk about 'Hayley' has been limited; it is a narrative of 'otherness', transgender is not an issue which has been thought or read about by the other characters, and her existence has not caused anyone else to question their identity in a transgendered context. She is an alien and even more alone than the soap lesbian or gay man in her status, without peer support and with family rejection, yet popular.

Audience research has evidenced identification by some female audiences with melodramatic moments (Ang 1982). 'Hayley' although coded within tragedy and comedy has the potential to be identified with. Her melodrama is of the 'other', overcoming hostility and being mostly accepted if not understood. This would be meaningful for audiences, especially those questioning gender expectations and/or identity, although the solution of surgery as the only option within the narrative curtails and subverts questioning the terms. Research into soap 'talk' (Hobson 1990, Brown 1994, and Thomas 2002) is particularly relevant to investigations about the readings available to and possible identifications with 'Hayley'.

### **Overall Conclusions**

Soap narratives have clearly developed a range of LGBT storylines from the 1980s for a range of reasons - both liberal and exploitative. They therefore allow moments of

'otherness' that are framed within heterosexual discourses and so resist a perverse reading. The infinite structure of the narratives is suited to responding to audience views and ratings and can introduce transgression and equally restore 'normality'. Previews and articles about production of the soaps under discussion indicate that the emphasis on introducing lesbian characters is to increase audience ratings. The spectacle of 'lesbian chic' is the acceptable lesbian for representation: young, white and conventionally attractive. These are not 'butch' lesbians or lesbian feminists. The narratives contain the lesbians sometimes within codes of horror, insanity and usually confession. This necessarily inhibits reverberations which question heteronormativity. The considerable energy and interest created by these narratives often focuses on hiding and 'coming out', confessing and being accepted to some extent in the soap community. The 'coming out' performances illustrate the issues involved and the problems with the 'closet' as a philosophical idea. (Sedgwick 1991). The need for continuous performances of coming out and the impossibility of a final statement and action are made clear. The youthful lesbians are represented as childlike and often frightened by their desires. Intertextualities set audiences up to read the narratives as spectacles and guilty secrets, usually short-lived. Audiences are interpellated by previews, reviews and articles as shocked or guilty for watching lesbians being 'exploited' by misrepresentation. These audiences are interpellated as heterosexual and there is no awareness of pleasures of the text, for lesbian or wider audiences.

As with the lesbian narratives, the silence about bisexual possibilities enables the narratives to set up dualistic sexualities and ignore queer readings which may be threatening to heterosexual constructions. The way that lesbians and gay men enter soap narratives is similar: their arrival or transformation from previous 'heterosexuality' is greeted with wonder and horror as though no-one has known a lesbian or gay man before. Their constructed isolation makes overlap and mixed communities difficult and only partly successful within the later narrative. Strategic alliances as with other cultural issues signifying 'difference' are not within the frame of reference. 'Todd's' boyfriend 'Karl's' appearance in Manchester's gay village is an exception to this. This is however a context of potential support which has no lesbian equivalent. Audiences are set up to see lesbians

as isolated with no support; gay men slightly less so as the 'Manchester village' signifies social networks. The social and cultural effect is to represent society as unwelcoming to lesbians and gay men unless they are very helpful in the mainstream 'community' and that there is little support outside of it.

The gay men focused on in this chapter can be read as potentially representing a 'new' masculinity. The gallant behaviour is however mostly limited only to gay men, not the heterosexual characters. The heterosexual men in these soaps who behave kindly to women and not competitively with other men are represented as naïve and dependent. This reinforces ideas that gay men are different, and heterosexual men insensitive and prone to violence. The soap narratives conflict with some drama and queer storylines; they mostly embody hegemony in terms of lesbian and gay issues and yet often have more feminist content and challenge middle and upper class superiority. Because they are nostalgic the challenge is muted. The confessional tone of homosexuality, as Foucault theorised, is a dominant discourse in popular culture and remains so in soaps during the period studied. New representations in soaps are less confessional and problematise bisexuality; gay men continue to be sensitive and caring.

'Hayley' is referred to in reviews as transsexual; the term transgender and later trans has become used by campaigning and queer Groups and individuals to refer to anyone who lives as another gender to which they were born whether involving surgery or not. Within the *Coronation Street* narrative there has been no parallel development and 'Hayley' is not seen to be involved with any groups, conforming to her statement that she is a 'woman by choice' and placed in an individualist discourse. 'Hayley' is a contradictory signifier. There is a challenge to biological and gender hegemony and the previews and reviews show confusion about how to read her. She is seen as a man, a woman, a woman who was once a man, and her relationship with 'Roy' is read as sometimes homosexuality and at others heterosexuality. She is represented as tragic and comedic which trivialises the seriousness of much of the prejudice she faces. Her sexuality is linked with her transgender status in that the problematic is caused by her desire for a man. She must tell him; 'Roy' then has to deny her former self in order to

banish thoughts of homosexuality. The situation is resolved into 'normal' heterosexuality, yet 'Harold', her former self, is always there, to be hurled as an insult by a bigot in the community. 'Harold' leaks into the narrative and causes audiences to rethink, particularly now that 'Harold' has had a son. 'Hayley' contains 'old-fashioned values' and postmodern identity issues; the former makes her sympathetic and the post modern possibilities are usually subsumed by them.

Transgender campaigns have been successful in the European Court (the right to change the registered 'sex' on birth certificates and to marry) and television documentaries and written texts about male to female and female to male trans people have become more common since 'Hayley' was introduced. 'Hayley' has been a part of popular cultural transgender representations and has familiarised soap audiences with the existence of and some issues about being a male to female transsexual. However, like the lesbian and gay characters, although they are here in the soaps as a result of Campaigning and in this case some involvement with knowledgeable media lobbyists, 'Hayley' is isolated in the soap and has no transgender friends or support, making her vulnerable and always an oddity. There is no transgender movement or challenge to the fearful idea that transgender people are thrown out of their homes and have no networks, whereas kin and other networks can sometimes be supportive. (Hines 2007, p159).

The soaps under discussion have contributed to textual representations including previews, reviews and articles and part of the popular discourse on lesbians gay men and transgender (mostly transsexuality). Competition between soaps have created reverberations across rather than within narratives. This is not true of transgender characters; 'Hayley' remains the only prime time soap character. Developments since the period being studied have seen an increase in gay men, and less of an emphasis on confession and fear. Civil Partnerships are becoming an issue for them, and some of the threats to their stability come from involvement with outwardly 'straight' men who are hiding bisexuality. Bisexuality is arguably becoming less taboo, in that it is visible, but often signifies dishonesty.

The previews, reviews and the soap narratives themselves create a climate of “talk” and debate on the issues in the soaps. The gossipy tone of the texts creates carnivalesque and enjoyment; Audiences are assumed to be interested and to be able to pick up the clues and relate them to the episodes. Many older audiences are fans and while not always interpellated and distanced from ‘new’ and ‘action packed’ themes they are present and included in the ‘talk’ about soaps. LGBT representations are previewed and reviewed as shocking to older people (“putting them off their cocoa”, Kingsley 15.8.1998, p25) who are implicitly seen as unaware of diversity) and while they are known by directors and writers to be fans of soaps they are often ‘othered’ and homogenised in these texts. This thesis will go on to examine how selected audiences negotiate the LGBT representations and their many intertextual references. Because there have been LGBT representations for twenty years, this allows for a wider inclusive pool of participants to be researched (where researching one drama would narrow available participants) and this is further justification for the choice of soaps for research. A search of previews and reviews reveals a plethora of soap related articles and the references to soap episodes. Narratives are multi stranded and can be meaningful and then disappear, indicating the need in interviews for awareness of memory issues and space for prompts, storytelling and mutual support, to alleviate this potential problem.

## CHAPTER 4. CULTURAL AND SOCIAL RESEARCH

The aim of the research, as described in Chapter 1, is to investigate older people as diverse and active audiences of representations of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) people in television soap operas in the late twentieth and twenty first centuries. As demonstrated in Chapter 1, the older population of the UK are frequently positioned by a range of discourses as problematic, dependent, a 'burden', passive, infantile and largely asexual, but simultaneously and equally importantly, recent initiatives have sought to engage with them as more active consumers and citizens. Some current discourses begin to take a more critical approach to ageism and broadsheet recognition of more positive approaches to people living longer are welcome. "Our ageing world isn't a catastrophe. It's a triumph" (Williams 2009 p28) the *Guardian* headlines and the stress is on many older people not needing care. Many of the earlier reviews assume a conservative horror from older people to representations of sexuality, such as "putting them off their cocoa". (Kingsley 1998). Emerging discourses are complex and often contradictory frequently creating a 'new' younger 'old' who are represented as more active and critical, which challenges but also reinforces ageism by shifting the focus onto people of around 70 and over as opposed to 50 plus as less demanding and with multiple needs. It is the aim of this research to demonstrate that within 'older people' there are many voices and many views about LGBT representations and that older people change views in different social contexts; they show a familiarity with issues which are not reducible to age groups and that these are all evidenced in talk about LGBT issues generated from soap opera texts.

In order to provide evidence of diverse and critical opinions and discussions, the social research is organised to elicit (i) evidence regarding the critical responses of research participants as members of audiences and (ii) evidence of attitudes to non-normative sexualities through perceptions of narratives and characters in the programmes, and (iii) ways in which these relate to 'themes' identified in Chapters 3 and the participants' everyday lives. Different Groups of older people that can provide useful comparisons are selected and questions designed to provide life stories, histories and changing attitudes.



This chapter describes both cultural and social the methodology, ethics, research methods and analysis of data. Themes and issues arising from theorists of soap operas are examined in relation to areas of questions for Groups. Sampling strategy, rationale and access to Day Centres and Campaign Groups are explained and the variable access to these Groups according to professional networking and shared history and sexual politics. The two Mainstream Centres are a Drop-in for carers and former carers of older people in an area of East London, the other an older people's Day Centre in a South London Outer Suburb, and are coded EL and SL for anonymity. Three Campaign Groups are coded OL for the Older Lesbian Group, GM for Older Gay men's Group, and T for Transgender Group. Discussion of social research methodology and methods is on p.153.

In order to clarify the methodologies of cultural analysis and social research, the following discusses the relevance of 'close readings.'

### **Cultural and Social Research Methodologies**

As described in Chapter 2, television soap operas have been theorised as aimed at women, in the scheduling, context and the narrative structure and content, and in a broader intertextual context. Some evidence points to changing audiences and in terms of gender and age with more men and younger viewers. (Hargrave and Gatfield 2002) Soaps draw attention to the constructions and representations of 'everyday life'. They have large diverse audiences, there is much intertextual material and are talked widely about widely within work and social contexts. As Ang (1985) Hobson (1990) and Brown (1994) establish, soaps are important as focal points for sexual and social identities. Responses vary even in a single episode. Responses are further diversified by the style of engagement; Ang's (1985) research shows that women audiences of soaps may describe their responses as critically engaged and/or ironic while enjoying the pleasure of viewing either alone or with others, and that there are various ways that soaps are read; the structures (tragic, melodramatic, 'realistic') of the genre do not define the audiences readings and the responses vary; life histories, experience and intertextualities are some of the variables (Schlesinger, Dobash, Dobash and Weaver 1992), Ang, (1985, p61)

Brown, (1994) and Thomas (2002) are particularly relevant as they research the talk that soaps generate and the carnivalesque and negotiated responses of audiences.

This social research aims to continue these themes in relation to older audiences by exploring the 'talk' about soaps, the extent of variation to which the social identities represented by soaps influence their 'everyday lives' and how they respond to them. The group structures enable the views of older people to be discussed and negotiated and to provide challenges to views which place older people as fixed and unchanging. The qualitative research undertaken provides possibilities for participants to relate to narratives of other participants. Quantitative research on viewing figures for prime time soaps were according to the *Independent on Sunday* in 2002 *EastEnders*, 11m, *Coronation Street*, 10.9m, *Emmerdale*, 8.2 m, *Brookside* 1.5m. (Vallely, 2002). Figures are higher when there are 'controversial' themes (murder, incest, lesbian gay and transgender representations) in prime time and are starting points for further qualitative studies which are able to investigate meanings and perceptions. Here quantitative and qualitative can usefully be seen as complementary rather than oppositional methods.

Cowan and Valentine (2006) research the BBC over a period of 168 hours and conclude that "gay lives were represented positively for just six minutes", that lesbians are rarely represented and that gay men are acceptable only if desexualised. (Cowan and Valentine 2006, p6). Nevertheless they also conclude that many heterosexual viewers become aware of lesbians and gay men via television and that empathy can be created in this way. (Cowan and Valentine 2006, p6).

The Groups selected for research here continue an investigation into the extent of 'empathy' created by the texts, negotiated meanings and diverse responses of older audiences. As noted in Chapter 1, there are a range of Groups; one is made up of users of a tightly structured national voluntary provider, one belongs to a loosely organised Drop-in centre and there are three 'Campaigning' Groups: Older Lesbian, Older Gay Men and a male to female Transgender identified Group. Attempts to find an Older Bisexual Group were unsuccessful. The diversity of older audiences is expected to yield varied

responses; some have known and been familiar with LGBT communities and will have complex critical responses to representations.

### **Themes and Issues**

The research is organised to evaluate selected soap theorists' conclusions. As argued in Chapter 2, Ang's (1990) theory of 'emotional identification' and Brown's (1994) theorising of the carnivalesque (from Bakhtin's (1968/1984 development from Rabelais) and audience pleasures provide potential for active, varied and resistant readings. Brown (1994) theorises resistant, carnivalesque and active talk and Brunnsden (1997) researches the group discussions in a work environment which occur after the programmes have been transmitted. Ang, Brunnsden, Brown, Thomas (2002) and others illustrate from their research that soap opera audiences talk about storylines and themes, identify with them at times and use various reading approaches. They frequently resist and transform hegemonic discourses. Carnivalesque is defined in this thesis as Brown (2002) uses it, referencing Bakhtin's (1965) concept "to suggest that the making fun of role hierarchies and the status reversal that the pre-Lenten carnival involves can lead to a kind of empowerment for the people". (Brown 1994, p134) Resistance and laughter are key components; Brown explains, "Social practices for subordinated groups can be a mass of contradictions. Soap opera fandom networks acknowledge these contradictions, and in turn such contradictions have the capacity to provoke carnivalesque laughter". (Brown 1994 p134). The outcomes of cultural analysis and the themes and issues are identified as appropriate for group discussion and social research.

The introduction and incorporation of LGBT narratives bring into popular culture issues which had previously frequently been compartmentalised as 'special 'interest' programmes. The fandom of soaps indicate that audiences who would not watch a documentary programme about LGBT issues engage with soap narratives with these storylines; there is a compulsory engagement with LGBT issues for the soap opera fan. The analysis of this talk in the Groups and outside of them investigates some of the

readings and the possibilities of change that these audiences utilise in relation to LGBT narratives in the soaps under discussion.

As there were few lesbian and gay narratives in the periods being studied by the soap theorists focused on in Chapter 2, it was only possible for the theorists to predict the implications of more mainstream Lesbian Gay (Bisexual) and possibly Transgender narratives. Modleski's approach is relevant and worthy of investigation when she theorises that only "acceptable" issues are addressed in soaps. The possible acceptability of the lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgender can be investigated textually and intertextually in relation to these older audiences as well as the absence of bisexuality as explicit narrative. Geraghty's prediction of the transgressive possibilities of lesbian narratives within the soaps and audiences' responses will also be investigated.

The research methodologies discussed in Chapter 1 which are most useful for this project are those which use focus groups and semi-structured interviews, providing potential for discussion and probes of views and the situating of views within broader narratives. Addressing the issues alongside concepts of empowerment indicates a positive approach and acknowledges older people's contributions rather than needs. (Walsh and O'Shea, 2007). Researching older people's views is most relevant (Manthorpe, Moriarty, Rapaport, Clough, Cornes, Bright and Iliffe 2008, Iliffe, Wilcock, Manthorpe, Moriarty, Cornes, Clough and Bright, 2008), Gott and Hinchcliffe 2003. Research on older LGBT issues by the Group Gay and Grey in Dorset (2006) emphasises varied experiences the need for awareness and training for health and social care staff and need for social and support Groups. The research came out of discussion Groups and expanded to reach other lesbians and gay men. Theories of familiarity with issues and minority groups in promoting tolerance (Valentine and McDonald 2004, p20, Schlesinger, Dobash and Weaver 1992) are relevant to this project. These are discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

Themes derived from Chapter 3 inform social research into soap 'talk'. Older audiences are frequently not recognised or set up to be easily shocked, and heterosexual. They can be perceived as bigoted and unable to change yet rarely consulted about sexuality or

gender issues; these widely available representations provide an appropriate site for investigating their evaluations of these readings.

## **SOCIAL RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Sites for investigation**

For comparative purposes it is important to include groups from a variety of settings and which address the issues examined in the preceding Chapters. Older people who participate in formal Day Centres or loosely organised groups are required to access them. These stringent criteria are likely to provide a setting for members with less mobility and sometimes more 'care needs'. Noting the often complicated and long running narratives in the soap operas under discussion it is evident that memory will be an issue for all participants and that memories of the same characters or narratives. Some of this can be alleviated by the group dynamics which encourages narratives to be remembered by prompts and stories from life histories. Memories can be 'jogged' or the forgetting can be meaningful.

The views of participants in each Group of LGBT representations are investigated in the context of their histories and experiences, and in group settings which allowed for non directive structure, exchange and change of views, and narrative development. While the Mainstream Groups are both in more formal settings than the Campaign Groups, there is potential for comparison between them; the setting and structure of the South London Outer Suburb Group is less flexible than the East London Group and the areas have different identities and political associations.

The Campaign Groups include people who have engaged in social and political activism for equality for LGBT identities. They provide comparisons to the Mainstream Groups and are important and timely contributions to research which has paid little attention to them; these older audiences are rarely identified or consulted about their views on media issues. The selection of a range of Groups for comparative purposes in this research

project permits an investigation of a variety of responses. Group discussions enable change of views, so that the interviews are able to evidence challenges to the traditional 'static' view of older people's ideas, beliefs and lifestyles.

### **The East London Group**

British soaps have localities which construct a nostalgic view of geographic locations, and this is meaningful to audiences who know the soaps, their myths and histories well. Older audiences tend to be knowledgeable about their local areas, and *EastEnders* is an example of a well-known location with a rich, if violent history, fictionalised in a soap. The history of the East End of London, outlined earlier, is of myths both exciting, as illustrated by the nostalgic narrative of the Krays, gangster brothers well known in the East End in the 1960s for protection rackets, robbing and murders and glamorised subjects, of biographies (Pearson 1995) and a film 'The Krays' (Medak 1990) and comforting as illustrated by looking after 'their own' and the safe neighbourhood of unlocked doors. Parts of East London are well known as a working class areas, and for various historical events, many of them violent: 'Jack the Ripper' murders of female sex workers in Whitechapel in the 1880s, fascist movements' attempts to recruit supporters in the second half of the 1930s and local resistance to this, and gangster activity in the 1960s and 1970s. The soap *EastEnders* utilises these myths. The East London Drop-in is in a multi-cultural borough; there are, besides Bangladeshi and other South Asian communities, Jewish, Somali, Chinese and Vietnamese populations. There has historically been a large Jewish population in parts of East London, and in the last 30 years many have moved away and Bengali people have moved in. The previously 'Jewish' area in Brick Lane has been named 'Bangla Town'. One of these boroughs, Tower Hamlets, in mid 2006, had a lower proportion of older people than the rest of the UK, with over 80% less than 50 years old. (Tower Hamlets PCT Public Health Report 2007).

The Group meets in a community centre attached to a church and is broadly working class identified. The regular participants are local and appear to identify with the East

End of London, in spite of some background differences. The centre is a meeting space for many groups. The development of the community centre and the carers' support concept was a joint project between the former female minister of church and the local Age Concern 'Carers' Relief Service' co-ordinators. Close involvement by the researcher with the setting up of this enabled easier access and more accessible historical context. The Drop-in is now independent from Age Concern and funded directly by charity and church grants, although one of the original co-ordinators is on the steering Group for the project.

The structure is informal; the centre is open Monday to Friday and has a café run by volunteers, two older women who are also users of the services and former carers themselves. There are occasional speakers and ongoing consultations with the members, and day trips. Most of the members who use the café are white; Somali women come for massage and the other services provided but are mostly separate from this Group and meet in another room. This is partly caused by the café's pork focused snacks; (bacon, sausages) but to change the menu would have caused an open rift between the Groups and the co-ordinator. At the time of interviewing it appeared there was mutual tolerance with no overt prejudice, separation of the services being seen as a practical solution.

The varying structures of these organisations and Groups has direct implications for access. Access to Groups is affected by gatekeepers' views and motivations, the researcher's relationship with the Groups outside of the research and the structures of the organisations to which the Groups belonged. Gatekeepers are pivotal in facilitating or preventing access to research participants. Holland (2005, p4) describes "resistance from gatekeepers who thought that their club members would not be interested" and points out that they often need to be convinced first. This has relevance here: access is eased where organisers of these Groups are enthusiastic. It was also very advantageous for this project to be working with older people and to know campaigning groups and networks. However it can be considered that being in different relationships to the Groups and not being an 'outsider' to some makes for unequal comparisons. However being an older lesbian and also working with older LGBT Groups is helpful in gaining access to LGBT

Groups where 'trust' is a factor as Emmel, Hughes, Greenhalgh and Sales (2007) cite in relation to 'informal' gatekeepers and working with socially excluded people. Access to the East London Group was facilitated smoothly by the organiser who was keen on the research and was flexible in approach. This has been useful as Emmel et al point out, the relationship between gate keepers and specific social groups, especially those who may be socially excluded:

Trust is built through long-term reciprocal relationships between gatekeeper and socially excluded individual or group. The features of empathy, credibility, rapport, and the slow evening out of power relationships that have been identified by researchers as arising from using particular strategies to access hard-to-reach groups are all displayed in the reciprocal relationship between comprehensive gatekeepers and participants. Nonetheless, researchers who have gained access through the referral of a trusted gatekeeper may still be refused access because they use approaches similar to those used by formal and statutory organisations that are not trusted. (Emmel, Hughes, Greenjalgh and Sales. 2007, 9.5).

Knowing some of the current members of the Group and the facilitator enhanced the possibility that they would participate. Most importantly, the method of the running of the Drop-in was a loose structure largely determined by the members. There was a relationship of trust between the users and facilitators, confirming the arguments above. When they said they would like to talk, the date and time were fixed immediately with no need for further staff interventions or confirmation. The organiser arranged a room with settee and refreshments and was available if we needed anything.

### **The South London Outer Suburb Group**

The Day Centre is a large building containing a day centre, meeting space and offices and the local headquarters of a charitable organisation. Unlike the East London Group context, the area is suburban and the centre situated away from the main high street in a residential area. The houses appear to be largely owner occupied and the roads quiet. The layout of the building is of a large day centre with a reception area and offices above. There is a café and a large room with a dining area and a lounge. Most of the users on the day the interview was carried were white. 13.4% of the population of the area were aged over 65, in the 2001 census and 24,900 over 60 years of age in 2002/3 (CPA 2004). The



area has a large Korean population and other Asian communities. In further contrast to the East London Centre, the South London Outer Suburb Day Centre is accessed by older people from a wide area, many of whom are not mobile. Many are referred by Social Services. Council run and voluntary day centres for older people have in some areas become less accessible, based on referrals from social services or a health professional thus prioritising those most in perceived need. (DoH, 2002). Funding from local boroughs connected to service level agreements may indicate priority for local residents. This contrasts with the Drop-in Centre which was designed to be openly accessible and informal for carers and former carers of older people and its funding structure gives it independence from contracts in the form of service level agreements.

There was no visible support for older lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgendered people at this Centre, although Age Concern England (ACE), one of the providers of older people's Day Centres in Britain has a national lesbian gay and bisexual project and held a high profile conference in April 2002 called 'Opening Doors'. ACE is effective in acquiring funding and promoting national events but the local Age Concern centres provide varied services with local funding and few have lesbian and gay support groups. A gay male worker in the Day Centre was working with Polari, a London organisation which consults older lesbians and gay men on policy issues, and was keen for the researcher to bring up LGBT issues, albeit in the form of soap characters, with some of the Day Centre members. However, although he was instrumental as a gatekeeper in organising the interview, there appeared to be no awareness of Age Concern's work with lesbian and gay issues in the Group interviewed.

The South London Outer Suburb Group, being part of a structured organisation with a hierarchy was more complicated to negotiate a pathway, and to make intentions clear. The gatekeeping was more formal than the East London Group. Initially a contact was given to the researcher by a professional from another organisation for older lesbians and gay men. Contact took two months and this worked well, and there were four members of the centre willing to participate and talk about soaps. The course of the research was not easy, however. Arranging a return visit for one to ones was problematic; phone calls

were not returned and it emerged that the day services manager had left the Centre soon after the first visit. The purpose of the second visit had not been clearly explained to the participants- or they had forgotten. A one- to- one interview was carried out but disrupted by other users and a staff member. This was in contrast to the East London Group, where activities were decided by the members. The South London Outer Suburb Centre's overall structure was formal and appeared to be staff led. The episode illustrated the problems of working with a large organisation with inadequate communication between staff. These issues were a useful in a reflexive sense. They emphasised the difference between the two sites for analysis and exacerbated the memory issues of the members affected.

### **Campaigning Groups**

In contrast to the older users of the Mainstream Groups, place and location are less meaningful to the members of the Lesbian, Gay and Transgender Groups. Sexuality or transgender identity and age are the unifying factors; there are few local groups for older LGBTs and London wide regional meetings have more success in attracting members and secure more anonymity. The members of these Groups are more mobile than the users of the Mainstream Groups as they travel without assisted transport.

### **The Older Lesbian Group**

The Group has been running for 22 years. Although based in London, older lesbians come from outside of Greater London because there are limited venues for older women and the network is widely publicised on a website and through 'word of mouth'. The meetings are in an older people's Day Centre in central London once a month and are semi structured. Women take roles designated at the previous meeting, including opening up, running workshops and welcoming new women. The website describes the network as for lesbians aged 40 and over and as "not appropriate for transsexuals". There is a socially mixed group at the meetings. The researcher's involvement in the network is as an infrequent participant, overlapping with work commitments.

The Group discussion was held at the monthly meeting. Inside knowledge of the Group made access relatively easy although there is usually a waiting list for requests to run any kind of event. However two members had died recently and this created an atmosphere where light diversion was welcomed. It was followed up at the next meeting and there was a one- to- one at the home of a friend of one of the participants as she was not able to participate fully in the Group discussion.

### **The Older Gay Men's Group**

The older LGBT Group meet monthly at an LGBT youth centre in South London facilitated by a paid staff member. Members come from a wide London area. The Older LGBT Group was founded in 1997. The members meet in the main ground floor room; the room is informal with settees and comfortable chairs. There are older LGBT women and men at the monthly meetings. The Group is primarily a social Group with occasional speakers organised by the paid staff member, and appears to be less 'campaigning' than the older lesbian network.

The researcher's involvement with the Centre is intermittent and work related. As a development worker with older lesbians I attended the launch of the older LGBT Group, and had arranged and been arranged and been involved in the Association of Greater London Older Women's (AGLOW) performance workshop for them at the request of the organiser. There was therefore a good working relationship and air of reciprocity by previously providing a theme for their meeting and facilitating discussion, which created goodwill but highlighted the Insider/Outsider status of the researcher. Members of the older LGBT Group were invited to join a focus group at a monthly meeting. One woman and a few men were interested: one woman came to the Older Lesbian Group discussion and the focus Group consisted of 3 men. The paid organiser of the Group arranged for the researcher to book a room, and the former reminded the members at the previous meeting about the aim and the date. There was a two month time lag between asking for interested people and the actual discussion.

## The Transgender Group

This Group meets monthly in a Resource Centre for LGBT in north London. This was initially the most difficult to find as the researcher has no contact with transgender Groups except for LGBT forum meetings. The gatekeeper was encountered by chance at a consultation meeting between the Metropolitan Police Association and LGBT Groups and individuals. The meeting room is on the ground floor in part of an old shop front, and would not be recognisable as a meeting space from the outside. The participants are male to female transgender and one of their male friends is present. This is no age criteria for the Group although there were a majority of older people at this meeting.

The Group presented themselves as open and friendly and appeared to enjoy having speakers and new issues to discuss. Access and gatekeeping in this case were through networking rather than personal or professional involvement; the issue of trust as with the South London Outer Suburb Group had to be proved. The discussion was noisy and chaotic, good humoured and difficult to control.

**Table 1. Participants in the Discussion Groups.**

<b>East London Group</b>	<b>South London Outer Suburb Group</b>	<b>Older Lesbian Group</b>	<b>Older Gay Men's Group</b>	<b>Transgender Group</b>
All women White British Former unpaid carers	All women White British except for SL3	All women White British except for LG3	All men White British	Male to female and one male friend. White British
EL1 75 years	SL1 73 years previous paid employment	LG1 69 years	GM1 57 years	T1 71 years
EL2 85 years	SL2 79 years	LG2 69 years	GM2 over 60	T2 49 years

EL3 65 years	SL3 73 years West African; Methodist identified.	LG3 69 years, mixed race Caribbean British	GM3 67 years Labour supporter	T3 61 years
	SL4 in her 80s.	LG4 55 years		T4 66 years former university lecturer
		LG5 72 years		

### **Coding**

The speech is coded for confidentiality and immediate identification of the speaker and the Group. (Transcripts are Appendices 3.1 – 3.8) The Group names are abbreviated to EL. for East London Group, SL. for the South London Outer Suburb Group , LG. for the Older Lesbian Group, GM. for the Older Gay Men’s Group and T. for the Transgender Group. The participants re numbered within each Group.

### **Gender, Class, Age and Ethnicity**

The Mainstream Groups are all women; the only men interviewed are the Gay Men’s Group. There are men present at the Transgender Group but they did not participate in the discussion. The overall age range is 49 to 85.

The issue of gender is relevant for soap opera audiences and for older people’s Day Centre and resource participation. Life expectancy for older women is higher than for men (*Age Concern* 2008, p4) and there are consequently more older women participating in the activities. Soap theorists and textual analysis evidence the genre of soap opera as likely to be seen as ‘women’s programmes’, in spite of some ‘masculinisation’ of themes. This increases expectations that more women than men are interested in discussing them. Soap themes are expected to be of more interest to women or to be a more acceptable

topic of interest. The participants in the Mainstream Groups are all women; there are three women in the East London Group; and four in the South London Outer Suburb Group. The men who participated in the research are the gay men from the South London centre, and in a minimal way one man friend transwomen in the Transgender Group. The Transgender Group describe themselves: T1. the organiser of the Group, explains “I live as a woman, I’ve not had major surgery, I’ve ‘ad **minor** surgery”, T2. who regards [herself] as a “transgenderist. I like to live **female** but I don’t want the operation. I enjoy the fruits and benefits of er hormone therapy”, T 3., “post operative, since 1999”, T4., a former university lecturer, and T5. who is a male identified born ‘male’, a friend of the Group.

Within the introductions, the descriptions of gender identity and bodies are clear indicators of ‘new’ constructions of ‘women’ which do not depend on established body characteristics. Until recently, to be Trans was considered to require surgery to reconfigure genitalia and breasts to ‘match’ conventional ideas of ‘normal’ women and men. There is evidence of new gender identities which can accompany a range of differences rather than just ‘sex’ organs. This continuum of bodies and genders is arguably a challenge to the dualism of ‘male’ and ‘female’ bodies.

### **Class and Age**

The participants were encouraged to talk about their histories because of the range of questions and structure of the interview and this was helpful in foregrounding experiences and backgrounds but class can only be loosely identified. Occupation was not asked of any participants; it was identifiable in some of the histories and narratives and can be considered to be interesting in the context of the stories and the decision by them to name their work. In the Mainstream Groups, knowledge of LGBTs was linked to past occupation, in others it was in a leisure context.

While the geographical locations of the Mainstream Groups are placed within contrasting areas including a working class area and a less definable location, it was not considered

appropriate to ask the participants to define themselves in class terms. This issue was considered and rejected because it was anticipated that the question may cause argument and possible offence, and at the least a lengthy discussion. There was limited time and so the question was not asked, interesting and possibly theoretically useful though this may have ultimately been. It was not considered appropriate to identify them by class without their contribution. Thomas (2002, p179) indicates the problems of the interviewer defining categories for others. Analysis of the tapes/interviews arguably enables a definition based on life experiences and the use of language as a more useful indicator, in terms of accent and received pronunciation, language codes and paralinguistics (volume, pitch, tone etc) as indicators but still problematic. The contested categories of Bernstein's (1961) concepts of "restricted" and "unrestricted" codes were initially considered of use but class origins do not necessarily correspond with the position of participants in group dynamics in terms of expressing themselves or dominance or, in the case of the Campaign Groups in particular, in relation to prominence/high profile in the public sphere. Class comparisons are therefore complex as the main indicators are language or occupation if described. All of the East London Group have stories to tell which are contextually relevant and discussions develop; the quieter respondent is the least dominant in the Group discussion and reveals much more when in a one to one. EL1. can be assumed to have most access to middle class lifestyle and speech and illustrates her interest in reading and knowledge of equalities language. The interview reveals the Group as mixed in terms of class and all are able to describe broad life experiences which give depth to the interviews. While EL2. may not have worked in paid employment outside the home, her experience of 'Diamond Lil' and gay men is equal to EL1. who was employed outside of the home. The 'East End' of London is culturally diverse and these participants engage actively with it. The South London Outer Suburb Group is less culturally meaningful in geographical terms, and class is more unclear; SL3. is British West African and owns land in Nigeria; she is in a different economic position from the other participants and her background is culturally diverse. The experiences that SL3. and SL1. recount and discuss are varied while SL2. and SL4. have less to say and do not always hear the questions. Disability is an issue as well as class. The Older Lesbian Group consist of mostly women who have accessed higher

education (apart from LG5) and now have access to a middle class lifestyle; however they have no property or wealth and this is possibly linked to having no male partner or living alone. The Gay Men's Group is mixed; GM2 has a middle class accent, he is the most 'conservative' of the Group and is very critical of other people; he is however the most carnivalesque in enjoyment of *Coronation Street*. The Transgender Group is mixed and the dominant Group member has a 'cockney' accent which changes on occasions into a more middle class one. Class conclusions cannot be drawn from these examples; there are indications that experience is a powerful motivator for articulation of ideas but there is need for encouragement and one to one engagement with unselfconfident participants especially where there are others with strong beliefs and swift responses.

## **Research Methods**

The selection of qualitative social research methods, and the decision to select semi-structured interviews in a group context for social research aims is determined by the need to be able evidence changing views, perceptions of the possibility of moving away from a perceived consensus, sensitivity to political correctness, Group members jogging each others' memories, paralinguistics and 'talk' in a group about soap operas. It can be argued that both quantitative and qualitative methods are valuable for this research.

Anonymity can be argued to help elicit truthful answers to 'sensitive' questions. Group discussions may contribute to silencing of views. Maynard (1994) quotes from *Researching Women's Lives from a Feminist Perspectives*

A number of researchers have recently drawn attention to the ways in which the polarization of quantitative versus qualitative impoverishes research, and there have been calls for the use of multiple methods to be used in a complementary rather than a competitive way. In their chapter for this, for instance, Liz Kelly, Sheila Burton and Linda Regan clearly illustrate how this can be done to advantage in their work on child sexual abuse. They argue that using questionnaires produced more reliable information than interviewing, because it



allowed participants anonymity in revealing distressing and sensitive experiences. This indicates that it is no longer tenable for the old orthodoxy to remain. (Maynard 1994p14).

For some projects anonymity is productive. Responses are however not static; participants in this project changed views and shifted from what they thought was acceptable consensus, when other members became more open. Maynard's points are helpful for some topics and contexts while this project has aims which require that interview methods and structure are qualitative, semi-structured Group sessions with spine questions to allow for flexibility, prompts, interaction with each other and development and exchange of views. A 'tick box' questionnaire would not in this researcher's view give the time or richness to develop ideas and one to one interviews, while being invaluable here as follow ups, do not allow for interaction with others. Hakin (2000) explains that the strength of qualitative research is the validity of the data "if the individuals are interviewed in sufficient detail", (Hakin (2000, p36) and the weakness is that small numbers cannot be taken as representative. This is not an issue here as the outcomes will be contextualised as small Groups located in specific areas and with individual histories so that claims of being representative would be inappropriate. The one to one interviews in this project were effective in enabling participants to talk more freely and not be struggling to speak, and to elaborate and talk about 'controversial' incidents in their lives which they did not wish to voice in the Group. However, although others may also have had this reticence they did not signal they wished to develop it to the researcher.

The semi-structured design of the interviews relates to themes and issues arising from Chapters 2 and 3. The questions are designed to examine the perceptions of the Group participants of LGBT representations and the meanings they have for them as well as changing views made possible in Group discussion, in the context of their life histories. The interviews in this project use 'spine' questions and examine aspects of life histories, contexts of viewing, viewing habits, perceptions, identifications, inconsistencies and contradictions, moral judgements, use of language describing specific incidents and

episodes, and talk about LGBT narratives. The structure and style encourages time for probes and thought, so that participants are encouraged to remember past and current events. Memory problems are expected to be issues for some of them. Moreover, soap narratives are complicated and changeable and have been engaged with over many years. It is to be expected that reminders will be asked for and given. Asking questions which require long memories requires patience and support; it is not a one sided exercise and there are times when their memories are sharper and their knowledge of soaps wider and more in depth than mine.

Group discussions, sometimes called focus groups but in this case not as market research, (Stewart and Shamdasani 1990) are used to enable audiences to give views in a supportive and enjoyable environment. Semi structured interviews within small Groups have been used in research to effectively challenge myths and stereotypes and approach 'sensitive' topics in a positive way. These include "Using written vignettes in focus groups among older adults to discuss oral health as a sensitive topic", (Brondani, MacEntee, Bryant and O'Neill, 2008) "Challenging social myths and stereotypes of women and aging: Heterosexual women talk about sex", Gott and Hincliffe (2008) and "Nurse managers' perceptions of quality of life of older adult's living in long-stay care in Ireland -Is it time for a bill of rights?" (Murphy, O'Shea and Cooney, (2008) The group structure allows for peer support and breaks down power relationships between interviewee and interviewer where the latter in a one to one can have more control than is intended. The group structure and semi-structured interviews are therefore considered most effective in this project to allow for fluidity, multiple views, development of ideas and themes, and probes which can reveal personal and soap narratives, where participants can discuss and change views within the Group; there is potential for recording emphases of feeling, memories to be jogged by others, and carnivalesque. As Hakin (2000, p35) explains, group discussions "yield additional information as people react to views they disagree with, or the group as a whole develops a perspective on the subject". They are non directive and provide for probes and reminders so that they can be encouraged to remember soap opera and their own narratives. Opportunities arise for noting the

conversational context in which talk of LGBT in their personal lives occurs and their own experiences of LGBT communities.

### **Recruitment and Sampling**

Recruitment was carried out via known Groups and snowballing. Despite a general feeling of older people being “over-researched” (Holland 2005, p9) this topic was seen as fun and a break from serious issues in the Campaigning Groups. In all the Groups, participants were self selected on the basis of interest in soap operas. Groups were targeted with the criteria of older age, generally self defined but formally confirmed in the South London Outer Suburb Group because of the less flexible criteria of membership.

Each Group was invited to a broad discussion about soap operas and when asked for further details mention was made of talking about ‘relationships’ in soaps but not exclusively so. A decision was earlier made to present this as a general topic and not present it as a ‘sensitive’ one. Presenting ‘sensitive’ topics can cause problems with expectations, and LGBT issues, being closely linked with sex, can reinforce it as taboo. Jones (2005, p47) describes her decision to “frame the topic in ways that did not assume its sensitivity” when asking older people to talk about sex. Additionally it was necessary to compare views on all relationships, not just LGB or Transgender identity. The questions consequently were designed to encompass general views, histories and all relationships in the soaps. The LGT Groups were aware that one focus would be on LGBT narratives but not exclusively so. The Groups were small in number and informal. Additionally, the opportunity was offered for one-to-one interviews if any participant wishes it.

As explained earlier, attempts to find older bisexuals who met as a group were not successful. This is noted in this research as a notable absent referent and indicates possible future research focus.

## **Access and Gatekeeping**

The Groups were intended to be able to be compared; therefore there is a varying positionality which affected the tone and possibly the discussions. The researcher was an insider in some ways with the Older Lesbian Group although participation is sporadic and usually for work rather than interest. Feminist politics are multi stranded and 'insider' status does not fit neatly here. However it can be said that some 'insider' assumptions could be made with the LGT Groups and an understanding of issues of identity. The Mainstream Groups involved both insider and outsider status issues; the East London Group was more familiar and there was a history of being carers and older people's campaigning. The South London Outer Suburb Group was unfamiliar and making links with the two Groups differed, reinforcing the gatekeeping effect of new contacts.

Perry, Thurston and Green (2004 p135-148) have particular implications for this research in relation to researching non mainstream sexuality and the importance of management of the researcher's own ideology.

Access to the Groups was facilitated by cultural capital gained from work and familiarity with some issues of older people and LGBTs. The Group was made accessible by a colleague who showed interest in the research and was a mutual contact. The participants were unknown to the researcher and responded to the staff member's invitation to discuss soaps. This Group was conducted initially in a formal way since the researcher had no knowledge of them and it was clearer to them that I was 'the researcher'.

The East London Group was familiar to the researcher from working with them in the past and consulting them more recently on hospital experiences. This made access easy and perhaps involved a keenness on their part to be involved. It also highlights one strand of the 'insider/outsider' status.

Access to the Older Lesbian Group was eased because of knowledge and some involvement with the Group but presented conflict of interest initially; the researcher's

usual role is of participant and formally separating it to 'researcher' required explanation. There was an atmosphere of being consulted for research many times with no outcome and it was more difficult to gain trust; the topic was appreciated as 'fun' after initial misunderstanding. Knowledge of the formal statement of 'no transgenders' at the monthly meeting led to expectation of anti-transgender views but these were not forthcoming so the researcher's preconceptions about them were contradicted. This was illuminating and revealed various views which were not reflected in formal decisions made by a few.

The Older Gay Men's Group was also familiar as a sub- Group of an older LGBT meeting. Familiarity was again conducive to access but not knowing the individual participants was helpful here. In relation to the Transgender Group, as a non Transgendered person some of the responses to the researcher were polite and explanatory, becoming partly an awareness raising session for me. There were issues which she was more familiar with in the Lesbian and Gay Groups and consequently less explicit explanation. This was productive for her; perhaps repetitive for them.

This research notes the notable absent referent. The omission of interviewing a Group which identified as older bisexual reproduced the disappearing in the soap narratives. Attempts were made to contact older bisexuals but networking was not successful. Interest was shown by a group of younger bisexuals one of whom offered to ask her friends and colleagues for contacts but none were forthcoming. Support Groups in London for older bisexuals do not appear easy to find; there may be informal Groups which do not advertise themselves. It was possible that the Transgender Group had bisexually identified members but as this was not asked of them it was not a factor in the analysis. The bisexual invisibility in this research is an omission; future research on bisexual representations and older audiences would be an important contribution.

### **Rationale for Questions Structuring the Group Discussions**

The questions and probes were designed to elicit elements of life histories and to provide a context for the negotiated meanings of the audiences. They were designed to test hypothesis presented by soap theorists discussed earlier in ‘themes and issues,’ particularly whether these audiences respond differently from each other to LGBT issues and narratives and engage seriously and ironically, if discussion is generated after programmes, whether group talk in the interviews can create change and carnivalesque (Ang 1990) and how their own histories and experiences affect their perceptions. The age range of the participants was wide (49 to 85) and the Group discussions provided opportunities to address the ‘new old’ and ‘young old’ thesis that younger old are more critical and engaged with issues, or whether this could not be substantiated, albeit within a small sample such as this.

The Group interviews included questions about memories of campaigns and social movements, soap watching histories and habits, and views of all relationships in the soaps. The initial question helped place them in relationship to political movements and engagement with formal and informal campaigns. Questions about past social and political movements were considered relevant for finding out the perspectives participants use to view the world; past involvements within political or social movements help to provide possible links with views on current movements and discourses. Views on and engagement with campaigns for decriminalisation of homosexuality, feminism, transgender recognition are possible links to views on current issues.

The following questions were developed to elicit answers regarding the perceptions of all Groups of LGBT sexualities in soap operas. The research also aimed to situate them in the context of their own life histories. The first question therefore was in the past tense. The questions are in italics. The questionnaire noting ‘probe’ questions is in Appendix 3.9.

*What do you remember about the social movements/ political movements?*

*What did you think of them? Is there anything in soaps that reminds you of them?*

Questions about the length of time of watching soaps place the participants in positions of being able to remember earlier narratives and thus to examine their changing ideas about what is acceptable and taboo for soaps. The context of viewing is linked to whether there are specific narratives where friends watch together and how much is determined by residence and family connections. The talk about soaps and whether LGBT issues are addressed is an important part of the thesis; some anecdotal evidence had been circulated that groups of gay men had gathered to watch gay narratives in the 90s.

*When did you first watch soaps?*

*Which ones do you watch now?*

*Do you watch them on your own or with others? In the past?*

*How do you think that relationships are represented?*

*What do you think about how*

*lesbians*

*gay men,*

*transgendered people are represented?*

*Are they realistic?*

*Can you identify with any of them?*

*What do you remember about these episodes?*

Views about 'realism' and possible identification with LGBT characters were designed to evaluate the level of empathy and familiarity with LGBT people in their own lives and critical awareness; LGBT Groups were expected to be more familiar with some of the issues and to be able to identify or feel strongly if they cannot do so, with some of them. Probes were used to help remind them about narratives from their own lives, and to describe experiences of being, knowing or having knowledge about LGBT people.

*Having seen these episodes do you think they change audience views? If so how?*

This question was designed to elicit evidence of views on whether soaps should and can raise awareness, how much talk is generated from the LGBT representations, including with friends, families, work colleagues, and less connected acquaintances. Probe questions would reveal how much the intertextual material is noted and approved or otherwise. The next question was linked to this.

*Do you talk about the characters and storylines with friends, etc?*

*What do they think about them?*

An informal introduction was given before the spine questions; this helped to make the session less like a meeting and enjoyable. It was important to convey that I am a soap opera fan and interested in the participants' soap habits and views.

### **Narrative analysis**

Narrative was used to bring out the participants' life stories as they remember them and within the flexibility that the group setting allows. The narratives of their lives have resonance in the narratives of the soaps. As Wallace (1994) argues "social constructions ... are created and sustained through social interaction. Stories are social products emerging out of and shaped by the context in which they are produced." (Wallace 1994, p38) Ricoeur explains that "the narrative structures of history and of the story operate in a parallel fashion to create new forms of human time, and therefore new forms of human community, for creativity is also a social and cultural act; it is not confined to the individual." (Ricoeur 2000, p341). The questions enabled participants to tell stories about themselves; the soap narratives were remembered as storylines and the questions about life histories could be answered and represented as stories from the past.. This was effective in facilitating memories in context of the issues rather than dates and much of the 'reconstructed past' was theorised as influenced by and described in terms of diverse narratives. Narratives about their lives presented a challenge to numerical time as memorable events were frequently accorded more importance and emphasis. They could be recalled and reconstructed within more recent discourses.



## **Paralinguistics**

### **Transcribing from voice to text**

The interviews were taped, with permission from the participants and assurances that no-one would be identified in the thesis. Taping enabled closer interaction with the group and ability to prompt was facilitated with eye contact and close concentration, not easily achieved with note taking and later reflection. The recordings allowed post interview detailed analysis of the talk and interaction with others in a group; these could not be detailed in note form. Silverman (1993, p119) emphasises that the “tape recording and the transcript allow both analyst and reader to return to the extract either to develop the analysis or to check it out in detail”. Qualitative analysis enabled close reading of the language, narratives and styles used by the Groups. Most of the Groups were working class women and there was value in investigating the style of speech and interaction with each other. Cameron (1985) points out that many feminist studies have challenges assumptions of hesitancy and silences in women’s speech and reveal “a rich verbal culture”. (Cameron 1985, p158) The importance of the narratives (Ricoeur 1985) of personal lives and soap narratives and relations between them can be more effectively revealed and recorded by taping and analysing the talks.

Questions which arise relate to theories about women’s language or more specifically styles of speech. Deborah Cameron (1985, p56) writes convincingly of the tendency of some theorists including feminists to overstate the differences between men’s and women’s conversation style. The effect can be to reinforce rather than deconstruct dominant discourses. “In fact, it turned out on investigation that women’s attachment to the tag question could not be confirmed empirically”. (Cameron 1985, p55) Assumptions have been made about ‘gossip’, often assuming that it is a category of discourse, failing to examine a more interesting issue: whether the content and style is the focus, or the gender of the speaker.

However

If we understand female experience as unified, or if we write as if all women are oppressed in the same manner, and to the same degree, how are we to understand the differences between the life-histories of a middle-class, white woman and a working-class African-American woman? In a sense this is another instance of a form of analysis which pays careful attention to the historical specificity of language and recalls again Williams' comment on the relation between historical semiotics and cultural materialism. (Burke, Crowley and Girvin 2000, p141).

The paralinguistics revealed with recordings made close readings of the talk accessible. Pauses and emphases were evidence of hesitations and thoughtfulness; emphases were useful indications of intensity of feelings in all interviews and particularly marked in the Older Lesbian Group interview. Anger and irritation and mimicking of lines brought a carnivalesque quality to the meeting. Interruptions and talking over each other were able to be caught and made analysed. There was opportunity to examine the style of talk here; theorists have indicated the 'upward tone' on the end of women's sentences (Cameron 1985) and this has not been adequately addressed in terms of cultural styles rather than gender.

### **Presentation Codes**

( ) indecipherable

[ ] my addition

/ upward tone i.e. tag questions or not

... pause in speech

**Bold Type:** Emphasis in tone

### **Ethical issues, Research Governance and Reflexivity**

#### **Ethical issues**

In all social research, ethical considerations are crucial. This research was informed by the Statement of Ethical Practice for the British Sociological Association (March 2002)

informed the research. Middlesex University permission was granted . As Bulmer (2005, p45-57) points out, informed consent, anonymity, privacy , confidentiality and sensitivity in qualitative research are key issues.

Informed consent was given by the participants to full information about the nature and purpose of the research and showed understanding of the agreement; there were no signs of confusion. They were told that they could signal withdrawal any time during the interviews. They were assured that there would be no identification of individuals or place.

Consent by gatekeepers to interview, and from Groups for recording and transcribing the discussions was obtained on the tape and the tape recorder was visible at all times. The decision was made to tape the interviews so that eye contact could be maintained, there was less need for more and directive questions or interventions and to enable the analysis of paralinguistics which revealed the timing and intonations of the participants and clear interpretation of the contributions, as argued on p.170. Participants were asked if they wished to read interviews and final thesis but this was declined although some interest was shown in response to the suggestion of a return visit to present a summary of the research findings.

In the presentation and analysis of narratives indicating a shared geographical, social and cultural environment, all efforts have been made to anonymise the Groups' locations. Privacy was obtained by organising separate rooms for the Group interviews and there were no interruptions. Any references to an individual's personal experiences were unsolicited and are anonymised. Confidentiality was observed regarding individual interviews arising from requests for follow up interviews by the participants who did not wish to share with the Group, or did not have an opportunity to express their views in the context of the group dynamics. In the one to one follow up interviews there was a private space allocated in one instance; however with one there was no reminder or private space available and this was less productive, possibly because of this lack of space. Questions were formulated and presented with sensitivity to possibly contentious issues and

personal stories were treated sensitively. Encouragement was offered to those who were unused to groups, had hearing problems or were less familiar with soap narratives and needed reminding.

## **Reflexivity**

Bryman (2001) states that “researchers should be reflective about the implications of their methods, values, biases and decisions for the knowledge of the social world they generate.” (Bryman 2001, p471). Professional campaigning and personal aspects are relevant and affect the choice of the research process designed to be objective. The Introduction (p6) describes the researcher’s work experience and campaigning background and some implications for research. As a feminist, lesbian, and a member of staff in two organizations, a Primary Health Care Trust and Associaton of Greater London Older Women (AGLOW) a campaigning organisation which challenges ageism, there are issues of identity and different relationships to the Groups.

There are at least four dimensions which affect research standpoints in this research and confer both ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ status to the researcher through 1) familiarity with the environments of the Mainstream Groups from a professional rather than user’s viewpoint; 2) Campaigning history against age discrimination and ageism in a context with which the participants may not have shared, 3) lesbian sexual identity and 4) researching as a member of the ‘younger old’ category.

The choice of television soap operas as a focus for discussion influenced the self selection of the Groups (excluding the Older Gay Men’s Group) and this created an imbalance of gender and did not allow for male audiences to be equally involved.

Campaigning against discrimination based on old age has influenced the research and outcomes; there is a tendency to be over critical of research which does not emphasise ageism and which makes claims of equality. The research aims to elicit experiences and responses which are then analysed in relation to themes identified in the cultural theory.

Issues arising from the professional standpoint are discussed in the Introduction and in the context of Access and Gatekeeping. Ethical issues were raised on occasion by the professional 'insider/outsider' status. An example of bad practice (homophobic language) by a personal care worker was given by one of the participants in the Older Gay Men's Group. This occurred at the end of the interview and outside of the structured questions. He did not want to take this up with the provider and having described it made light of the homophobic comments by the care staff. This was an ethical issue about awareness and training of staff which was problematic to confront.

Identity as a lesbian feminist influenced the thesis choice because analyses of soap operas have been led by feminist researchers, soap operas have been derided partly because of female target audiences, and because LGBT issues have not often been researched in relation to soaps. Within much feminist movements and feminist research there is an "aim at equality" (Franks 2002 p3) which influences topic but also the analysis. Underlying the researcher's questions are assumptions of inequality which informs contributions and analysis. Sexual identity as a lesbian affected insider and outsider status. The issue of a 'lesbian and gay standpoint' is not without problems. It can be argued that it "enables us to question concepts which may be taken for granted in the straight world" (McIntosh 1997 p206) but there are many standpoints available within LGBT identities.

Membership of a 'younger old' group was notable in the the Mainstream Groups, who, being older, shared narratives of a historical period different from those of the younger groups.

## **CHAPTER 5. ANALYSIS OF OLDER AUDIENCES' RESPONSES TO TELEVISION SOAP REPRESENTATIONS AND NARRATIVES**

This Chapter analyses the selected older audiences' responses to LGBT soap narratives described in chapter 3, using theories and perspectives of soap theorists in Chapter 2 and comparing close readings with the participants in the five Groups. The main focus of investigation is talk about soaps. This will encompass diversity of views and may contain carnivalesque, (Bakhtin 1968) resistance and will be analysed to examine the possibility of LGBT narratives to disrupt hegemonic 'compulsory heterosexuality' of storylines. The Chapter is organised to investigate older audiences' awareness of issues, (for this reason the social and political events referred to in each Group are identified in the discussion of older audiences), responses to representations on sexualities in soaps, and talk generated from them. The areas focused on are active engagement with the text, intertextuality, recognition of melodramatic imagination, compulsory heterosexuality, encoding and decoding, the carnivalesque in group discussions, language use, and talk about soaps. Transcripts of the interviews and individual follow up interviews are in appendices 3.1 to 3.8.

### **OLDER AUDIENCES**

The varying histories and identities of the five Groups interviewed are described. Chapter 4 describes the Groups in detail; there are marked differences and this is most emphasised in the importance of identity and the area in relation to the users of mainstream services, and the contrasting importance of sexual or transgender identity with the Campaign Groups. Although the numbers are small there is an opportunity to challenge the idea of a singular 'ideal' of audience as well as the generalisations made about older people as a homogeneous group. This will affect their responses and ensure diversity. The BFI research finds audiences of domestic violence representations, "differentiated by life experience, social class and ethnicity, viewers interpret sexual and domestic violence, given scenes and characters, as well as entire programmes, in a variety of ways..... Accordingly, the viewing audience becomes several viewing audiences".

(Schlesinger, Dobash, Dobash and Weaver 1992, p164) Memory is an issue emphasised by the long running and forgotten soap narratives, and life histories which may not be remembered. As Chapter 4 explains the group structures are designed to provide prompts and help with remembering where common histories may have been shared.

Viewing habits give some indication of social contexts. The East London Group's viewing is a mixture of watching alone or with much younger family members, now or in their pasts. One of the South London Outer Suburb Group (known hereafter as SL. in the transcripts) speaks of her husband not allowing her children to watch. Most of the participants watch alone and so do not conform to predicted group or friendship viewing especially of LGBT storylines. There are more individualistic patterns, with older Mainstream Group audiences watching alone or with grandchildren and LGT audiences watching alone. None of the participants talk about watching with partners.

## **GROUP RESPONSES TO MEMORIES OF CAMPAIGNS**

### **East London Group**

The East London Group is an informal Drop in for carers and former carers of older people and they have established friendships outside of the Group. Their histories are mostly East End histories including fascist and anti fascist marches and rent strikes. The talk in this Group contains awareness of past resistance, solidarity with other working class East Enders and left wing and feminist campaigns. They are mostly ideologically Labour and critical of some kinds of racism.

EL1. Well I remember Greenham Common/ and the CND movement/ which was very strong/ erm and also .... just before the Iraq war there was a million people out on the **streets/** . and I am **totally** and **utterly** against the Iraq war/.

EL3. .... the miners' strike /.

EL2. Mosley, the black shirts /, and what 'ave ya/.

Their local knowledge is evident and all but one has lived there all their lives; their views are anti-war, they are aware of the women's liberation movements and violence against women. What they describe critically as "jumping into bed" with each other is related to 1960s and 1970s movements. They are critical of "workshy" men, materialism and "greed". The present is seen as materialistic and selfish compared to a more community oriented past.

### **The South London Outer Suburb Group**

The Group are more diverse in their histories and their views are varied. They are not local and they have a cultural mix; their politics are mostly conservative. Political campaigns are placed within historical personalities (Churchill, Thatcher) and there is ambivalence about equality for women who are described as having "small brains" but equality is related to protestant christian debates.

SL1. Well only that I think it's quite **good**.

SL3. Yes.

SL1. You know because I think why should women be left **out**? .. I mean yes they may have small **brains** very often **but** women should have their **say**.

### **Campaigning Groups: Older Lesbian Group**

Campaigns are described as left wing alternative ones, for example Greenham, CND, women's liberation, "women in black". Campaigns in soaps are not initially recognised yet are talked about with interest and perception when probed. They are aware of disability politics. Representations of what is seen as "political correctness" are seen as evidence of campaigns, so that only feminist representations are seen rather than narratives which mark women as non-feminist. There are, in their readings of soaps a normalising of submissiveness within heterosexual relationships which while angering them is not seen in terms of backlash or a specific campaign.



## **The Older Gay Men's Group**

The campaigning history of the three men includes young liberals, labour movements, Campaign for Homosexual Equality, and a self defined "non-political" past. One participant's view is that the 1960s were the start of a selfish "permissive society." This contrasts with the East London Group which is positive about the 1960s and is critical of the present. However within this there is disagreement. GM3. enjoyed the 1960s more than the 1970s, and is critical of the disappearance of many "friendly" gay pubs and the expansion of corporate gay culture. One describes the police in the 1970s "still hanging round pubs 11o'clock at night", waiting to arrest gay men.

## **The Transgender Group**

The Group meets in a community resource building in north London and members come from across London; the Group is not specifically for older transsexuals and transgender male to female but there are more older than young people. One participant refers to herself as having a "nice pair of tits" early on, indicative of a good humoured approach, not 'feminist', and the importance of use of language about bodies. Their bodies do not conform to binary definitions of 'men' and 'women's bodies.

T1. [laughs] and we're all women.

T3. Well I'm 61, I'm Margaret I'm 61, I'm post operative, since 99.

T2. Er, I'm **K** er I'm **49** and I regard myself as a transgenderist.

T2. I like to live **female** but I don't want the operation. I enjoy the fruits and benefits of er hormone therapy.

T1. I'm 71, er I live as a woman, I've not had major surgery, I've 'ad **minor** surgery, er I've got a nice pair of tits. [laughs].

Campaigns and movements are linked to feminist and gay movements and there is criticism of those in terms of perceived antagonism to transgender issues. T.1's view is that the transgender movement was behind the other movements in terms of

achievements until the Gender Recognition Act (2004) “leapfrogged” [them] in front”. This is important in recognising the effective campaigning by Transgender Groups and the view that they are at the forefront of gender politics. The question about campaigns within soaps is answered in a contradictory way as later there is praise for ‘Hayley’ as a changer of attitudes yet they are “for entertainment” and “the masses” which implies that they are trivial.. This leads to positive talk about immigration and the impact of this on changing culture. However, there are views that in countries where religions which are seen as “intolerant”, for example Catholicism, predominate there are more accepting attitudes to lesbian, bisexual, gay and trans people.

## **RESPONSES TO REPRESENTATIONS OF SEXUALITIES IN SOAPS**

As shown in Chapter 2, Ang’s thesis argues that the readings which social audiences make are informed by knowledge of genres and have the possibilities of both engaging and distancing from the text. Cultural capital is possible and enjoyable. The texts are read in various ways and point to explosions of texts as well as diversity of audiences. The choice of group interviews reveal a more fluid response than was possible with Ang’s written interview material because when they are interacting with each other, views change and develop from discussion. However comparisons with Ang’s work are still valuable.

## **ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH THE TEXT**

### **East London Group**

There are some distinct differences between the responses of the Mainstream audiences. The East London Group is more critical of the narratives and aware of the ‘messages’ being promoted than the Suburb Group. There are examples of awareness of constructions of the text and the placing of current ‘issues’ into them. For example, they are familiar with what they view as more ‘relaxed’ attitudes to sex in the 1960s, and relate current soap narratives to those movements. They are aware of soap discourses

being related to political issues and power, and take individual examples to make those points.

EL2. She's been **married** four times..

EL1. **Twice** to the same man.

EL2. Same man, yeh, twice, to the same man.

EL2. Yes As I say it's coming back **now** it's coming **now** to what **they** done then.

Where they're jumping in and out of bed with one another **now**, they were doing that **then**.. 'cos she went with whass'is name didn't she, 'Deidre'? /.

In contrast to the other Mainstream Group which do not engage in this way, further evidence of their awareness and critique of the construction of the text is identifiable with the issue of "illiteracy" embedded within a 'family' narrative and at the time viewed as a social problem:

EL1. I don't particularly see the reason why the 'Millers' are there, but you're beginning to see it now with this ... not being able to read and write.

EL1. [Interrupting] It wouldn't stop 'im getting a job - he could be a **road** sweeper.

They show awareness of the issue of illiteracy being current and the statistics which they see as driving the narrative. They are resistant to the sympathetic narrative, using examples of their own to describe a different outcome based on individual struggle and independence from the state, and they reveal knowledge of current research. The communal narrative is one of independence and overcoming poverty and disadvantage both in the past and in the present.

The transgender narrative and the construction of the text is seriously and sympathetically engaged with and there is criticism of antagonism against the character.

EL1. They really do, they really do have a hard time of it when you...

EL2. [Interrupts] It's not **fair** you see.

EL1. Malicious people, they remind you of it anyway..

They are aware of safe sex issues and critical of narratives which promote unsafe sex:

EL1. Don't you think Anne that they should do a **storyline** showing girls going down with er sexually transmitted diseases, and boys going down...

EL3. They did in er.. *Family Affairs*.

EL1. Did they? Yeh. They need to do this because they want to show kids the other side of sleeping around.

This is a resistant and oppositional reading and is noted in Encoding/Decoding. Much of the soap storylines focus on young people and relationships which are short lived; the storylines use pregnancy as the metaphor for punishments for women, and disputed 'fatherhood' for tension building. Infection and HIV is not spoken of at this time (although *EastEnders* had a long running theme of a heterosexual man with HIV) and this group is critical of the absence. Where there is awareness of the constructions and the narrative devices, a distancing effect is created. The presence of others talking about the narrative, and soap magazines which give storylines away do not facilitate engagement with the text. This is also an example of intertextuality.

EL2. What **spoils** it is - it's in magazines what's gonna happen. And that spoils it.

EL3. Yeh it does.

EL2. 'Cos you know what's gonna **go on**. Which they should never do. They **should not do that**.

This contrasts with the seriousness with which some issues are engaged. The Lesbian, Gay and Transgender issues are not ironically described in this interview although this does not mean this is consistent with approaches when watching or discussing with friends.

EL2. Oh no I don't agree hold with that **ooh no**.

I. Can you remember any of those....

EL2. I can't **stand** anything like that.

However the Group discussion, with other members showing a more tolerant approach, changes the tone of the speaker who has described firmly that she switches off when same sex relationships are shown. This evidences ideas in process in relation to peer discussion. EL2. can be perceived initially as prejudiced especially if she had been interviewed on her own, but she renegotiates her position within the more dynamic relational experience of the Group interviews. This shows the importance of group interviews for investigating deeper responses, and the possibility that views are not fixed. When the discussion becomes more complex later, EL2. explains that she doesn't like representations of sexual behaviour on television, and reveals familiarity with and liking for gay men. After saying she knows nothing of lesbians in soaps she reveals:

EL2. Didn't she er wasn't she a lesbian that had a baby after? What was her name in 'erm

EL3. Zoë in *Emmerdale*.

EL2. *Emmerdale*? I remember them saying about that.

.

They engage with the issue as a serious one, which places the narrative in an informative context. EL3's view is one which recognises the need for support and information for isolated LGBTs

EL3. It's **helping** people.

EL2. I don't **mind**.

EL3. They could be **helpin'** other lesbians come out and other gay people...

EL1. Mmm.

### **The South London Outer Suburb Group**

One of the Suburb Group members also criticises one of the themes of casual sex and resists this. She sees the message as promoting sex and that it can affect children watching.

SL2. Er well I think every time it comes on they're either **in** bed or getting **out** of bed...

SL3. Yeh that's it /

SL2. I think it's nothing else but **sex**.

SL3. **Yes, And it's no good for the children.**

There is awareness of the way that narratives in soaps, particularly *Coronation Street*, punish women who do not behave in an 'acceptable' manner. 'Sally' is having an affair; she is married, the other man is married and they have children. This is read as ending in her being judged by her children and that it will "cost a lot".

SL3. Like this problem Sally had in that soap; well I think it, I think it's going to cost a lot, you'll find the children going **against** her, that's what they say. Uh mm./ They will cost money, I think trouble come, soon, or later.

### **Older Lesbian Group**

Some of the Older Lesbian Group participants are aware of messages:

LG2. Had a lot of erm political stuff.

LG1. Oh that's **right**.

LG2. Like erm you know a **disabled** ....was she a woman?/

While there is approval for some of the older female characters there is awareness of some being placed in a patriarchal context. This respondent is a feminist and sees power relations within the text and this is reinforced by other participants. The theme is linked to 'bed-hopping' by another, seeing casual heterosexual sex inevitably affecting women negatively:

LG2. I'll tell you what really annoys me is, you get a very ..erm **positive woman**... coming in, and in **no** time.. she is reduced to **nothing**. As soon as she meets a man that's **it**.

LG1. Mmm. V...You know they're you know they're I'm, I'm **constantly** disappointed in ..the way women...

LG5. I think with these soaps, there's too much **..bed hopping**. I call it bed hopping. Then there's always drinkin'. Don't matter what...indoors with a bottle or a can. *Emmerdale*, you just get fed up with it.

Lesbian relationships are seen as represented in negative ways; there is awareness and criticism of the text:

LG4. They're not.. I don't think they are .. I think gay life style is portrayed in a very negative way, because I think there's this **attitude** out there that lesbians don't stay together less than ( ) weeks or a **year**. There **are long term** relationships out there for **homosexuals**; it's not only the **straight** world that stays for twenty to thirty odd years.

One respondent says: LG2. "It's all, you know, suddenly they meet.. you know, and immediately they're..they're **kissing**,...and then, you know, it's very short term, ... and it it's it there's no connection with anybody else **outside** of that relationship".

This reading reveals criticism and resistance of the construction of the text; the lesbian representations seen as isolated within the soap community both in terms of family and community. There is criticism of the lack of older lesbian visibility, and the preponderance of representations of 'feminine' lesbians. LG4: "Well they're young as well. When do you ever see an **older lesbian**, and when do you ever see a lesbian on the tv, **lookin'** like a lesbian and not a face full of make up, no disrespect to .. but when do you ever see any lesbians with short hair, big boots on, they're all portrayed as twittery, aren't they? And none of us are **twittery** here, so where **are** we all isn't it?"

There is a belief that lesbians are "mimicked" which can be seen as awareness of negative messages and/or that only 'real' lesbians can play them.

### **Older Gay Men's Group**

The participants in the Gay Men's Group show awareness of issues and construction of the text. They link campaigns with representations of gay men in soaps.

GM1. Yeh, definitely, definitely. In er I watch *EastEnders* and they've 'ad they've 'ad a gay couple and that **years** ago, it was **unheard** of before, an' then they 'ad a lesbian couple, a few years later, that was unheard of as well, and what is **interestin'** me is that *EastEnders* seems to be so far **ahead** of anything else.

GM3. explains the text of an *Archers* episode in a way which shows he is aware of what the writers are intending and how it could be changed to make more disruptive gay storylines. The discussion becomes about what could be changed and a new narrative is suggested. However there is knowledge about long standing characters and that they would not be likely to be punished for being homophobic at the expense of a gay man.

GM3. But 'e's, the homophobe was running the **Bull**, which is the **pub**, in the *Archers*. And er I suppose if they started to sort of push **'im** out, that would 'ave been the worst .... scene than pushing the **gay** one out.

There is serious engagement with the text which alternates with carnivalesque and laughter. Where they criticise casual sex narratives they are aware of justifications used by producers. GM3: "But do you think that they will probably **excuse** that on the grounds that we are only reflecting what goes on in **society?**" GM1. "That's right I think". Awareness of messages and the complex relationships between them is evident in this response to representations of black couples.

GM1. In *EastEnders*, there's a **racial** thing definitely going on where they're trying to show that black couples, or Asian couples, or whatever er you know are just like us, and soaps are also showing that gay and lesbian couples are just like us... they're next door.

GM2. I think the first er soap that does it tried to do something to society, the others just copied for the ratings.



## Transgender Group

The participants explain they are involved with campaigning for transgender rights and in this discussion their views on soaps are frequently measured against the perceived effectiveness of messages. They are the only Group which point out the non-naming of the representations in relation to bisexuality and see soaps as following trends. This is however contradicted later by another respondent saying that they are leaders of trends.

T1. In, in what's happened, because of the way soaps have, have **shown** certain aspects, of LGB and T, it's not so much bi, but more lesbian, gay and transgender, society has become more er patient, perhaps, more tolerant, perhaps, but they haven't **led** anything, they've followed the trends that were already taking **place**.

Knowledge of the construction of soap texts and targeting audiences makes them aware of the codes; it is seen as inevitable that there will be short-lived relationships and storylines. However this view doesn't acknowledge the longevity of some of the heterosexual relationships. This is pointed out:

T1. Well, any **gay** relationship.. in the soap.. has to be **short term**. Because they're afraid of it turning off the audience long term. But a **heterosexual** relationship, because that's seen as **normal, can** go on, for several years. But.. from the **soap's** point of view. There is knowledge of how the narrative is affected by ratings:

T1. The only reason they brought ['Peggy Mitchell'] back was really because the **ratings** were falling'.

T4. They **needed** her.

The readings of 'Hayley' are similar to the researcher's in that that she is read as 'normalised' and is acceptable while at the same time raising awareness of trans issues. That the trans issue is often forgotten is also emphasised:

T3. Yeh, and you do soon forget that she is transsexual now, you just, and everyone thinks that she's a **woman**, even though that information's been passed by.

T1. That is true of a small minority of post op transsexuals.

T3. Yeh.

T1. They fitted **in** to society and they're now accepted as **women**.

That 'Hayley' is a woman, post transgender, is true; T3. is viewed as saying she is read as a biologically born woman. 'Hayley' is acutely read as being made for *Coronation Street*, to raise awareness and to gain viewers, and in the former mode she is seen by the Group as mostly effective. They have investment in her as one of the Group has been involved with *Press for Change*'s talks to help create the character with the producer.

## **INTERTEXTUALITY**

### **East London Group**

Intertextuality as Ang (1985) argues is an important element of audiences' readings. In these Groups narrative is significant; the soap narratives are referred to and participants use their own narratives to contextualise their histories and views. Memory issues are helped by the use of remembering stories and events rather than the need for dates.

EL2. But I can't stand to see, on the telly, they're **kissing** one another. That is the one I don't ..that's what I **don't** like. I can't ... It makes me feel sick.

EL1. You didn't watch *Fingersmith* did you? [to researcher].

*Fingersmith*, a dramatisation of the lesbian novel (2002) by Sarah Waters which had been shown the night before on terrestrial television is referred to. EL1. asks the researcher if she has seen the programme and it becomes apparent she has watched it closely, critically and sympathetically, identifying with one character. The researcher reads this as saying that she is interested in and not shocked by lesbianism on the television; perhaps in her own experience. She directs her comments to the researcher specifically which also

indicates she knows her lesbian identity. Her view is informative in identifying her close reading of a lesbian narrative which is outside of the soap themes. This emphasises an interest in lesbian narratives and a statement about a more 'serious' viewing approach. As the example illustrates, intertextuality and narrative is used to effect in conversation. The same participant recounts a story about lesbians, outside of the interview, which is memorable to her and negatively described. She relates a narrative of working on the British Telecom exchange during the second world war. There were two lesbians in a relationship who worked there, one described as dressed like a man, the other 'feminine' a third 'feminine' joined the staff, leading to flirting and activity in the toilets between the 'butch' one and the new woman. A fight broke out between the two 'femmes' and equipment was broken. The gay men at the exchange said they would 'sort it', got replacement equipment and tidied it all up by the morning, by which time all was visibly normal. The story places the gay men as the heroes. EL1. explains that she had not wanted to make negative remarks in the formal interview. This is notable; what initially seems to be prejudice against lesbians is explained in terms of a desire not to place them in the interview as bad. Her comments to the researcher show awareness of positive discourses about diversity.

EL1. I worked for BT for many years and I worked with gays at night and you couldn't wish for a [better?].

EL2. That's what I'm saying they're nice people to get on with.

EL3. Genuine.

EL1. I think the thing with gay men is they have a little bit of a feminine thing in them that makes them relate to women in a much nicer way.

Her narrative is shaped into a linear progression with a beginning, a middle and an end; the end is a heroic portrayal of actions of gay men which ends the story and constructs them as friends and saviours. Using this framework she brings a new dimension to the responses but one which reinforces the general views of gay men as kind and familiar to them. Gay men are ultimately described as friendly and helpful to women. Within the interview EL2. becomes more positive and describes gay men she knew at that time in

supportive and appreciative terms; all of the talk in this Group is ultimately of this view. The Group refer to the 'Kray' narrative in relation to their own memories and the Kray mythology. This is a reminder that Ronnie Kray, part of East London's mythology and gangster family of brothers was well known as being gay.

Transgender narratives and characters are described as tragic, read as a tragic narrative and a line from the story quoted. The theory of a 'man trapped in a woman's body or a woman trapped in a man's body' is not only in the soap however; documentaries on transgender people often speak this theory, and this audience is more familiar with male to female transgender issues.. The effect of the soap storyline can be exaggerated without knowledge of the social context of the East London audience.

EL2. **They are to be pitied.**

EL1. I feel dreadfully sorry.

EL2. Yeh. Sorry **for** them.

EL3. Yeh I do.

EL1. 'Cos they're say a man trapped in a woman's body or a woman trapped in a man's body.

Homosexuality is described as 'all hidden away', yet 'Diamond Lil' is described as a public figure. The researcher assumed he was a gay man who dressed as a woman but later understood she was a trans male to female.

EL2. I 'ad erm there was a fella that cooks in the Broadway, the pie shop they had a son, ...and we used to call 'im Diamond Lil [> lower tone]. Now it's all them years ago right? And worked at Silverstone's in Bishop's Way, right, it's still there the building and er 'e used to work with us, and 'e was a very nice fella, right? / and we used to give 'im all our earrings and all our lipsticks and all that you know/ ? But 'e was a very 'elpful fella. And then we lived in Russia Lane and we 'ad **two** in there. Used to talk to 'em and things like that?

EL2. describes in detail 'Diamond Lil' and tells a narrative of an affectionate and protective relationship with other women who gave her make-up. EL2.'s language suggests fondness for 'Diamond Lil', which is again contradictory to her earlier talk. This story is an example of the use of the intertextual in terms of narrative in describing views and experiences, here placing the gay men and transgender characters in a positive context and giving the interviewees historical knowledge in the form of 'cultural capital'. (Bourdieu, 1993). The soap narratives and the personal narratives of gay men as friends with older women are important in validating the older women's experiences and reconstructions of the 'real'.

### **The South London Outer Suburb Group.**

The backgrounds and experiences of the audiences are varied and responses reflect that. They are less aware of 'second wave' feminism, and not so aware of the soap narrative's construction or campaigns, although they do not believe the situations are 'real'.

One expresses anger about Margaret Thatcher; political views are not consistent within the Group, although there is general support for a feminism which recognises women's varied management skills. There is criticism of "bedhopping" as with the East London Group but not related to social movements, and this relates to concern about the effect on young audiences.

SL2. Er well I think every time it comes on they're either **in** bed or getting **out** of bed

SL3. Yeh that's it /

SL2. I think it's nothing else but **sex**

SL3. **Yes, and it's no good for the children.**

The Group is generally initially negative about representations of same sex relationships, seeming at first to confirm prejudice and heterogeneity, but this changes as they are asked about familiarity with LGBTs.

SL3. Yes I think it's I think it does vary, but sometimes but I'm **against**... Because they do it so **openly**, children, anyone watching it

SL4. Yeh, It's **sex** all the **time** innit? [All talking over each other to agree]

Intertextuality and narrative are again utilised; they use narratives from their own lives particularly when discussing lesbian gay and transgender issues. This is after earlier reluctance to talk and illustrates the usefulness of narrative when probes used.

SL3. No I don't. I think that being this is a play; I don't think that it's like this one. I don't think so. These ones, they marry themselves, they go into the pastor where we live at East Ham to marry them he say he will marry them **and they live like a man and wife and they're ladies**. Mmm.

Another respondent remembers an incident which she also tells as a story. This places her family structure as a step family, which she hadn't mentioned earlier. The detail given illustrates the group structure's ability to make connections, remind people with poor memories and to use other's stories to trigger them.

SL1. Yes yes I.. I.. I can't spot them at **all**. I mean I was in a pub once, and I was talking to the....girl behind the count- behind the bar.

SL3. Mmm...

SL1. My stepmother was with me and I asked her – I don't know what question I asked her, but something, and when we got home my stepmother said "Fancy asking that question. Didn't you **know**?" And I thought know **what**.

SL3. [laughs].

SL1. That she was a lesbian.

This Group does not have the ironic approach that the East London Group have and are more serious about the issues and less analytical. Memory is an issue for one of them, emphasising the need for prompts and stories. However given prompting and time

SL3. from the South London Outer Suburb Group tells a story of two lesbians she had known. Again her husband is represented as anti-lesbian, but she describes speaking to them. She appears, when probed, to know more about them than just saying hallo, and that they had been to the pastor and got 'married'. They lived "like man and wife" so she perhaps saw them within constructions of 'masculine' and 'feminine'. The Group is tolerant, but swiftly focuses on gay men rather than lesbians, describing gay men as "gentle", and "caring". SL1. then tells a story about meeting two lesbians and being what she described as naïve, asking a question for which she was later reprimanded. She goes on to say she had known two lesbians in the office where she had worked. This is another contradiction: at first all of them claim to know no lesbians or gay men. This is indicative of the need to go further than accepting initial answers as final, and giving time for memories and other people's comments to encourage discussion. There is no consensus about whether lesbians can be identified by appearance; SL3 is adamant that the two lesbians were clearly identifiable. This is another indication that she viewed them 'masculine' and 'feminine' in appearance.

### **Older Lesbian Group**

The Group refer to stories from their past or other texts less than the Mainstream Groups. They are, when prompted, reminded of LGBT narratives.

LG2. Well *Brookside* was quite issue based wasn't it?

I. And, yeh

LG2. And that was..was that the first lesbian?

I. Erm

LG2. *Brookside*?

LG4. In *Brookside*? Well no there was a gay guy..

I. Yeh that was the first lesbian though.

LG2. There was Michael **Cashman** in *EastEnders*.

LG5. **Oh yeh** there was.

There is criticism of lesbians in soaps because they are not represented as ‘political’; a feminist text is compared to the representations and the latter are judged as not feminist. However, references to “political correctness” in soaps are seen as evidence of campaigns. There is a disjunction between what is seen as “political correctness” and feminist ideas. Feminism is viewed as not coming within popular ideas of “p.c.”

LG2. Being, you know, if your politically correct in a soap, you know,

LG5. Well Zoë, Zoë actually is a lesbian part, in *Emmerdale*, she’s not really a er she’s not really a **lesbian**.

LG2. No I know and she’s not **political**.

Past texts are referred to as being more aware; both *Crossroads* and *Eldorado*, which are often derided for low production values and mediocre acting, are noted for being more inclusive and diverse.

LG2. Oh **yees**.

LG5. I remember that er the chap in *Crossroads* he was in a wheelchair, but he died.

I. ‘Andy’.. the character was ‘Andy’.

LG2. See *Eldorado*.

I. Yeh

LG2. Had a lot of erm **political** stuff.

LG1. Oh that’s **right**.

LG2. Like erm you know a **disabled** ....was she a woman/.

I. Yeh with a wheelchair? A wheelchair user.

LG2. With a wheelchair.

Lesbian relationships are read as melodramatic and negative; this is a reading which concurs with the researcher’s and is not described in these terms by the other Groups. In spite of the sometimes melodramatic narratives there are few memories of them in other Groups.



LG2. Well they all end in **tears**, don't they?

LG1. Yeh. They all **end**.

LG4. **Yes**.

LG2. [laughing ironically] And they all **end** [laughs].

LG4. They're not.. I don't think they are .. I think gay life style is portrayed in a very negative way, because I think there's this **attitude** out there that lesbians don't stay together less than ( ) weeks or a **year**. There **are long term** relationships out there for **homosexuals**; it's not only the **straight** world that stays for twenty to thirty odd years.

'Realism' texts are implicitly compared to soap lesbians so that when actresses are described as 'mimicking' lesbians there is an assumption that other texts can contain a realistic image of lesbians.

LG4. And **lesbians** are por.. portrayed in the way that we **should** be, then I would watch it. But if it's people **mimicking** lesbians, then forget it, I won't watch it.

There is reference to lesbians being 'used' by heterosexual women which is taken from the soap and is also claimed as a life narrative; there is textual relevance to this both historically (novels such as *The Well of Loneliness*, 1928/2002]) and images in popular culture of young women kissing for the male gaze.) In this text women identifying as lesbians are placed within constructions as objects for men and playing games with and being used by heterosexual women.

### **Older Gay Men's Group**

References to soaps and the structure which GM2. views as enclosed within a community continually referring to itself, is described early on. This denotes cultural capital and knowledge of genres, which is consistent throughout the interview.

GM2. Well I, I've been an **addict** ...of *Coronation Street* for years and years and years, there's **never never ever** any **campaigning** in a big political way, they camp - campaign

about very **local** issues, 'Emily Bishop' gets on her high horse about something.... but there is nothing of **national** interest whatsoever, I suspect the same as *EastEnders*. It's all very very **enclosed**, you could be on a desert island.

GM3. challenges an accepted text which represents the Wolfenden Act and changes to the law as a linear progression of enlightenment; there are examples of police entrapping men in toilets, and a critique of capitalist intervention.

GM3. It..it was just a very gradual process, and erm.. in those days..there used to be gay pubs, which were..... well they were sort of **friendly** gay pubs, it seemed, then it turned into a kind of a professional thing, the erm the big companies ...jumped in and they became gay clubs that cost a fortune, played deafening music, and erm... suspect er things went on [laughs] and gradually it got more and more permissive, and er I didn't like that frankly.

Other soaps are referred to with examples of excess. GM3. 'Oh *Compact* I used to love *Compact* because of the music. I **recorded** the music once.'

There are references to *Rebecca* (Hitchcock 1940/1993) to indicate an absent referent.

GM3. Erm, well, it took a long **time**, for the *Archers*, but the erm writers use a device whereby a lot of people are **mentioned**, and referred to, but you never hear from them, a bit like 'Rebecca' only she was dead when it started.

This reading shows his cultural capital and is recognition of many texts where transgressive characters are mentioned but not seen; this construction is often used when lesbian and gay characters in soaps leave the text with another partner and are not seen again. In this textual case however it is the possibly bisexual character ('Rebecca's' sexuality is dangerously ambiguous) who is absent and the lesbian 'Danvers' evilly present.

The quote below is arguably a reference to queer texts and also a normalist one; this illustrates some of the tensions where some queer theories can be challenging to heteronormativity but also re-create normalist views.

GM1. In *EastEnders*, there's a **racial** thing definitely going on where they're trying to show that black couples, or Asian couples, or whatever er you know are just like us, and soaps are also showing that gay and lesbian couples are just like us... they're next door.

### **Transgender Group**

T3. describes her readings of a range of texts which concludes with the tabloids; she describes this as a journey searching for transgender representations and finds the only ones are as spectacle. She reveals knowledge of genres and of academic spaces in London.

T3. I can't really think – really I, I used to try and get **information** on TV...things, when I was a **teenager**, and I couldn't find **anything**. I used to go to **Foyles**, look for **books**, psychology, there was **nothing**, absolutely nothing. And I remember first of all seeing something like in the Sunday **papers**, you'd always see things in the News of the **World**, wouldn't you?

The Group is knowledgeable about western transgender history; the information they give in the interview reflects their campaigning aims and interest in both alternative and popular culture; research has been carried out and the results reveal an overlap between these.

T3. Oh yes Christine Jorgensen (?)

T1. Christine Jorgensen, and Roberta K(?) [Cow?]

T3. And there was that case... Jameson case wasn't there 70, in 1970? April, April **Ashley**, that was it

I. Yeh that was the well known

T3. And there were two, Caroline Cossey (?) was in a 'Bond' film, wasn't she?

T1. Caroline Cossey, the golden girl, 'Bond' girl,

Conflicting views of how LGBT has been and is seen are described and coalesce finally as a consensus that transgendered people are defined by an absolute identity which is predetermined.

[Young transgender woman has joined the Group]. I think transgender people are sort of medicalised, as a medical **problem**, categorised as (whereas?) homosexuality, like some people see that as a **life style** choice.

T1. No no. Homosexuality was seen as medical condition only 20, 30 **years** ago. I mean back in 1960, I would have been receiving aversion **therapy** for being a cross **dresser**.

Gay men and lesbian women were **also** receiving aversion therapy.

T2. Bottom line is we're all hard **wired**, so whether we're gay, straight, transgendered.

T1. It's only in the last fifteen, twenty **years**. [All talking over each other].

T3. We don't change.

T2. This is our hardwiring.

Choice, psychology and cultural contexts are dismissed; the use of a biological or chemical explanation for transgender is to describe an absolute and unchanging cause. This is not however responded to with one solution; earlier descriptions of themselves as having post operative or preoperative selves with varying amounts of hormone therapy provide challenges to bodily concepts of 'women' and 'men'. References to other textual representations of transgender people reveal differences and beliefs in lack of awareness of more recent, primetime documentaries and interviews. *Coronation Street* is seen as in the vanguard of transgender representations.

T3. Apart from the soap, you'd never see a... this subject being seriously, **ever**, all you see is things like er Danny Le **Rue** used to, whatever, you know, the top man, you...

T1. 'Ang on, there were two... American television series, one was a law firm, *LA Law* I think it was.'

Stories of being called 'Hayley' in the street are vividly recalled, an effective way of describing lives and also the effect of the soap on some audiences. This is strong evidence of the soap representations creating discourses in popular culture.

T1. 'The **positive**, the **positive** side of that thing, and I can speak for personal experiences, the off shoot of bein' invited on to chat shows, to **talk** about the subject, because of the 'Hayley' character, I've been on at least **12** programmes, just talkin' about transsexuals in television'. I. 'Right, yeh, it did open up something.' T1. 'Oh yes yes'. T3. 'It opened the door, good yeh'.

Intertextuality is a major factor in these interviews; stories in the soaps trigger narratives from personal lives and other texts and these give depth to the results. Life stories (Ricoeur 1988) are helpful in revealing experiences and viewpoints; the methods by which these stories are recollected include memory, past and some knowledge of current discourses to describe memorable incidents. Other soap opera texts are compared and this gives cultural capital to the participants. The views of the East London Group are in accord with some of the close readings in Chapter 3; the gothic context and confusion of the lesbian representations are however noticed less than predicted and there is a noticeable absence of view, or uncertainty to talk. One is concerned that lesbians should be supported by the soaps in 'coming out', a view which emphasises the childlike representations and confessional readings. The transgender character is sympathetically read by the Mainstream Groups and the references to 'Diamond Lil' give depth to their views. In the Transgender Group, the citing of recognition from the public supports the view that programmes have increased cultural awareness and discourse because of 'Hayley'.

## **RECOGNITION OF MELODRAMATIC IMAGINATION**

One particular intertextual concept, as Ang theorises, is the melodramatic imagination, and has to be recognised in the text in order to be read. There are varying degrees of melodramatic engagement in these interviews.

## East London and South London Outer Suburb Groups

The East London Group does not use a melodramatic code to read the soaps; they are critical of the representations which they see as creating unsafe sex and 'bed-hopping'. They compare some examples as unlike life (the literacy storyline) but not in terms that it is too melodramatic. Their views on LGBT narratives are consistent with their non melodramatic readings.

The South London Outer Suburb Group members read the transgender narrative as the most melodramatic.

SL3. A man you see before she turned to a woman. That one was funny. Mm [laughing] My eldest son he asked me '**how can that happen?**' I say well you turn to be a woman if it's the thing he say no. I think it's the **right** thing ( ).

## Older Lesbian Group

One member of this Group reads the lesbian storylines as melodramatic as she describes them as 'always ending in tears'.

LG3. Very **sad** situations....all end in disaster, yes...

There is little engagement with this however; the melodrama is critiqued and creates a distance rather than engagement. LG4: "Erm,.. I think maybe you can 'ave a little bit of **sympathy** if that's the right , or maybe a little bit of understandin' but personally, for myself, **no.**"

The narrative is seen as issue based which creates in memory a distancing effect.

LG2: "Well **Brookside** was quite issue based wasn't it? .... And that was...was that the first lesbian?" Melodrama is recognised in the lesbian storylines, but not enjoyed as much by the Group which is more critical of the lesbian representations.

### **Older Gay Men's Group**

The gay men's interview shows enjoyment, anger and engagement with the melodramatic, mainly in relation to gay men and transgender narratives. One of the members of this Group is aware of the construction of the soaps and this adds to the melodramatic. GM2: "It's all very very **enclosed**, you could be on a desert island."

The melodramatic is recognised, enjoyed, described and acted out to the rest of the Group. This is both melodramatic and carnivalesque. The idea of 'catching' homosexuality is satirised.

GM1. He was **married**.

GM2. Yes, and the first person he ( ) to was his brother 'Jason' ...[in a louder voice] **'I've been sharing my bedroom, I've been getting'** ...

GM1. [laughs].

GM2. **'undressed with you in my room,'** and that was the first person.

GM1. Like it was infectious you know.

The appreciation is expressed in dramatic form which reflects the style of the soap.

GM2. **Marvellous** dramatic thing obviously 'cos...Now when **'Todd'**, he was only about 18, what I was annoyed about with 'Todd', is he'd be **oh yes** I can have this one in mind, oh I've had him in mind for 8, **8 months**, oh its' so **terrible**, and so **agonising**, so **terrible**, and then he actually met his man working at the hospital, I thought well it only took 8 minutes, or 8 years or 18 years, erm but he finally got off with this guy.

The melodramatic is recognised only with particular narratives; the earlier narratives are read as constrained, in contrast to the recent 'Todd' storyline. However the comedic construction of 'Sean', current at the time of interviewing, is read as melodramatic. The 'cultural capital' of all of the men in this Group is evident as well as recognition and enjoyment of melodramatic codes.

## **Transgender Group**

The Transgender Group does not code the transgender narrative as melodramatic, but as shallow and understated.

T4. No I don't think so, I think it's very shallow, she's clearly a ... I think it's very shallow, it didn't put over anything, it brought up the **subject**.

The transgender narrative can be read as melodramatic or tragic and some of these audiences engage sympathetically with 'Hayley'.

The melodramatic imagination is resisted more than embraced in these Groups apart from the gay men, however, and creates a distancing effect, while the significance of intertextuality is reinforced, and narratives from their own lives and other texts are referred to.

## **COMPULSORY HETEROSEXUALITY**

Considering Rich (1980) and the theory of "compulsory heterosexuality" it is relevant to ask whether the soaps allow lesbians, gay men, bisexuals or transgender people into the networks of 'family', and how far the transgender character is acceptable. Masculinity is seen as challenged by gay men, in the soaps and in the interviews, underlining the close readings of the narratives which enable heterosexual 'masculinity' to appear 'normal' and unquestioned. The East London Group prefers the 'feminine' gay man and sees 'femininity' as helpful to other women.

EL1. They have a little bit of a feminine.

EL2. Mmm.

EL1. Thing in them that makes them relate to women in a much nicer way.



There are no heterosexual characters viewed in this way. In contrast to their personal knowledge of gay men, there are no expressed experiences of knowing lesbians in the present which sets up the fictional characters to appear ungrounded and decontextualised in the interview. This leaves 'masculinity' and heterosexuality uncritiqued. Close readings of the narratives indicate that LGBT representations are not constructed within similar frameworks or genres. Lesbians are represented sometimes sympathetically but within the monstrous family, 'feminine' sometimes mad, and young. These are hegemonic representations and 'encoding, decoding' theories can be applied to audience readings. Gay men are constructed within liberal humanism and tragi-comedy, (not always young as there is one older gay man) transgender as 'normal', within the parameters of heterosexuality. The Mainstream audiences interviewed read the gay men in the 'preferred' way, but the lesbian representations are read as absent or unreal. Most notably, while some Mainstream Group participants describe LGBT representations as if they are everywhere, there is little memory of these soap narratives until reminded. It is important for the research that some recall when probed because some of the narratives are 20 years old. In conclusion the audiences here read the gay men as attaching themselves to families in the form of single mothers or older women. The Mainstream Group audiences like them and view them as challenges to 'masculinity' while this leaves heterosexual masculinity intact. The transgender character is acceptable to these audiences as heterosexual. There are no indications of the LGBT narratives shifting the heterosexual matrix in terms of text or audience readings. These reading are similar to the close readings in Chapter 3; there is no challenge to heteronormativity although the representation of gay men challenges 'masculinity' in a contained way.

Audience responses challenge Modleski's (1984) thesis that women audiences identify with all of the characters, because the interviews show that characters cannot be equally identified with. Lesbians are arguably viewed more as objects and not subjects; audiences are distanced from them and less able to identify with them. The older lesbian Group is more angry and does not want to be identified with them. Gay men are read as more likeable and identifiable with; they are read as witty and sensitive. The BFI research (Schlesinger, Dobash & Weaver 1992) challenges monolithic readings, using gender race

class and experience to explain divergent views; these can be extended to sexual and transgender identity; familiarity and experience influence readings and intensity of feelings. Experience can determine whether a character is believable although this is not the same as identifying with her. As one member of the transgender Group says, T2. “I can’t.... I could believe the **partner** but I couldn’t believe ‘**Zoë.**”

As discussed in Chapter 3 ‘Hayley’, the transgender character and ‘Roy’, her (biologically) male partner are outsiders in *Coronation Street*, even though heterosexual. The audiences investigated predominantly like ‘Hayley’ but feel sorry for both of them; they also feel sympathy for ‘Derek’, the older gay man in *EastEnders*. Some of these audiences are distanced from LGBT representations in different ways; the Mainstream audiences, initially reluctant to discuss them, show liking for gay men and the transgender character but they are not given prominence and they do not, in these discussions, present a challenge to heteronormativity. These characters are less part of the soap community and often arguably play an educative role in the text to test the latter’s tolerance. (Geraghty 1991).

## **ENCODING, DECODING**

There is a problematic issue of defining the ‘preferred’ meaning in soaps and therefore the ‘oppositional’. Dominant ideology can be read in the ‘punishment’ of women and men being allowed freedoms: the LGBT representations can be read both as attempts to raise awareness and ‘feel sorry’ for them; some current (2010) gay male representations in soaps have a more stable and often humorous space.

### **East London Group and South London Outer Suburb Groups**

The East London Group are aware of and analytic about the construction of the soaps; they refer to the illiteracy issue being in *EastEnders* as a deliberate political act, and speak of 16% of school leavers being affected. They negotiate the codes; they are critical of the lack of safe sex messages with young people in the soaps. The ‘punishment’ of

pregnancy is the dominant code which blames women and promotes abstinence, rather than safe sex. Within younger soap relationships, the Mainstream Groups attribute blame to younger women for break ups. This is despite the East London Group having some feminist perspectives and sometimes resistance to hegemonic constructions. This audience often reads against the grain, in a positive and tolerant rather than a repressive way. They appear as against sex when they criticise “bedhopping” but their suggesting safe sex messages does not support this view. The one to one opens up the importance of participants having a history of being non-conformist and questioning; this respondent’s views on the awareness raising potential of soaps are expressed. The interview reveals her as thinking against the grain and rejecting right wing views. She made friends as a child with a black neighbour, after being warned off by her “nan”. This acceptance, curiosity and ability to learn is consistent throughout the discussion.

EL3. ‘Cos I remember when I was little I thought ooh, who is it **says** you ‘ave to get married , cos then you ‘**ad** to be married, why **do** you ‘ave to be married, what does it matter if you’re married or not? I couldn’t, couldn’t understand that...

Both Mainstream Groups interpret ‘older’ characters and relationships as younger than the researcher intended: ‘Deidre’ in the East London Group and ‘Den’ in the South London Outer Suburb Group. Within the East London Group, older age is defined as 50. It is necessary to probe about soap characters who are older than that. While the soaps have a number of characters in their 60s and 70s, these are overlooked until specifically mentioned. This poses an (unasked) question about how they identify themselves, as possibly beyond older. The issue of age is considered of note as in all of the Groups there is no initial discussion or recognition of the representation of older people or the absence of older LGBTs.

Older characters (60s, 70s and 80s) include ‘Audrey’, ‘Rita’, ‘Blanche’, ‘Peggy,’ ‘Pat,’ ‘Edna’, and most have had romantic or sexual relationship storylines in the past. They have fewer than other characters and they are often presented within comedy, arguably providing light relief from the anguish of some of the younger characters. This may

account for a tendency to not recognise them as having relationships, and identifying a younger group which is represented as having sex. There are few scenes of passion in the soaps for these but strong references to them are present. Once the question is clarified, there is a preference for older characters to have relationships which are off screen and read as good humoured. The representation of older bodies especially women's, as 'monstrous old feminine' is visible in the soap text and audiences' readings. There are however 'younger old' characters who are occasionally actively sexual in the narratives making this a more complex issue.

### **Campaigning Groups**

The Older Lesbian Group responses do not immediately show an awareness of age as an issue in soaps, although this is a Group from a self defined 'older' lesbian network. The topic is not mentioned until a question is asked and this then leads to descriptions of absence of older or 'butch' lesbians. The issue of not noticing lack of older lesbians indicates the hegemonic 'common sense' construction of thought where older lesbians and gay men are not meaningful enough to miss, even by older lesbian audiences. No one can remember iconic lesbian moments until the researcher is asked to say what she remembers. As soon as there is mention the *Brookside* 'kiss' LG2. says that it "was cut out for the Saturday repeat". LG4. says that the making visible and then taking away is not something she could "celebrate". This is a reading of power on behalf of the producers, giving something to lesbian communities at particular moments while making clear that it can be taken away. The Group agree that it is positive to have lesbianism named and that "they" impose heterosexuality on audiences and should be able to cope with lesbians. "It's better to be in there than not" (LG2). New discourses are viewed as created. The theory that it does not threaten heterosexuality but could make audiences more tolerant is shared. This are negotiated and oppositional readings.

LG4. describes all present as 'feminine' without questioning the term; another hegemonic construction. LG5. is less analytical throughout, and reminds us that the actors aren't like their characters. She says "I don't think it's everyone's cup of tea" when talking about

lesbian representations which is an indication she is reading the text from a preferred point of view. In a later one to two interview with her and another older lesbian. they describe her as living a “double life”; she is not able, she says, to be honest about her sexuality with her family. This may contribute to her reading the text through the ‘preferred’ meaning.

Bisexuality is recognised as absent and gay men’s heterosexual past performances is not referred to. ‘Hayley’ is seen as having ‘other’ sexuality yet she is heterosexual. This has some logic in terms of the narrative. ‘Hayley’ is sometimes referred to in the text by the bigoted characters as ‘Harold’ and therefore as a gay man, making ‘Roy’ gay too. Memorable moments include her being verbally abused. The Older Lesbian Group manifest both preferred and oppositional readings.

### **Older Gay Men’s Group**

GM2. is a ‘fan’ of *Coronation Street*; his self definition is ironic and his manner is that of someone who considers popular culture as inferior. He sees campaigning within the soap as about ‘local issues’ although they are not confined to those. GM3. sees *The Archers* as being taken over by young people’s themes. His description of an episode of the *Archers* where an older woman is told about “Pride” with no mention of “gay” indicates to him the word is considered by the writers as unacceptable to older audiences or an assumption that they didn’t know of such terms. In spite of their age however they do not notice the absence of older gay representations (apart from ‘Derek’) and re-inscribe the dominant view that sexual attraction is concomitant with youth.

There are further examples of readings which are preferred, oppositional or negotiated. ‘Sean’ is seen as “unfortunately” camp by GM2. and he is more approving of ‘Todd’s’ representation as more seriously represented and not camp in the soap. This reinforces that there are two representations of gay men, one comedic, the other tragic, although there is overlap in that the comic gay men have tragic moments. GM2. mimics some of ‘Todd’s’ lines. He describes him as very good looking, and remembers the negative

reaction of his soap brother 'Jason'. This is important for GM2; 'Jason' performs horror at sharing a bedroom and being naked in front of 'Todd'. GM1. analyses this: "like it was infectious you know". GM2. is also positive about a gay character in *Emmerdale*, who is described also as "very good looking".

GM3. speaks of *The Archers* as a reflection of society. GM2. describes the soaps critically with "little of the old fashioned moral values I mean they're in and out of bed". This is a similar reading to the Mainstream Groups' views. GM2. refers to the younger characters, yet he describes the older characters as boring. He is correct that their storylines are not so exciting. They are "stable" in GM3. and GM2.'s words.

GM2. is negative about many of the female characters except for 'Audrey' in *Coronation Street*, described as attractive and "deserving a man". 'Audrey' performs femininity in specific ways with hair, clothes and behaviour, and is 'respectable' working class, even lower middle class by now, important to GM2. This can be read as 'preferred' meaning. Her femininity is emphasised in her hairdressing shop surrounded by signifiers of femininity (although 'unisex' there are few men who come for hairdressing). She can represent drag for some, because her femininity can be read as excessive and reveal its construction. (Garber, 1992, p. 49). Although a normalist view is given here, particularly in terms of 'feminine' constructions, 'Audrey' is actively sexual compared to the other older characters' perceived asexuality. GM1. is aware that the black older sexually active couple may represent a stereotype.

### **Transgender Group**

There is knowledge of constructions of soaps and interventions which influences readings. The transgender campaigning organisation *Press for Change* had intervened and talked to the production team of *Coronation Street* and although it is agreed that the latter do what they want, *Press for Change* is seen as having a positive effect. T1. sees the issues concerning the transgender narrative as 'real'; the toilet storyline (where the transgender character is seen as perverse for using the women's toilet) is emphasised by

her. There are some contradictions in that the issues are seen as realistic yet no-one can identify with her. It can be considered that this is because she is so 'old fashioned' and difficult to identify with. She does not fit with the Group's ideas of radical politics and some of these interviewees see themselves as cutting edge. The discussion however becomes more sympathetic to the 'Hayley' narrative; there is permission in the Group to be positive although there is a separation between 'us' and the 'other' audiences which are seen as not aware. There is one strong opinion on the effect of her character in changing attitudes. When the questions are over and the researcher asks for anything else they wish to say, T4. says "Not really no. It's surprising the soaps lead public opinion. They don't just sit back and follow opinion. There was a gay relationship on *EastEnders* twenty odd years ago". There is agreement that this was "brave". The previous discussion about the "softness" of soaps is contradicted because there is a belief that soaps can be controversial, thus recognising that soaps are active and can intervene in social hegemonies. The ongoing structure of soaps is believed to be helpful in introducing LGBT characters "so the characters have had a chance to build up with the audience, first". (T1). The Group take oppositional readings as active campaigners but predominantly negotiate the codes, weighing up effects. However audiences are again seen as a mass, unaware, and the soap structure as beneficial to controversial characters (previously described as inappropriate) but only if they enable slow build up. While knowledge of constructions of soaps is extensive, views of audiences are of a homogeneous mass.

## **THE CARNIVALESQUE IN GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

Validating Brown's (1997) thesis, using Bakhtin's concept (1968) the carnivalesque is an identifiable factor in all of the discussions, particularly the gay men and transgender interviews. The carnivalesque is fun and sometimes resistant to dominant ideologies, revealed here in the way that the Group members respond to each other, as well as to the texts. Many of these responses are to the readings as melodramatic and amusing, leading to repeating lines in a camp style from the soap texts. A space can be created by irony and fun, where the seriousness of criticism is shifted into laughter and shared recognition

of signifiers. Difference can be managed and humour at their own expense rather than making them vulnerable adds to recognition of shared amusement. There is carnivalesque within all of the Groups. The Mainstream Groups manifest this least however; there is some laughter but their views are seriously put. The Campaign Groups are less restrained especially the Transgender Group and the Gay Men's Group.

### **East London and South London Outer Suburb Groups**

The East London Group is the least carnivalesque. They express views seriously and mostly intensely; there is little irony in their readings and one of them is equally intense at first about disliking lesbians and gay men in soaps as she is about her liking gay men in her life experience. They feel strongly about poverty, history of the East End and violence against women. The South London Outer Suburb Group has a less serious atmosphere and the memory issues can add to a sense of fun. The Day Centre which they participate in is very structured and this discussion may be viewed as a more informal and enjoyable experience.

### **Older Lesbian Group**

The intensity of feeling initially works against carnivalesque, raising questions about how resistant it can be if it cannot include anger. Lack of 'real' lesbian representations is evident. This changes during the interview; the experience becomes more pleasurable and there is laughter which offsets some of the sadness of a double bereavement manifest at the meeting. The contribution from LG5., who has noticed an eye testing board in the vet's surgery in *Emmerdale* causes laughter and admiration that she had noticed such an anomaly and a joke is made of an image of animals being asked to read the letters for the appropriate strength of glasses.

### **Older Gay Men's Group**



As described in the section on melodramatic imagination, one gay man takes pleasure in speaking the lines of 'Todd' in an exaggerated manner, enjoying the attention and laughter this causes. This is an effective way of creating group cohesion; this respondent describes himself as 'intellectual' and is critical of much of the soap narratives. He then amuses the Group by 'acting out' the more dramatic moments and enjoys being the centre of attention.

### **Transgender Group**

The Transgender Group discussion is politically aware in relation to transgender campaigns, and combine awareness with humour. Much laughter is created by the age related research; the fact that older audiences have been chosen causes a lot of remarking and references. This indicates that they have encountered few requests for older people to comment. Bisexuality is seen as the ultimate in transgressive sexual identity.

T3. Pleasure.. the notion of pleasure, the audience can't take that,

T2. It's the ultimate in promiscuous. You've, not only do you want **gay** side of the cake, or the straight side of the cake, you want it **all** [laughs]. When you walk in a room you've got two chances of pullin', like Woody Allen says.

[Laughter].

T1. Sure of a date on Saturday night.

[Laughter].

The laughter here illustrates the carnivalesque atmosphere; there are also challenges to dualism. The carnivalesque is evident throughout; much of the interview is noisy and disorganised, with a lot of loud laughter and good humour. The carnivalesque (Bakhtin 1965) describes a space where seriousness and conformity can be challenged in a pleasurable way and sometimes resisted. Pleasure is often transgressive and creates a bond with others. While there can be containment and separation from 'real life' and the radical potential exaggerated, these interviews indicate that carnivalesque can be part of a wider culture of resistance; the Transgender Group is the most carnivalesque and is

very involved in and effective at campaigning. The carnivalesque in these interviews evidences camp acting out of the soap narratives and self directed laughter, and comments which challenge heteronormativity.

Within the Transgender Group there is campaigning and an effective publicity campaign. Resistance is evidenced in all of the interviews but not necessarily within carnivalesque; it however bring another dimension to the interviews, enhancing pleasure which creates a flexibility and positive sense of identification with others.

### **INTENSITY OF FEELING IN GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

The responses support research (Schlesinger, Dobash and Weaver 1992) which emphasises significance of experience of issues in contributing to intensity and perspectives of readings.

#### **East London and South London Outer Suburb Groups**

As the section on the carnivalesque argues, seriousness and intensity is evident in moments in all of the Groups. The East London Group show intensity of feeling in most of the interview; there is strong feeling in the history of the East End, in anti racist views, in critiques of storylines which show East End characters as lazy, unsafe sex, “bed-hopping” and, initially, LGBT representations. The intensity with which one of the group voices dislike of what appears to be LGBT representations is most noticeable by the contrast in which she tells of companionship with gay men. Familiarity with gay men and transgender people, but not currently lesbians, is meaningful in influencing their views so that they have no measure of comparison to ‘reality’ and this contributes to readings of soap lesbians as ungrounded. The one to one underlines this although there is interest in finding out how her daughters feel; she repeatedly states an intention to discuss this with them.

EL3. Yeh I’ve just thought of that; I’ll have to talk to me girls. I know they won’t be bothered you are what you are, that’s it.

## Older Lesbian Group

Although this project differs in relation to the issues (the BFI research concerns representations of domestic violence) the anger and critique of some of the lesbian interviewees confirm this thesis. The paralinguistics of emphases, all talking at once and loud voices are indicative of strength of feeling, and experience of issues having affect on this.

LG4. It really hacks me off, big time. ‘Cos what do straight people **know**, about lesbians, anyway. You know we ‘ave a lot of gay actors out there, so why do we ‘ave les- straight women, and straight guys, playin’ the role of of **my** sexuality, and the lesbian woman, and I don’t think **any** of these issues, Greenham Common, as I said **..where are these?**

However within the Group there are different approaches so that irony, laughter, and intensity exist in the same session.

LG1. Then a Monday, I sit down and you know... **sink myself** in it [her and LG2. laugh] and it leaves me free for a few days. Mmm.

There is more intensity of feeling expressed in the Older Lesbian Group. LG4. is angry that lesbians are played by ‘straight’ women. This raises several issues: an assumption that they will be played more realistically if played by lesbians, that lesbian identity is defining, and that these actresses are heterosexual. LG4.’s view of sexual identity as total is developed later, when she describes being unable to identify with or relate to the heterosexual relationships. Feminist perspectives are used to read and analyse the text, these descriptions are emphatic and angry.

## Older Gay Men’s Group

There is intensity about what is viewed as “bedhopping”, about some of the gay men storylines, and the teasing and harassment of ‘Hayley’. This can be seen to reflect

familiarity and interest because they have strong views of the 1960s and changes in views on sexual behaviour as well as personal knowledge of transgender people. The Group welcomes Transgender as well as LGB, and are aware of transphobic attitudes. However, the older lesbian membership of the wider older LGBT Group does not appear to have the same effect on their awareness.

### **Transgender Group**

This Group shows familiarity with feminism, lesbian and gay movements, transgender campaigns, and popular cultural representations of transgender characters and people. This gives them knowledge and strong feelings about the past and the progression to successful campaigns for transgender rights. Dates of significance of legal change are described with emphasis, strong feelings are articulated in describing the effect that 'Hayley' has had on popular discourse. T1. "The **positive**, the **positive** side of that thing, and I can speak for personal experiences, the off shoot of bein' invited on to chat shows, to **talk** about the subject, because of the 'Hayley' character, I've been on at least **12** programmes, just talkin' about transsexuals in television".

### **Contradictions and change of views**

Views on LGBT representations are not fixed; the group dynamics illustrate what may be said and evaded or avoided as 'poor taste'. (Bourdieu 1984) Views change and are negotiated throughout interviews and most noticeable is the ability to inhabit apparently competing discourses.

### **East London Group**

The group structure enables in depth responses which take note of each other and do not remain as what may have been seen as a fixed position. What appear to be anti LGBT views are arguably influenced by expectations of other members of the Group to be prejudiced. Within the East London Group, tolerant attitudes manifested by the others

lead to an opening of the discussion and create narratives which contradict or make problematic earlier apparent prejudice.

EL2. I don't like that – [kissing] I can accept em you know I talk to 'em

EL1. We have to don't we

EL1. says that she worked with gay men. EL2 then talks about gay men/trans people (m to f) that she knew. She talks about personal knowledge positively after the other two have been tolerant. Sympathy is expressed for 'Hayley' and the line from the soaps repeated "a woman trapped in a man's body". They are aware of the narrative device of making 'Hayley' 'normal' most of the time, with occasional references to her trans status in a negative way. EL3. "Yeah if she'd been played by a man; you forget that she was a man."

The stated views about gay men and lesbianism differ considerably, sometimes reinforcing the different representations in the soaps. Gay men are more familiar to them and popular while lesbians appear to be invisible. The culture of drag and out gay men in some East London pubs/entertainment is familiar; there is no lesbian equivalent. The representation of gay men in the soaps is very much how they see them in 'life'. Lesbians in the soaps are sometimes 'damaged' or mentally ill, but not noticed much by these audiences. However it is possible, given the context, they are unwilling to talk about them. EL2. becomes less vehement, as the Group show more tolerance. She contradicts herself by saying that lesbians and gay men are accepted but that soaps make it out to be "good" thing and this is wrong and draws a parallel with the previously criticised (by all) under age sex. This is meant to draw agreement of the others but doesn't do so. 'Derek' is then described by EL2. as more acceptable because "you don't notice" his sexuality. He is also though "poor man", a tragic figure because of this and at the same time "he's alright old 'Derek.'" His acceptability gives male homosexuality a positive status in the Group and EL2 then says she gets on alright with gay men and her only objection is seeing them kissing on the soaps as it make her "feel sick". She describes her relationship with a gay man who is employed in social care as "like that", holding up two fingers close together for the Group to see. This signifier conveys

closeness and liking. The discussion shows not only that the group structure helps to reveal narratives and experiences but illustrates the possibility of inhabiting both dominant discourses and alternative views and the importance of social context. Her dislike of seeing men “kiss” and her liking for gay men, exist as initially contradictory concepts but do not appear problematic to her. Discourses of accepting all sexual identities unless made explicit is one possible thesis here; the dislike of “bed-hopping” generally includes heterosexuals as well as LGBTs.

The LGBT representations are described as realistic, and references to familiar gay men are made to substantiate this. The lesbian episode mentioned is the ‘Charity’ and ‘Zoë’ affair in *Emmerdale*. They express a belief that soap narratives make audiences more aware. ‘Hayley’ is mentioned most as functional in awareness raising and it transpires that they knew trans people in the past and had a liking for and familiarity with them. Close readings, reviews and previews illustrate the difficulty of comparing LGBT representations as they are given different emphases and longevity in soaps. Responses to the lesbian representations in the Mainstream Groups are more complex than anticipated; lesbians are not, as the close readings indicate, seen only within the grotesque or childlike fear of the ‘Jordache’ narrative because it isn’t much remembered. The key factor is whether these audiences know and are friends with LGBTs. The one to one interview with EL3 reveals sympathy and a wish to support lesbians although she has not knowingly met any. Her background is not conventional and she has a more liberal approach generally. Gay men are viewed in a similar way to the close readings; they are however known and liked thus making conclusions about the effect of reading from the soap text a difficult one. The soap text in this instance reinforces some of the participants own experiences . The transgender narrative is read with sympathy as predicted but they have known transgender people for a long time; there is no suggestion of close friendship but these women see them as both tragic and helpful.

SL1.’s firmness about never watching *Coronation Street* is so emphasised that her distancing herself is likely from a class perspective. *Coronation Street* was, historically, sometimes seen as for and about working class and ‘common’, compounded by being on

ITV and surrounded by advertising. SL1. is embarrassed by her liking for *Neighbours* and says she likes watching it because of the accents. She never watches *Brookside*, which is also associated with working and ‘under’ class.

Same sex relationships are described in contradictory ways by the same people.

SL1. Yes I don’t think they’re **too** bad, because you, I mean at one time you never used to hear of it

SL3. Mmm.

SL1. Now it’s all **over** the place.

SL3. That’s right.

I. Do you think the soaps treat it – quite well?

All. Mmm.

I. It varies?

SL1. It varies I think yes.

SL4. It does vary yes.

SL3. Mmm.

I. What do you think about that. Same sex relationships? In the soaps?

SL3. Yes I think I think it does vary, but sometimes but I’m **against**. Because they do it so **openly**, anyone watching it.

There are contradictions because SL1. thinks it a good thing in terms of making visible the invisible, but sees it as too much, a theme the others appeared to agree with, yet they all have difficulty remembering same sex narratives. The discourse of an explosion of same sex representation in the media is not uncommon in other texts (reviews, articles). The impression of saturation of ‘otherness’ is created when there are representations which appear to challenge the hegemony of heteronormativity. As described in Intertextuality, there is denial of knowledge of lesbians and then use of narratives to describe encounters of the past.

Probes elicit few examples of same sex narratives; ‘Derek’ is popular as a character but they are largely unaware that he is a gay man, and originally thought he would have a relationship with ‘Pauline.’ This is consistent with the narrative, since he initially entered

the soap as a romantic possibility yet also within a pantomime setting. It is not always apparent that he is gay and this is the 'secret'. Like 'Hayley' he has only one sexual encounter, based on the past, and is only referred to as gay in a problematic storyline. Otherwise he is 'Pauline's' best friend and ideal companion, a parallel to 'Sean', the gay man, in *Coronation Street*.

The transgender narrative is explained more clearly, and this is a theme which is seen as more productive in talk and references in their lives. They like the character and they know she had been a biological man, causing her to be viewed as a gay man within and out of the soap. 'Harold' is the insult used against her in the narrative.

The gay man 'Sean' in *Coronation Street* is described as a 'nice man', and again is popular. Their views are consistent with the positive representations of gay men in soaps. 'Hayley' had arguably made them more aware and sympathetic although both SL1. and SL3. disapprove of laws which enable transsexuals to marry. SL3.'s views are inconsistent however; she first says it is good, but agrees with SL1. when she says it isn't. SL2. is muddled about the difference between gay men and transsexuals; she counters the idea of linking together paedophilia and gay men, and reinforces the narrative of gay men being kind to women. SL2. "I think they're all as good and fine, don't you think? They don't in - hurt children do they, nor women."

Views on relationships in the soaps are similar in both Groups: the South London Outer Suburb Group explain it here.

SL2. er well I think every time it comes on they're either **in** bed or getting **out** of bed

SL3. Yeh that's it /

SL2. I think it's nothing else but **sex**

SL3. **Yes...And it's no good for the children**

However, the East London Group relate this to social and political movements of the 1960s and 70s. This indicates a more analytic and political approach.



## Older Lesbian Group

The Lesbian Group's views on the heterosexual relationships are critical of what they see as women becoming weakened by being in relationships with men. They are similar to the Mainstream Groups in naming "bed-hopping" as a frequent narrative and in a critical way. There is contradiction here as earlier feminism was related to a soap issue yet the negative representations of strong women are not seen as having been set within backlash. One respondent is angry since she can't identify with heterosexual issues.

LG4. "Well personally, I don't relate to them to **that** extent, because the **majority** of them... they're all **heterosexual**, and I cannot relate to heterosexual **relationships**. So I just **look** at that, and I just think... I don't think too much at all to be quite honest with you because I'm not... I'm not **straight**." This indicates neglected audiences; there are 'heterosexual' scenes which can be interpreted as homoerotic, but readings of same sex desire between 'heterosexual' women in soap operas are not so easily identifiable. A particular kind of gang culture represented in *EastEnders* which refers to the Kray brothers is often homoerotically coded; desire between women does not have the same popular accessibility and is more often situated within porn and cult genres. Awareness of gay audiences is more easily detected.

As anticipated by the researcher's readings the responses are critical of the lesbian representations, while there is also enjoyment in viewing them. Gay men are read as kind but this is said in an angry way and there is awareness of the different representations from a feminist perspective. 'Hayley' is not critiqued; 'Hayley' and 'Roy' are approved of and there is no analysis of them. This was unexpected; the Group do not publicly welcome transgender members and there are heated discussions at times. There is arguably less consensus than the large decisions making meeting implies; within this small Groups there are divergent views on all of the issues.

## Older Gay Men's Group

Contradictions are apparent when they say they don't watch particular soaps then that they see a few episodes.

I. What about *Emmerdale*, do you think that's funny, or?

GM1. I've never seen it, I've never seen that.

GM2. I haven't seen it, I've just seen a few episodes.

It is a view which disclaims being a soap fan unless there is regular and frequent viewing and it is possible *Emmerdale* is not regarded as a credible soap.

The Group see heterosexual relationships in the soaps as mostly short lived and shallow.

GM2. "And particularly the young ones, I mean whether it's characteristic of teenagers in early 20s which he probably is I **don't know**, in and out of bed and just one night stands, even, **even though** they've got a **permanent relationship**, it's not just happened recently." They see this as a reflection of reality and are critical of the representations being "on the screen". The paralinguistics of all talking at once here indicate strong feelings.

GM2. Yeh but I don't like to see it so...

GM3. No no, I don't like to see it in front of me on the screen

GM2. I'm sure it's going on goin' on all the **time**.

However, the older characters relationships are viewed as "boring" as they don't have sex but this is contradicted when one respondent, GM1. points out, "In *EastEnders*, the **black** couple talk about 'aving sex and that". There is awareness that this may be a positive representation and also help to perpetuate a stereotype. Cultural capital is evident.

GM2. These black people ...( ) seen as ?

GM1. No, I don't know, ..stereotypes, do you think they get into stereotypes with that? I don't know.

GM2. is very critical of the middle aged women and refers to them as if unattractive: They're always dreaming, I mean 'Janice Battersby'.. my **god**. GM1. agrees.

GM1. To think of her ( )

GM2. ( ) her daughter, you've blown it with '**Jamie**', never mind what you, what about **me**....I must say I wouldn't give 'Janice Battersby'....

GM1. laughs

GM2. A **chance**...

There is a complex attitude to older women; admiration is expressed for an older woman character who is very 'feminine'; her character is seen by these gay men as making efforts for men rather than herself, with a reward of a man. GM2. "Audrey's' somebody who would **love a man**, she's an **attractive** woman, personality. Very **demanding** of a man but er yes she **deserves** a man".

Lesbian representations are noted and remembered by GM1. The scene he recalls is of a lesbian couple in bed ('Binnie' and 'Della' in *EastEnders*). GM2. is emphatic that he hasn't seen any. GM3. says he used to find lesbianism embarrassing: "something deep in my subconscious" and now "if you feel as if you're being exposed to it, oh well, there's nothing in it." He is aware of the near invisibility and perhaps mysteriousness of lesbians who are rarely in soaps, describing his previous feeling unknowable to himself and describes familiarity as a dissipater of embarrassment. GM3. is interested in the structure of the media and pressure to target and not lose audiences, aware that *Coronation Street* would not have wanted to lose "a lot of viewers". He is astute in describing the use of absent referents in *The Archers* (like *Rebecca*). He tells a narrative to the Group which engages them and leads to their suggesting different endings. There is much interest in this cricket themed story; gender is important here.

GM2. is inconsistent; he thinks 'Sean' a "very lovely character in every way," yet earlier has described him as "unfortunately camp", and refers to the pressure on actors who play gay characters, and the political context. The discussion in the Group reflects the 'safeness' of 'Sean', who is not seen with a lover, compared to 'Todd', who suffers. GM1. thinks that with 'Colin' and 'Barry', "no gay politics came into it"; GM2. agrees, seeing them as isolated. GM2. is positive about the "long lingering look" that 'Colin'

gives 'Barry' and prefers this style, "like in old films, suggestive". Again this is similar to the Mainstream Groups. This makes GM1. remember the 'Jordache' affair. There is then a misremembering of a *Coronation Street* scene when 'Todd' kisses 'Nick' who is asleep and then angry. This leads to a discussion of a *Big Brother* task where two men have to kiss. The link between these readings is the idea of a heterosexual person being forced into gay sex. The 'Brookside kiss' has this construction until 'Beth's' feelings are reciprocated as 'Margaret' had rushed off with a look of horror. The Group remembers the lesbian scene and all the others as being inappropriate or forced. One character in the scenes was not a 'real' lesbian or gay man. The readings of the Group reveal the memories of rejection and horror which are dominant in the texts, and indicate representations have negative personal and emotional effects, opposed to cultural awareness seen as only positive. The newness of representation is not the strongest memory. The soap lesbians may be new to the Mainstream Groups but these audiences have seen 'alternative' films and texts and their position is one of critique rather than enthusiasm.

'Hayley' and 'Roy' are read as "touching, intelligent" and "they're both strange except 'Hayley' isn't". GM1. is angry that other women are cruel to her although in the narrative men are too but this isn't mentioned. As GM3. has not seen her, there is some explaining to do about her status. GM1. concludes with "she's a nice character, nice fussy little thing, and very human", implying non threatening. The talk about 'Hayley' takes up a lot of the time, partly because of the explanations required so that GM3. can understand and because the other two remember the scene well where 'Hayley' tells 'Roy' she is "a woman trapped in a man's body".

The three members of this Group have different views and are the most difficult to relate to the researcher's close readings. One has never seen lesbian narratives, is critical of the camp male representations and dislikes the strong working class women. One remembers lesbians and another is now not embarrassed by them. They are critical and do not generalise about gay men in the soaps; they differentiate and do not see them as helpful to

women; women are seen as “getting in the way” rather than allies. There is liking for ‘Hayley’ and pleasure in the telling of the narrative.

### **Transgender Group**

Heterosexual relationships on the soaps are seen as short lived and this is generalised to all relationships. Cultural capital (Bourdieu 1993) is evident and knowledge of targeting audiences. Their close relationship with campaigning and *Press for Change* informs their views.

T2. Yeh they ‘ave to be [confrontational] to be entertaining.

T3. It’s sensationalism, everything’s got to be interesting to be on there. If it was dull no one would **watch** it.

T1. We ‘ave to remember that a a soap storyline isn’t going to be able to run for more than a few weeks, anyway, erm so the characters just keep moving in and out. Older characters are read as popular and amusing. T4. He’s very lifelike, ‘Jack Duckworth’.

The lesbian relationships are remembered and described by T4. “They just have a kiss or something like that. It’s not really adult.” This reinforces the text; the lesbian kisses are indeed short and not like some of the “full blooded” heterosexual relationships, as Geraghty (1991 p 163) also argued. ‘Zoë’ in *Emmerdale* is seen as unrealistic. The discussion goes swiftly to transgender issues.

They are aware of targeting audiences and production issues:

T1. “Any gay relationship, in the soap, has to be short term. Because they’re afraid of it turning off the audience long term. But a heterosexual relationship, because that’s seen as normal, can go on, for several years. But – from the soap’s point of view, when it suits ‘em, they bump off one of their partners”. She points out that ‘Hayley’ is heterosexual and it is easy to forget her transgender status. They are knowledgeable about the narrative. T1. reads it as ‘Roy’ having problems because he “is a bit of a dope”, not ‘Hayley’. This is not the ‘preferred’ reading; T1’s transgender politics inform her

reading of the soap so that she sees audiences having problems with understanding 'Hayley'. The Group do not see her as realistic, but useful in getting "people more, very empathetic towards transsexual". (T2). T1 is very critical of the discourse which she describes as "the only kind of partner she can get is a dickhead". T3. responds with "Most men probably are dickheads". This remark makes them laugh. There is a contradiction in the context of their earlier criticism of feminism. This remark could have been made by feminists in a joking or serious way, yet when this Group speaks about men in this way it is considered amusing. T3 's "But not all transsexuals have dickheads as boyfriends" qualifies the remark; the implication is that transsexuals have better judgements. There is disagreement about the character 'Roy'. T4. describes him "sweet" and "nice", but reads the narrative as shallow. T3, despite earlier being negative about soaps, says that "apart from the soap you'd never see a...this subject being taken seriously, ever."

No one describes being able to identify with 'Hayley.' T2. says, "she was designed for *Coronation Street*." This contrasts with the Mainstream Groups' view of her as realistic, which cannot wholly be attributed to their unfamiliarity with transgender, women as they have known them. However the Transgender Group's circle is varied and encompasses radical and campaigning women, which may not be so with the former, whose relationship is more in terms of acquaintance than a deeper familiarity in the sense of the BFI research. The Group reads lesbians as short lived and unmemorable; they do not read them as the close readings in Chapter 3, tortured or childlike; they show little interest in gay men representations but their critique of 'Hayley' is similar to the close readings. They see her as made to be sympathetic and part of campaigning (one of the group says has been involved in talks with the producer) and give examples of the reverberations 'Hayley' has caused in popular culture and discourse. Most audience views are positive about 'Hayley' and although seen as unrealistic by the Transgender group, this is evidence that she is successful in becoming a 'woman' by her performance. She is read as tragic but a good partner for 'Roy', whose 'masculinity' is also problematised but often positive.

### **Language use: gaps, silences and talking at once**

Talk about soaps has often been considered trivial and 'women's talk'. These interviews, which include gay men and women indicate strategies of reading and enjoyment in carnivalesque. Research has frequently concluded that women use 'tag questions' at the close of sentences. The woman who uses these most is the most dominant in the East London Group and it is not evidently a sign of need for reaffirmation so much as an assumption that the others know what she means. The South London Outer Suburb Group has one member who also has a frequent upturn of tone; this can be seen as culturally familiar to her and analysis using 'British' language structure, which is in any case widely variable does not give useful results.

### **Mainstream Groups**

There is an individual follow up interview with one of the Group participants; she speaks less in the Group interview and it is difficult to interject between the two dominant ones. Eye contact and directing questions have little effect. As she expresses a view that lesbian representations in soaps can help lesbians it is considered valuable to have her contribution. The one to one interview emphasises being alert to unequal participation and small but potentially important contributions.

The East London Group have fewer pauses than the South London Outer Suburb Group. The participants are confident and have strong views; there are less memory issues. Pauses are used to build up tension.

EL1. Police were **supposed** to be there, the police arrived at the beginning of the meeting, saw it was all quiet and went.....and as soon as they went so the **trouble** started.

The detail of past soap narratives is remembered and preferred but this shows contradictions as the newer narratives are then seen as similar. The emphases are on the time comparisons.

EL2. Yes As I say it's coming back **now** it's coming **now** to what **they** done then.  
Where they're jumping in and out of bed with one another **now**, they were doing that **then**.

There is much common knowledge and agreement in this Group with EL2. and EL1. frequently saying the same and finishing each other's sentences. This contributes to a positive atmosphere of enjoyment and solidarity between them.

Memory problems affect the South London Outer Suburb Group and there are problems identifying time scales: SL1. 'My trouble is remembering what was, what **did** happen in a certain year'.

This does not necessarily affect the issues that they remember or the discussions; it is not important to know exactly when events occur. They are aware that they have memory problems, and speak of them, and they do not have the short term memory problems often associated with early dementia. There are general problems with remembering but it is not clear that this accounts for their sparse recollections of past social movements; it can be because they had not been interested in specific movements and are unaware of their significance for others, or that they have forgotten.

There are silences and pauses when prompting for examples of same sex relationships. There are noticeable emphases and interest when the questions are about 'Hayley'. There is a parallel to the Transgender Group which agrees that we all 'hardwired'.

SL2. And **they** probably didn't **wanna** be like it. It's the way they're **born** like it, innit?.  
SL1. is less hesitant and more knowledgeable without pausing when she talks about her own experience. SL1. "Whatever they may be, I mean we did have two girls in the **office...**"

### **Older Lesbian Group**



Although LG2. is confident she is hesitant at times: LG2. “And that was...was that the first lesbian?” It is possible that she didn’t remember or trust her memory. It was then surprising that she remembered the gay man more clearly. LG2. “There was Michael **Cashman** in *EastEnders*.” She refers to the researcher’s views on soap lesbians in a monolithic way, assuming that the interviewer will agree that all are negative. LG2. “I think often, negatively. Well **you** know.”

She emphasises feminist politics (in what she sees as anti feminist narratives) and pauses for dramatic effect, not because of a memory issue. LG2. “I’ll tell you what really annoys me is, you get a very ..erm **positive woman**... coming in, and in **no** time.. she is reduced to **nothing**. As soon as she meets a man that’s **it**.”

LG1. is alert to the attention given to ‘Hayley’s’ responses and describes them with no pauses and she emphasises the terms of objectification: LG1. “Erm, if they **ask** her something everybody **looks**, you know, they’re all watching to see what she’s **doing**, what she’s saying. But... anybody else they you know oh, shut up.”

### **Older Gay Men’s Group**

The Group has few pauses and GM2. is more dramatic and uses emphases a lot more than the others. Questions about lesbian representations cause initial silence. There is a moment of much talking over each other when criticising young gay men in soaps having one night stands, indicating strong feelings.

### **Transgender Group**

There are few pauses; they are very talkative and keen to express their ideas. There are many times when they all talk at once when there is strong feeling and especially agreement on gender being ‘fixed’ and not socially constructed.

T2. Bottom line is we're all hard **wired**, so whether we're gay, straight, transgendered.

T1. It's only in the last fifteen, twenty **years**,' [Talking over each other]

T3. We don't change.

T2. This is our hardwiring.

T1 .....The only thing I find is that that sometimes, when you walk around the supermarket, people say "ooh look.. there's people like **Hayley** over there".

The contradictions of their views on transgender representations are seen here; they have earlier criticized the representations for this liberal representation.

T1. They may not 'ave been depicted in quite an **aggressive** enough way, for **some** people....But then there will **always** be people that want to see an **aggressive** approach to the ( ). The older **we** get, the more changes we've seen.

This contradicts what the others say earlier about soaps reflecting reality and points to the diverse range of views in this Group. T4. "Not really no. It's surprising the soaps **lead** public opinion. They don't just sit back and follow".

There is othering of audiences which are represented as monolithic using repetition of "the audience can't take that", underlining its' perceived conservatism and universal inability to accept bisexuality.

T3. Pleasure ( ) the notion of pleasure.

T2. Pleasure....

T3. [talking at the same time as T2] The audience **can't take that**.

T2. It's the ultimate in promiscuous.

T3. The audience **can't take** that...

## **SOAP TALK**

One area of this work theorises that LG (and implicitly B) T narratives in the soaps create talk about them in communities and thus provide opportunities for positive attitudes and

change. However finding out about talk about the LGBT narratives is problematic and complex. The interviews are themselves evidence of this and can indicate some of the issues involved. It is often implied that older mainstream audiences are not familiar with equalities issues. They are however frequently excluded from discussion and training, which is placed within employment, and initially defined in research to be the most bigoted group (Stonewall: *Profiles of Prejudice* 2006).

### **East London Group**

Little talk about sexuality in the soaps is explicitly noted in the Mainstream Groups; the East London Group agree they talk about issues like the ‘Mitchells’ coming back; they remark upon the money the actors are reported to have been paid. They recognise the Kray references and are positive about them from their own knowledge of them helping relatives. It is clear from other questions however, that talk about soaps occurs on a wider scale. The possibility of not wanting to seem to ‘gossip’ about LGBT issues is considerable.

The follow up interview with one of the participants from the East London Group however reveals ‘talk’ between family members and challenges to younger people’s homophobia. EL3.’s views on the awareness raising potential of lesbian and gay storylines are more fully articulated than any of the other interviewees. In the Group the interviewees do not appear able to identify with LGBTs but the one to one reveals her ability to empathise with the lesbian or gay audience

.  
EL3. Well just like lesbians watching it or a gay man it.. and they might be **scared** to say anything and they realise, people **aren’t** so against it as what they **think**. So I **could** tell me mum, tell whoever whoever you know they must be terrible, they don’t know my secret you know... And all that so it might help them in **that** sense. And also there’s people, like say you’re with your – phobic do they call it, and you might think, oh well they **are** normal it’s just they’re different; you know, it’s contradictory but you know what I mean.

She supports the thesis that soap narratives help create spaces for people to talk about lesbian gay bisexual and transgender issues.

EL3. It got ‘em **talkin’**, for two reasons, erm one oh shouldn’t oh how dare they show that on telly, isn’t it disgusting, that sort of side of it, then I suppose it **did** get people talkin’... you know, oh it does ‘**appen**.

She says earlier that some younger people are more intolerant than older people. Watching soaps with her grandson she describes his homophobia. “My **grandson** he says “if that was my” (he hasn’t got any children by the way), “If that was a son of mine”, ‘e said, “I’d knock it ‘art of ‘im”. And this is the one’s at **university**”.

Her views and experience challenge the view that older people are intolerant of gay men and this conversation emphasises the importance of context and experience of people of any age in contributing to their views. Gender is as again central she represents her younger (male) family members as intolerant, but contrasts this with her daughters.

EL3. Yeh. One of ‘em goes **out** with ‘em.... like ‘er boyfriend left ‘er ages ago and she feels **safer** going out with gays ’cos she can have a laugh and a dance and.. they look **after** ‘er and that. Yeh she’s got a lot of gay friends. Men. I don’t know much about **lesbians**. We don’t know any.

### **The South London Outer Suburb Group**

The Group say that they talk about the soaps, but have difficulty remembering the plots. There is clearly some talk as SL1. in particular describes discussing them with her Canadian friend. Again it is possible that if they talk about LGBT storylines, they may not want to say so if they think they will be seen as unduly interested. During this part of the interview SL1. remembers another incident, which she tells as a story of seeing “cross dressers” on a bus, both male to female and female to male. The eagerness with which she offers this story suggests that talk had taken place about soap narratives, and that if

there are interested people they will encourage each other. SL3. describes talking to her son about the transgender character in a positive way.

SL3. A man you see before she turned to a woman. That one was funny. Mm [laughing] My eldest son he asked me “**how can that happen?**” I say well you turn to be a woman if it’s the thing he say “no”. I think it’s the **right** thing ( ).

### **Older Lesbian Group**

No-one in the Group initially says that they talk about LGBT narratives with others; LG4. says she may talk about documentaries but not where lesbians are “mimicked” as she views soap lesbians. LG1. says she “would” if she is close to the people she is talking to and it would be to distance herself from the characters; she is putting this in hypothetical language but it was possible that she had talked to her sister in this way. LG5. in a one to one says that she talks about soaps’ storylines to raise awareness with her family and that she recognises them as the only forum for discussion about lesbian mothers. She is not out with her family and leads a “double life” so soap lesbians, despite her criticism of them, are important validations for her.

### **Older Gay Men’s Group**

GM2. describes talking about the “gay myths” in the soaps with neighbours who he later describes as “mindless”.

GM2. We did tend to sort of discuss it the next day.. oh I wonder what’s going to happen to so and so...

GM3. I think people in **offices**, at least when I worked in them, obviously years and years ago, erm the first topic of conversation was **always** *Coronation Street* last night.

This is strong evidence for talk about soaps with work colleagues and creation of discussion between neighbours. However the response to asking about “talk” about the

LGBTs in the soaps is contradictorily answered. GM2. says that he talks about the “gay myths” with neighbours but later says he doesn’t discuss “from a gay point of view”, indicating he is not out with them. As he says that he does discuss the “gay myths” there is reinforcement that talk is created and that while he distances himself from the “mindless” neighbours, his views are being heard and the neighbours, whatever their sexual identity, are engaging in this. In addition, he says he talks about the LGBT narratives with family. GM1. then describes his carer’s attitude, which is connected to and is revealed because of his views of the soap LGBTs.

GM1. My own carer, my carer in the morning, Ken, nice sort of chap but he’s **definitely homophobic,**

I. Who’s this?

GM1. My K., my carer, in the morning...Homophobic, and ‘e’s racist.

Discussing the soap narrative with the carer reveals for GM1. an attitude which he takes as a guide to not being open about himself; the personal nature of the care being provided and the setting on his own home indicates a problematic power relationship which GM1. decides not to make a complaint about. He likes the carer and is not prepared to change him for someone who may be equally prejudiced and who he may not like.

### **Transgender Group**

As described in the earlier section about the diversity of the Groups, the Transgender Group is in a different place in relation to campaigning and public profile. T1.’s view is that the transgender movement was behind the other movements (gay and feminist) in terms of achievements until the Gender Recognition Act which “leapfrogged [them] in front”.

T2. I think with ‘Hayley’ another thing is, it introduced people who ‘ad prejudice, against transgender people, she was brilliant for that, she knocked prejudice down, she became quite a likeable person, and er she was very mellow person, a lot of people found ‘er

acceptable, and that ‘as done, I honestly believe, and I can say from my point of view, me mother’s acceptance of me, I think that even tho’ ‘Ayley’ went in with a sort of stealth, into into *Coronation Street* from my mother’s point of view, I think she found it easier to accept me when she you know when I presented myself to ‘er for the first time as **female....**’Cos she’s ‘ad a lot of passive information loaded into ‘er, as ‘Ayley’s’ character, and not aggressively in your face. This is a programme about transsexuals in your face, coming very gentle, and this information was offloaded very gently and....

T1. reinforces this:

T1. The only thing I find is that that sometimes, when you walk around the supermarket, people say “ooh look, there’s people like ‘Hayley’ over there”.

This indicates that transgender themes in soaps create new spaces and talk on transgender issues. The naming of ‘Hayley’ in public places her as an iconic transgender figure. All of the Group believe that audience views are changed and offer evidence. The effect of the transgender narrative is considered important as emphasised in the discussion about being invited to many programmes to talk about trans issues. This is the strongest evidence from the interviews that the soap character and narrative creates spaces and are part of other discourses which raise awareness of transgender issues and politics in popular culture.

## **CONCLUSION**

The readings are non-ironic, ironic, carnivalesque, utilising encoding and decoding, and complex and sometimes contradictory. However all members of these Groups are critical of what they see as “bed-hopping” and express a desire for meaningful relationships and advocacy of “safe sex” messages from the East London Group. Two of the participants in the Gay Men’s Group prefer nuances of desire to explicit sexual behaviour on soaps; there is no mention of safe sex messages, which is a challenge to expectations. The views are diverse so that while all Groups use the concept of “bed-hopping” in a negative way their reasons are not the same. The East London Group is informed by a recognition that

women are left with babies to bring up and/or infection; in the Gay Men's Group two of the participants are nostalgic for less physical representations which they see as romantic and exciting, advocating space for a particular representation of desire which leaves much unseen and unspoken.

These are critical audiences. There are areas in which the Mainstream audiences differ from the Campaigning audiences in their apparent distancing from the issues. The Mainstream Groups also differ from each other in that the East London Group has stronger views and less memory issues. Lesbian representations have less impact on both Groups but the one to one reveals awareness of discrimination and soaps' role in helping lesbians 'come out'. Both Groups read the gay men as kind and supportive to women, and like and feel sorry for 'Hayley'. The most notable factor for this research is however their experience; knowledge of and friendship with gay men and transgender people in the past and currently gives them stories to tell and sympathetic views. A lesbian fight is told outside of the interview in order not to promote negative views. The South London Outer Suburb Group has less knowledge and is initially less positive. Knowledge of lesbians is problematic; there are no apparent friendship narratives to tell and stories that are told are dramatic; however the South London Outer Suburb Group is more 'tolerant' about lesbians and one narrates an exchange in a pub and does not dramatise, and another describes ignoring her husband's wishes and acknowledging a local lesbian couple. The stories become positive in the Group context.

The findings are in contrast to views of older audiences as monolithic, closed to new ideas, and passive consumers of soap operas. The diversity of backgrounds and histories, and the group dynamics which encourage a fluid and changing discussion enable engagement with others and changes of attitudes. EL2. reveals the ability to inhabit two apparently competing discourses, dislike of gay men (later revealed as only seeing them kissing on screen) and the affection for gay men she knows. The issues raised include her changing of views in the interview and her ability to be firm in belief of both views. She separates the discourses into 'media' and 'life,' which enables her to believe she maintains consistency and be open to other viewpoints. The Campaigning Groups are



enthusiastic about talking about LGBT representations because they have investment in them. They know that this will be a theme in the interviews and the Mainstream Groups arguably do not expect this.

The Group structure enables attitudes to be revealed within narratives both as remembered pasts and present and soap narratives, and within discussion with others. Memory plays a large part in life stories and enables narratives from life to be attached to soap narratives. The South London Outer Suburb Group has members whose memories are initially inconsistent but the Group talk enables recollection of memories and be seen in a context in which LGBT is viewed as permissible. There is both talk which is triggered by other's stories and there are claims of not being able to remember past events. Memory appears a complex issue here; people can sometimes be helped to remember or need reassurance that interest is being shown. This is not necessarily an older person's issue; soap narratives are complicated and easy to forget unless there is a reason to remember. Episodes of life histories can however be forgotten and this is evident. The contexts of past narratives tend to be social throughout: pubs, work, and bus trips for example.

The narrative self (Ricoeur 1988) is visible in the language and the structure. Initial responses are sometimes misleading and persistence with prompts and responses to the other participants make the discussion more complex and contradictory. Most marked by this is the East London Group. This is at first dominated by EL2. who says, emphatically that she can't stand lesbians or gay men on the television; she responds more tolerantly when the other two have positive attitudes: EL2. "There was a there was a, in *Brookside*." Later EL2. is vocal in terms of knowing gay men and transgender people in the past, and being close to gay men in the present. This highlights the importance of in depth Group interviews to prevent a false picture of audience responses developing. The interview direction is changed by contradiction and resistance. The other two participants are interested and try to remember the lesbian narratives. There is an initial hesitancy perhaps of fear of causing offence which once overcome transforms into knowledge of history of the East End of London and familiarity with gay men and trans people. EL2.

claims: “I’m sorry I turn it off simple as that” but then describes a lesbian soap narrative. The contradiction indicates it may be not be considered acceptable to talk about lesbian storylines unless there is encouragement and contextualisation. The South London Outer Suburb Group appears to have no knowledge of LGB or transgender people until, as in the East London Group, there is prompting. SL3. is like EL2., not positive but becomes more vocal and describes ignoring her homophobic husband and talking to a lesbian couple she lived near. The effect of the Group structure to encourage flexible views cannot be underestimated.

Contradictions in the LGT Groups are most apparent in their assumptions about audiences. They are described as though they are all heterosexual and unaware yet they have not always been identified themselves by their sexuality or transgender status themselves. The Transgender Group is less aware of lesbian storylines. They do not appear to be identified by sexuality but transgender male to female. This informs their ‘gaze’ and the perspective which they prioritise is transgender.

The LGT Groups are variously critical of many representations and similar to the Mainstream Groups in many ways. The gay men largely like the gay men in soaps but the Lesbian Group is especially critical of the lesbian representations. The Transgender Group see the educative value of ‘Hayley’ but see it as simplistic. There is one notable view; all see audiences as a mass of heterosexuals with no awareness of lesbian gay bisexual or transgender issues. In this they have a hegemonic view of passive audiences apart from themselves.

The gaps, silences and contradictions are most evident in relation to the question about talking about soaps and there is initial reluctance about talking about lesbian sexuality. The Mainstream Groups, when prompted reveal knowledge and talk about lesbians they had known in the past. However, current knowledge is said to be absent. This is noted, possibly indicating that they found talking about them and noticing them, more common and acceptable when younger, or that is seen as historical and not controversial. Further it points to an absence of lesbians coming out to them. The researcher is aware of

reinforcing the silence, having worked with some of them in the past. Sex between women can be thus theorised as not to be spoken about; implications are that there is an absence of language to describe women's bodies and that lesbian discourses are not available. Apparent absence of lesbians in their lives gives them no measure of 'realism'. This contradicts the idea that 'equalities' issues permeate culture in a single narrative. Some of the participants in the Mainstream Groups discuss LGBT narratives with family and friends; there is an initial reluctance with this topic and the one to one interview is more revealing. Equality narratives can create fear of 'saying the wrong thing' as many of these are contained in 'anti PC' right wing ideology.

The responses are more complex and varied than the researcher's close readings of specific moments and associated previews and reviews predicted. The often childlike lesbian representations or context of monstrosity of the lesbians in the soaps being talked about is responded to in more complex way by the Mainstream audiences; although they do not show early evidence of noticing them one participant is interested in hearing views on more serious lesbian drama, and the one to one shows concern about discrimination. The lesbian audience are more aware of and critical of the representations but these narratives are not remembered for long and understandably require prompting, some being 12 years old. Far from being 'saturated' with LGBT narratives, as the reviews claim, the audiences see absences.

Bisexuality is unnamed in the soap narratives studied. Although many of the LGT storylines can be read as bisexuality it is not named until brought up in the interviews when probes are used. The Transgender Group are emphatic about the transgressive possibilities. The Group is not based on sexual identity and is placed in a different position to it; there is not the strategic link which has been necessary to the other two Campaigning Groups or the threat it may present. Bisexuality's inability to fit with dualistic constructions of sexuality explains the absence of naming in spite of representation. Many of the lesbian and gay narratives described in this thesis can be equally read as bisexual as the characters have not always been gay. Where there are bisexuals there is a tendency to represent them as wanting everything and as duplicitous.

A later (2007) bisexual character represented in *Coronation Street* is constructed as devious and manipulative, unable to make up his mind. He is Asian, 'other' in many ways and demonised while his gay lover 'Sean' is naïve 'in love' and his girlfriend seen as betrayed. *Emmerdale* (also 2007) has a similar character; married to a woman and having sex with a gay man, jeopardising the latter's apparently stable relationship and 'deceiving' his wife.

The researcher's readings of the representations of gay men under discussion are narratives which are largely seen as positive and reinforcing of them as helpful to women, reinforced by few signifiers of them having sex. The acceptable gay man for Mainstream audiences is the (not deliberately) celibate man who spends a lot of time with women and supporting them. In contrast one of the men in the Gay Men's Group is more interested in the character of 'Todd', seen kissing another man and beginning a relationship which led him to leave his female partner. Another views one of the female characters as "getting in the way"; these are readings which places women as incidental to the main male characters, the latter homo-erotically constructed and the women functioning to facilitate or intervene between men. They are critical of many of the women characters. The responses are more varied than anticipated.

The transgender narrative is effective in raising awareness of issues regarding male to female transgender. The phrase "a woman trapped in a man's body" is quoted by Mainstream and the Transgender Group and has impact, reinforcing dualism and not a complex concept. Many transgender issues reveal a new way of looking at gender; this phrase and construction is seen as only a beginning by transgender participants. Their views are both critical and appreciative.

The absence of old LGBTs is unnoticed until a question is asked. The 'common sense' aspect of ageism is apparent; the Campaigning audiences were expected to be aware of this absence and did not initially name it.

The theorists most useful for this audience research are the diverse responses (Ang 1990) and significance of experience of the issues discussed after viewing (Schlesinger, Emerson, Dobash, Dobash & Weaver, 1994.) M.E. Brown's ( 1990, 1994) and Thomas' (2002) research is validated and extended to include older people as diverse audiences and in relation to talks generated by soap narratives on sexualities and transgender identity. In contrast to Modleski's (1982) thesis, while the LGBT narratives create discussions and bring non -heterosexual identities into public discourses they do not 'reverberate' through the soap texts sufficiently to challenge heteronormativity within the texts, or in relation to these audience responses, but reverberations occur across soaps and other genres. They create popular LGT (but not B) discourses about soaps which bring issues of sexual identity and transgender status into the popular imagination. The issue of reverberation is worthy of further investigation.

## CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

### **Theories of soap opera and audiences.**

Using both cultural research of soap opera and media, and social research on older people's perceptions has yielded rich results to narratives and representations of sexualities and gender identities. While research on older people recognising their views and using group discussion has increased there is little research available about older audiences of television programmes. Close readings of and intertextualities about soap opera LGBTs indicate representations which became popular discourses but the invisibility of named bisexuals and old LGBTs is noted by the researcher, yet unremarked, by participants in Groups without prompting. Some cultural theories of soap operas are confirmed by the social research, firstly in relation to the varying approaches to readings theorised by Ang (1985) and use of intertextuality and encoding and decoding in readings, as theorized by Hall (1980). These older audiences consist of alert and skilled viewers (Brunsdon 1997, p18) with varying cultural capital. There is evidence of the significance of experience of the issues influencing intensity of feeling and views in discussion. (Schlesinger et al 1994) This is most noticeable in the Older Lesbian Group's critical readings of lesbian representations. However, while knowledge and experience of lesbians, gay men and transgender people is initially denied in the East London Group and to a lesser extent in the South London Outer Suburb Group, examples of experience and familiarity are given in rich detail. Brown's (1994) and Thomas's (2002) research about talk and possibilities of carnivalesque and resistance is shown to be relevant and can be extended to include older people as active and diverse audiences.

The social research findings on audience identification with LGBT characters challenge certain theories and assumptions. Modleski theorises many identification points but few participants find themselves able to identify with these characters. However, Modleski usefully claims that only 'acceptable' issues can be included in soaps. (Modleski 1982, p93). The close readings confirm they are at this time 'acceptable' LGTs and this has resonance for the research because Mainstream Group participants read the gay men as

caring and helpful, validating this from their own experiences. Gay men have a higher value in the community and are more visible. More critical readings come from some in the Older Lesbian Group. It is clear that the lesbian representations do not receive similar approval from any of the Groups. They are 'acceptable' lesbian representations in the 'lipstick lesbian' sense and do not appear to reinforce lived experiences. The transgender character is read as a kind woman and often her transgender status is not an issue. There is a notable absence of naming of bisexuals in the soaps and audience responses. The absence of representations of older LBTS contributes to issues of identification; the older gay man in *EastEnders* ('Derek') is 'young old' and there are no old LGBTs at this time. The lack of representation reinforces discourses of older people being conformist and non sexual and older LGBTs rarely see representations of themselves. They are further ignored by not being the interpellated in previews and reviews.

In contrast to Modleski's (1982) predictions, while the LGBT narratives create discussions and bring LGBT identities into public discourses they do not "reverberate" through the individual soap texts sufficiently to challenge heteronormativity within the texts, or in relation to these audience responses. It is however notable that there are some consequences as some reverberations occur across soaps and other genres. They can contribute to popular LGBT discourses about soaps which bring issues of sexual identity and transgender status into the popular imagination (although the non-naming of bisexuality creates a more complex picture). The issue of reverberation is worthy of further investigation.

Theories of the closet (Sedgwick 1991) and "compulsory heterosexuality" (Rich 1980) are substantiated by the cultural and social interactions recorded here where the default position is heterosexuality. Soap representations are within 'outing' discourses at the time of the period of study and contrast with queer discourses which are absent.

Unless the characters continually remind audiences of their LGBT identities there is an assumption within the text and many audiences that those characters are heterosexual and in the transgender case a 'born' biological gender. Bisexual representation are not named

and do not fit into the dualistic constructions and so remain undefined, in the soap operas of this period and within audiences, including the Campaign Groups until prompted.

### **Soap opera and talk**

The talk elicited by soaps in the Groups and one to ones was effective in encouraging bonding over a common interest and an expectation of informality and enjoyment, and sometimes carnivalesque. The Group structure and questions asked are instrumental in reminding the Mainstream Groups of narratives of LGTs; initial silence in response to questions about these characters about familiarity is then taken up with narratives of the past which contradict earlier talk. This encourages conversational exchanges and reveals fluid and changing responses, particularly in the East London Group, where change of views and relating of experiences give background and richness to readings. One to one follow up discussions are helpful and give further information which contradicts the discourses referred to in Chapter 1 which construct older people as prejudiced or unsympathetic to LGBTs, for example when the respondent describes watching soaps with and challenging her son and grandson's homophobic views. There are very similar responses to gay men in Mainstream Groups.

There were differences between the Campaign and Mainstream Groups and within the Groups. The Transgender Group mostly talked about transgender representations. Lesbians were initially absent from the talk in all Groups except for the Older Lesbian and Older Gay Men's Groups. Investigating talk about LGBT issues is complex however. While the soaps clearly generate talk, this is negotiated in different ways. The Mainstream Groups claimed to talk constantly about previous episodes but appeared to not wish to be seen (to the researcher) to be overtly interested in LGBTs. Few probes were needed however to elicit narratives in soaps and lived experiences. Most Campaign participants talked about them to people they trust or to distance themselves from the characters. This was contradicted by one gay man who talks to his neighbours about "gay myths".



The Transgender Group found the transgender narrative helpful to campaigning and recognition, but within other Groups implications are that the LGBT issues are sometimes regarded as sensitive and that talk is contextual. Participants weighed up possible responses; homophobia affects and can contain participants' talk. As Brown says in relation to resistive readings: "There are four areas that are important in the generation of resistive readings: talk, boundaries, strategic knowledge, and the lowering of normative controls". (Brown 1994, p167) In relation to LGBT talk these may not always be possible.

The absence of recognition of bisexual representations by any of the participants is encouraged by the practice of not naming of characters in soaps as bisexuals, although at certain points in the narrative they can be read as performing bisexuality. They are categorised within the soaps at the time as lesbian or gay providing evidence of the power of language to define and order into particular disciplines so that these characters can be placed and accorded value within binary constructions of heterosexual or lesbian/gay. More recent soap bisexuals have been represented as devious and unable to decide and responsible for splitting up both heterosexual and gay couples. (2007, 'Grayson' in *Emmerdale*) The lack of positive representations of bisexual and lesbian identities has implications for audience responses and equalities issues, creating negative discourses in contrast to those identified for gay men and transgender characters.

The absence of lesbian representations in prime time soap operas and the sporadic visibility in soaps is reflected in the readings; the multiple (soap) narratives and the changes over short time frames noted in Chapter 3 make remembering and focusing problematic for the audiences. Lesbian representation, it has been shown, is largely 'othered' in ways which further isolate the characters in soap communities. This is reflected in the talk about soaps. There was an initial reluctance by the Mainstream Groups to recognise or discuss lesbian representation but after encouragement the talk becomes of soap and dramatic representations and personal narratives. There appeared to be less familiarity with lesbians at the time of interviewing however and this interacts with the sparse soap representation to render lesbian characters 'invisible'. There was

arguably more familiarity when they were younger and that few lesbians ‘come out’ to them now, believing they will be unsympathetic.

### **Unexpected outcomes**

The extent of the radical shifts of views in the course of the discussions and the fact that the participants inhabited competing and sometimes contradictory discourses noted in Chapter 5 was not anticipated. Evidence of initial uncertainty about the appropriateness of expressing familiarity with and affection for a gay man was one example of a respondent weighing up a relevant discourse. These indicate active reflection on both soap representations and on popular discourses. One other point worth making in relation to remembering and forgetting among older people relates to the fact that soaps have many narratives and changes of characters which makes remembering for all of the participants a challenge.

The non recognition of the absence of older LGBTs apart from ‘Derek’ in *EastEnders* across all the Groups was not anticipated as expectations had been that the Campaigning Groups would have been aware of this and possibly critical of their absence without prompting. These responses reinforce popular discourses that older people are asexual and the invisibility of older LGBTs, and that this is not an issue for demanding representations. The ‘common sense’ constructions of ageism are reinforced by these audiences not noticing the absence of older LGBTs.

### **Limitations of the research**

The limitations of the research are caused by the small numbers and the largely female participants. The ages were broadly spread in the Mainstream Groups but younger in the others. In addition the samples were not ‘representative’ of older people (and this would be difficult to define in any case). The Groups were not equally unknown to the researcher; more familiarity with the one of the Mainstream Groups and lesbian and gay Groups affected insider/outsider status. More effort could have been put in to searching

for older bisexual audiences if time had allowed; this would have given a fuller perspective on audience readings and critique. This indicates a challenging but fruitful area of research.

Theoretical perspectives on constructions and discourses on older people were not balanced or equalled by soap opera theory so that there is not equal theoretical analysis in the thesis; it is hoped that there will be more emphasis on theory and older people as equalities issues impact on them/us.

The researcher has made critical remarks about the scarcity of lack of involvement and analytical input by older people in older people's research. This work reproduces that omission and while it is difficult to construct a thesis in that way it would be a challenge and achievement to design such a project.

### **Significance for research on older people**

The small Groups successfully function in jogging memories, one-to-ones and the eliciting 'sensitive' material. Soaps are productive sites to generate discussions of sexualities & identities and the research findings indicate active audiences, variously identifying with soap characters and narrative events. There is a relationship between their lived experiences and participation in discussions of non normative sexualities and transgender identities, and their capacity to change their minds according to the flow and direction of the Group talk – all contradicting traditional discourses.

Researchers who wish to develop this work may be similarly successful in not relying in 'tick box' questionnaires although these can be very useful for indication of areas for further research and more in depth discussion. Moreover where issues are very sensitive, for example young people and sexual abuse (Kelly, Burton and Regan 1994) it may help to have more impersonal methods of response as initial areas of investigation. The Group structure and follow up one to ones enabled complex issues to be voiced and revealed both knowledge and tolerance and a variety of sexual and gender positions that

*Stonewall* (2003) ignore in their initial 'tick box' questionnaire which concludes with older people as the most prejudiced group. In their more in depth follow up research using focus Groups and in depth interviews (Valentine and McDonald 2004) the results are more fruitful and less age related. As found in this thesis familiarity with minorities is given as the most important factor in promoting tolerance and respect (Valentine and McDonald 2004, p20).

Research of older audiences' views is under represented in research. Further research indicated by this thesis is an investigation on recent bisexual soap representation and older audience readings. Other TV genres, for example reality TV shows, would also provide fruitful sites for older audience research because of the dense intertextuality and large, wide audiences. One outcome of the discussion Groups indicates an investigation of a sample of providers of services for older people to elicit their awareness and approaches to older LGBTs.

Few of these participants wanted social care but there are implications for health and social care indicating expansion of structures of staff training which includes users of services as active participants rather than objects seen as problems to be solved. The ongoing discussions since the Equality Act (2006) made provision for a single Commission for Equality and Human Rights (2007) indicate it is a contested site; the inclusion of age is a campaigning issue that has the potential to explode popular ideas of older people as burdens on society and prejudiced against change. Older people's views are complex and influenced by gender, culture, sexual identity, histories, and most importantly, experience.

## **Appendix 1.1**

### **State pension and pension credit**

From April 2008 the full Basic State Pension is £90.70 a week for a single pensioner and £145.05 for a couple based on the husband's contributions.

From April 2008 the Pension Credit guarantees a minimum income of £124.05 for a single person and £189.35 for a couple as long as a claim is made.

Around a third of women reaching State Pension Age in 2005 were entitled to a full basic pension, compared to 85% of men. (*Age Concern* 2008, p11).

Age Concern. (2008). 'Older people in the United Kingdom. Key facts and statistics'. 2008. [www.ageconcern.org.uk/Ageconcern/keyfacts2008.pdf](http://www.ageconcern.org.uk/Ageconcern/keyfacts2008.pdf).

## Appendix 2.1.

### Close Reading of key *Brookside* Scene with 'Beth' and 'Margaret'.

Signifiers create a middle class setting. The audience sees the kitchen through the open partition doors behind them, and the washing machine, a wine rack, and a plant in a cauldron-shaped pot. They are not however middle class like the 'Farnhams' and are out of their own environments; they are both in a known 'someone else's' place. 'Margaret' comes into the 'Farnham's' living room with papers in her hands. She is wearing a long black skirt with a side slit. 'Beth' is sitting on the settee. She is wearing trousers, and a dark grey jumper with a big roll neck. They wear lipstick. ('Margaret' pale red, 'Beth' pink.) The signifiers are of 'lipstick lesbians' which are contextually important for readings of the two women. The two lesbians are a construction of this historical period (early 1990s) which they both reflected and helped produce. These representations can be seen as both the site of the male gaze and a statement that not all lesbians are the stereotype lesbian feminist. Althusser (1971) has theorized that absence of signification in ideological terms is as important as what is being signified, and in this example the fashionableness of lipstick lesbian is a statement about lack. Lipstick lesbians are constructed as white, young, attractive, stylish and mostly objects of the male gaze; they are therefore lacking feminist thought, seriousness, and signs of ageing. 'Beth' and 'Margaret' are constructions of lipstick lesbians. The papers which 'Margaret' carry signify learning; they are 'Beth's' project but 'Margaret' is the one who can do the graphs and make the theory recognisable. In the previous episode 'Margaret' said she didn't understand 'Beth's' work. 'Beth' is the intellectual, and the potential doctor. This is a cosy domestic scene, lit by a low light. Browns and red are dominant colours, marking this as warm and intimate. 'Beth' sits with her knees up and legs under her so they touch 'Margaret' when she sits down. The settee is small, a two seater. They both have their legs pointing to each other and are physically close. 'Margaret' is not flinching away. She may be read as flirting with 'Beth'. The shots are first of their whole bodies, then upper bodies, from waist up. 'Margaret' has been working on the project that 'Beth' has to do for college. In spite of the tension between them in the previous scene,

they are getting on well together. There is bantering and teasing when they talk about the work 'Margaret' has done. However, the atmosphere changes and becomes tense again when 'Beth' insists they talk about her sexuality. The previous intimacy is set up to enhance the later tension. 'Beth' pushes 'Margaret' to talk about how she feels, and 'Margaret' tells her that she thinks 'Beth' is attractive. She says that if she, 'Margaret' were a man she would fancy her. This indicates that she assumes male desire as active because she could have said if 'Beth' was a 'fella' she would fancy her/him. This is important: she speaks from a firmly heterosexual viewpoint and places women as objects of desire.

There is much shared humour and intimacy. 'Margaret's half-joking manner is seductive. The last lines, when 'Beth' says that "at least we'd know where to go from here" if 'Margaret' was a man, refers to a heterosexual narrative code which would give them clear guidelines for behaviour/performance. The speech is also ambiguous, as it makes sexual desire possible between them now, while signalling an absence of an accepted code for same sex desire. The heterosexual code leaves others outside, as 'other'. 'Beth' does not think that 'Margaret' is unaffected by her and it is possible that she can see 'Margaret' desires her. They know each other well. The framing and shots of them in this scene emphasises their physical closeness, as they sit with their knees touching and pointing to each other. A lot of the shots are close ups, showing facial expressions in detail. 'Margaret' is in control, not anxious, for most of the scene, arms folded, and smiling. At one point, 'Beth' says "I don't want you to be scared of me. I don't want you to think that...every time we share a bed I'm going to seduce you." The earlier scene has shown 'Beth' saying the same. She is referring to discourses of predatory lesbians, and is also frightened of herself, as she uses the romantic discourse of being taken over by an irrational force, 'normal' when male (since he is the active initiator/subject of desire in heterosexual discourse), abnormal when female (since she is the passive object of desire). The camera shows us a conflicting response in 'Margaret': her expression shows alarm and fear while 'Beth' speaks, so that 'Margaret's' later denial of being scared is not convincing. Several times in this scene the camera is on the one who is not speaking, so that we focus on the reaction.

'Beth' uses a liberal narrative code to signify the normality of lesbianism. It parallels heterosexuality with "Well, nothing's changed...I still feel exactly the same way about you. I'm happy when I'm with you and I'm sad when I'm not. I just want to be with you all the time." 'Margaret' expresses a heterosexual code of friendship, ignoring 'Beth's' desire. However, in retrospect it can be read as normalising lesbianism, (or more accurately bisexuality) when we know that she is attracted to 'Beth' after all. 'Margaret' signifies that she is objective in discussing desire. She can evaluate attractiveness without being attracted. 'Beth' is the logical one for the moment, and 'Margaret' is in 'denial'.

Scene 3

2 minutes.

'Margaret' asks 'Beth' to stay the night, knowing how 'Beth' feels. 'Margaret' initiates a kiss which becomes sexual. . 'Beth' is alarmed at the prospect and 'Margaret' comforts 'Beth', by putting her arms round her and holding her, then she initiates the 'kiss'. 'Beth' is happy, until she sees an expression of disgust on 'Margaret's' face. 'Beth' rushes from the house. The setting is the hall in the 'Farnham's' house. The scene takes place as they walk through the hall and in front of the door. The hall is uncluttered. This is a middle class home with plants. The frosted glass gives little protection. They are hidden but could be discovered at any moment. After the safe closure of a difficult discussion there is re-opening. The hall is brightly lit. It is dark outside which we can see through the glass panel.

The narrative codes include romance, melodrama and social realism. Secrecy is encoded again relating to taboo desires, which while they are signified as hidden are known in popular culture particularly in porn. Margaret is enigmatic: her thoughts are withheld from 'Beth' and audiences. However we know from the previews that there will be an affair. The scene in front of the door can represent a hidden closeted life, which can be exposed by someone from the 'Close' watching or opening the door at any time.

Sedgwick's work (1991) is theoretically useful. The hall can function as the closet.

'Beth' has not 'come out' because she is not open about her sexuality, but she has come out to 'Margaret'. 'Beth' will be required to come out again and again, and not only to



the other characters. Although some audiences know about her feelings and desire for 'Margaret', audiences are not constant. Different readings are available to different audiences; but while a lesbian gay or bisexual audience will need less signification, the default position is heterosexuality.

The conversation goes from safe to unsafe, as 'Margaret' begins with expressing pleasure that they have talked to asking 'Beth' to stay the night: "I'm glad we talked". "It's good we can be really honest with each other. That's the way it should be....why don't you stay here tonight?" 'Beth' is close to her, their arms touching. They have their backs against the door. Both are in shot from the waist up. 'Beth's' response: 'No, it wouldn't be right,' is accompanied with a frightened look as she throws her bag and coat to the floor. 'Margaret's' "Why not?" in response, is stupid or disingenuous. She forces 'Beth' to say, again, that she desires her: "Well if you want me to be totally honest I wouldn't be content to stay in the spare room." 'Beth' looks away, then back to 'Margaret', worried. She speaks in a breathy voice. 'Margaret': "What do you mean?" (Again this is naïve given the previous discussion.). Blinking signifies mock innocence here. 'Margaret' blinks a lot. 'Beth': "You know how I feel about you...it doesn't just end with me" she looks away then back at 'Margaret'. 'Margaret' looks at her with what could be distaste; (this is enigmatic, and ambiguous for audiences) "finding you attractive, like in your personality. I fancy you in the same way I fancied 'Peter Harrison'". [Pause] "I want to kiss you in the same way I kissed him". Bisexuality is signified here and expressed, but also heterosexuality as the framing experience: 'Beth's' feelings are the same as - not different and other. 'Beth' looks at 'Margaret' with desire. 'Margaret' looks away, down ruefully, and blinks many times. 'Beth': "Oh I'm sorry..... I shouldn't have said that". 'Margaret' looks back at 'Beth'. 'Beth' looks away. 'Margaret': soft voice, gentle tone: "It's ok". Beth: "No it's not." She breathes audibly in short gasps. "I've said too much and now. I've spoiled everything. How can you possibly stay friends with me now?" 'Beth' speaks facing away from her. She sounds angry with herself. 'Beth' looks back at 'Margaret'. 'Margaret': " 'Cos I want to. Come here." 'Beth' swallows. They are looking at each other. 'Margaret': "I hate it when

you go all sad on me. It's going to be all right you know." while still hugging her.

'Margaret' is the active partner now.

The camera is in the same position with both of them in shot from the waist up.

'Margaret' puts her arms round 'Beth', holds her and strokes her hair. We can't see 'Beth's' face. 'Margaret' is in the foreground with her eyes closed. They pull back and look at each other. 'Margaret' takes 'Beth's' hair in her hand. 'Beth' kisses her on the lips briefly, a friendly rather than passionate kiss. They gaze at each other. Then 'Margaret', who has been looking at her mouth, slowly leans forward and they kiss, not very passionately. This kiss lasts for 10 seconds. There are no visible tongues. Their eyes are closed. We can hear heavy breathing. The initial brief kiss could signify friendship but given the preamble to this we are expecting something more dramatic. The kiss signifies the taboo, repressed, and is understated in terms of passion. However, the build up, the previews, and the potentially disruptive narrative signify a moment that will have enormous and probably terrible repercussions. This kiss is full of significance and sexual longing because of intertextual references and the previous scene. Yet it can be seen as "a tender kiss, rather than sexual", as Sandra Maitland, the actress who played 'Mandy Jordache' describes the kiss in a discussion in the video *Brookside: The Women* (Redmond, 1994).

The shot and frame is the same and their reactions can be seen at once; there is no need to wait for the counter shot. 'Beth' can be seen as insensitive at first as she doesn't pick up on the horror on 'Margaret's' face. 'Beth' says, after an audible intake of breath. "Well, we haven't been struck by lightning yet". She smiles. They pull back. 'Margaret' has her mouth open and looks disgusted, as if she has swallowed something nasty. 'Beth' doesn't notice this. She has looked at her after kissing her but not closely. 'Margaret' still looks shocked and disgusted, after opening her eyes and seeing 'Beth', as if she can't believe it and there is a bad taste in her mouth. The metaphor of lightning striking signifies danger and in religious overtones the forbidden. There is no lightning which implies lesbianism as accepted normality, which 'Margaret' will disrupt because the taboo is not from outside but from inside in this construction. They have not been struck, but 'Margaret's'

response belies 'Beth's' optimism that all is well. 'Margaret's' pleasure and then horror signifies a repressed lesbian discourse. She kisses 'Beth' with her eyes closed and when she opens them she recoils. This is the narrative of the body responding to desire until 'reason' and fear arrive, and the fear of taboo returns, enacting a dualism of mind and body where the unruly body is at war with 'reason' and social acceptance. "I'm sorry" 'Beth' says in a quavering voice. 'Beth' breathes audibly. 'Beth' has realised, as she sees 'Margaret's' expression, that 'Margaret' is not happy. 'Beth' looks horrified. 'Margaret': "Don't be". 'Beth' bends down and grabs her coat. She disappears from the frame as she does this. 'Beth' says 'Mmmm I'd better go', with panic in her voice, and sounding breathless. 'Margaret' nods and closes the door after her, leans on it, mouth still open, and breathes out loudly, twice. This is the lesbian as a problem, shamed and wracked with guilt at her own abnormality. The words are not consistent with the action. 'Margaret' initiates the second kiss, yet 'Beth' takes responsibility for it. 'Beth' has been tricked; 'Margaret' is devious, a heterosexual discourse of women as seducers who then claim they've been forced into sexual acts. Yet 'Margaret's' body has shown desire and then recoiled, for we see she is performing disgust, with herself, or 'Beth', or both. 'Margaret's' actions can be read as if her 'conscious' mind is suddenly aware of what she has done.

Redmond, P. (1994). 'The lesbian kiss'. Brookside. [Television]. Channel 4, 1 January 1994, 8pm.

## Appendix 2.2.

### Close Reading of the 'kiss' scene between 'Barry' and 'Colin in *EastEnders*

The narrative is that 'Barry' is ill, and 'Colin' is looking after him before he has to rush off to jury service. 'Colin' is caring; 'Barry' petulant and rude. 'Barry' is worried about not being able to do his market stall. The setting is 'Colin's' flat, which is minimalist and tidy, and a painting can be seen through an open door. Television and sound system are also to be seen. This is signified as middle class home, tasteful in 'Colin's' style. 'Barry' hasn't made his identity visible in the style and furnishings in the flat. 'Colin' keeps it tidy. In the opening and following shots, 'Barry' is lower, so that 'Colin' has to bend or look down in this scene. Lighting is bright throughout. There are no soft lights and romantic atmosphere. Narrative codes are social realism and romance. 'Barry' is coded partly like an 'angry young man' of the fifties and sixties, responding against authority and/or a father figure, which can be represented as the same thing.

'Barry' says: "Naagh I've got the shivers, that's all. 'Spect I'm coming down with some bug or other. I mean you're likely to pick up all germs going into your work on that market." 'Colin' comes in with a mug of drink. He is wearing smart clothes with white shirt and a tie. He picks up a jacket from the back of a chair. 'Barry' is lying under a 'masculine' dark blue and white striped duvet. 'Barry's' voice is petulant, breaking and antagonistic. They are like parent and son. 'Barry's' illness is referred to as "flu-like symptoms" later in the episode. The symptoms in this context could signify HIV.

'Colin' says firmly "Go back to bed", then softer, "I wish I could stay with you but jury service is the one thing you can't say no to". 'Colin' puts his jacket on. He is in shot and 'Barry's' head. 'Barry' looks down at the mug. 'Colin' is loving and patient; like a parent.

'Barry' says, in a sneering tone, "Oh yes, I know. You've been looking forward to it since you got the summons. Right up your street". The last part is said in a tragic voice.

“Bet you’ll be at it for days. You’ll be the one who won’t be able make up his mind. ‘He’s been through everything ten times over’. If it was me I’d just say guilty and go down the pub”. ‘Barry’ is in shot with head and shoulders. He pouts. He holds the mug in a child-like manner. He pulls the duvet up further. ‘Colin’ straightens his tie, and smiles at ‘Barry.’ Again ‘Barry’ is like a sulky child with a parent. ‘Colin’s’ patient expression of fondness and calm rarely falters. They are predominantly asexual in the respectable setting. ‘Barry’ undermines ‘Colin’s’ resolve although ‘Colin’ is reliable, dressed appropriately. He is a responsible citizen who takes responsibility seriously. ‘Barry’ is lazy and likes a drink. They are very different. Class and cultural difference are signified. ‘Colin’ says, “Well. It’s just as well it isn’t you then” then in a firm voice, “Look, I don’t want to get into an argument with you but promise me you’ll take the day off and I’ll ring you lunchtime, ok? I won’t even know what the score is until I get there.” ‘Colin’ kisses ‘Barry’ lightly on the forehead, straightens up, picks up a newspaper (broadsheet) and leaves the shot.

‘Barry’ says “I couldn’t go in even if I wanted to. Another day’s takings down the pan.” Only ‘Barry’ is in shot. His voice is tragic and angry at the same time. The signification of his continued irritation with ‘Colin’ and martyred tone implies a dissatisfaction that can be read as he may leave him at any time; later he may revert to heterosexuality. ‘Colin’ says “Oh, I feel awful having to leave you”. He is in view in the doorway. He speaks softly, regretfully. ‘Barry’ is impatient, and says, “Oh, stop fussing.” ‘Colin’ smiles fondly. ‘Colin’ says “And don’t worry about that stall. It will only make you worse.” ‘That stall’ implies insignificance to ‘Colin’, as if it is a toy. ‘Barry’ says, “Yeah, well it might not mean much to you but it matters a lot to me”.

In this scene in which ‘Barry’ and ‘Colin’ kiss, difference and variations are signified. The working class culture which ‘Barry’ comes from is the same as the *EastEnders* constructed community. He belongs in the Square. ‘Colin’ is the outsider and not aware of Barry’s identification with his stall. Colin is both fond and patronizing. Yet later in this episode when ‘Colin’ covers the stall for ‘Barry’ he is robbed and humiliated. ‘Masculinity’ resides within ‘Barry’ although he is here like a child, whining and

petulant. Masculinity showing vulnerability in illness is not however challenging or unusual. Dominant discourses frequently represent men as like babies when ill and women caring patiently, exasperatedly or indulgently for them. 'Colin' can be seen as the 'mother' and as he is arguably often a 'feminised' character he can be read as challenging masculinity. There is an 'othering' of 'Colin' which he can make 'normal' only when caring for his young lover, and only then of sexual activity is never referred to.

Holland, J. & Smith, T. (1987). *EastEnders: 'Colin' and 'Barry' kiss*. [Television]. London: BBC1 17 November, 8pm.

## Appendix 2.3

### Close reading of the scene in an episode of *Coronation Street* in which 'Hayley' tells 'Roy' she is a 'transsexual'.

The episode is about seduction, courtings, with tensions about consequences (baby's mother not married) unresolved, threats to friendships, 'manipulative seductive' woman, and in the middle of this, an old fashioned courting scene, until 'Hayley's' revelation.

Close Reading of the scene.

The setting is the café. It is dimly lit by candles. The first shot is only of the table, laid with a cloth and one candle and a vase of pink carnations. They sit facing each other drinking red wine. The seats they sit on are plastic and cheap, café property. There is nothing else in shot so it appears stage-like. The background is a wall or fabric and has nothing to draw the eye. The scene parallels the previous wine drinkers where there has been secrecy but these two are not knowing or devious. The scene is romantic not sleazy and Roy has tried hard to make it look attractive but not a prelude to seduction, placing it in the café and not his flat. Later when he asks her to go to the flat this changes the expectations.

'Hayley' wears a white polo neck shirt under a silk blouse with a Chinese style pattern. She wears large clip earrings and wears pink lipstick, painting her lips in a bow shape. She looks healthy and glows. Her hair is straight and looks solidly set. 'Roy' always wears a cardigan which on an older person signifies bad taste and this one is green and thick with a collar. Underneath he wears a white shirt with a paisley scarf round his neck (Tootal style). They are both dressed in old fashioned classic clothes which may be expensive. 'Roy's' hair is straight, dark and with a side parting. In close-ups there can be seen slight stubble on his chin. 'Hayley' speaks softly throughout and her accent is softer than his.

The lighting is dim, lit by candles. One of these is on the table between them. 'Hayley' has her arm resting on the table with her hand stretched flat out and almost touching 'Roy's' plate. There is piano music rising to a crescendo. Both are in shot facing each other seated at the table. 'Hayley' holds a wine glass to her lips. Roy: "Just a little time to digest before dessert". 'Hayley' says "I'm sorry Roy," (she makes a fluttering motion with her hand), "I don't think I could eat another mouthful. I mean it was lovely but.." 'Roy' says, "No no no problem." He is in shot, waist up. He smiles. His mouth turns down when he does this and it is a grim look. 'Hayley's' back is seen and the pattern on her blouse is clear in the shot: leaves which look like snakes.

'Hayley' says : "You don't mind?" 'Roy' says, "No not a bit. It's such a treat not to have tout le monde interrupting like last time." He takes a sip of wine. There is a shot of 'Hayley' from the waist up; she laughs and looks down, takes a sip of wine and suddenly looks tense. She says, "Yes". 'Roy' says, "Hayley". He leans forward and continues: "I really feel we're getting to know each other tonight, don't you?" There is a close up on 'Hayley' who half closes her eyes as if praying. She says, "I do, Roy." 'Roy' says, "That means a great deal to me ....shall we take coffee upstairs, in mm the flat, make ourselves comfortable?". Still in close up 'Hayley' looks frightened and worried and puts her chin forward and visibly swallows. She says, "I'm sorry Roy". She is in shot, close up on face. She looks serious. Her head is on one side, then the other. She looks truthful and intense. 'Roy' says, "I've said something I shouldn't." She is in shot and raises her shoulders. 'Hayley' says, "No, No it's me. I've **not** said something I should,". She raises her shoulders and continues, "and I'm afraid it's something quite big..don't know how you're gonna take it."

'Hayley' is still in close-up. She speaks quietly, sincerely, and looks intently at him. She is not looking away and her bodily movements signify honesty and bravery. She is in control as her voice is not raised or uneven. 'Roy' says, "Why why what?" This comes out with no pause. He is panicked. He leans forward with a puzzled look. 'Hayley's' back is in shot showing the patterned blouse again. She says, 'I want you to know first... no matter how much I've **loved** your company, I will', she stutters, hesitant, "understand



if you don't want to see me again." The shots switch between them, so that audiences can see her sincerity and his bewilderment.

'Roy' says, "Nothing would make me not", and his voice breaks, "want to see you again 'Hayley'." His face is in shot and he looks anxious and he too is sincere. 'Hayley' says, "This might." She sighs and looks down. This is a close shot to her shoulder. Now she looks ashamed as the direct eye contact is broken. We are now set up to understand Roy's rejection later and to want him to 'forgive' her. We are forewarned both by the previews and 'Hayley's' words that this is a big issue and upsetting for him. The problem becomes his and the sympathy is for him, not her.

'Roy' says, "Why, what is it?" His voice is tense and he is in shot. 'Hayley' says, "Well, it's something to do with my past." She is in shot. 'Roy' says, "Your past?" He is in shot and looking very worried. 'Hayley' says, "Several years past now." This establishes that transgender is not a sudden whim of hers. "But." ...what?". Roy is in close-up. He speaks very quietly and seriously. He looks grim. 'Hayley' says, "I'm a transsexual". She pauses. She is in close-up and her head is again on one side. This is a pose that is child-like and an appeal. Then he is in close-up looking serious. She is in close-up, him again silent and expectant, then her again, head on one side as she says, "I mean I'm not a female by birth Roy"....Close up on Roy as she says, after a pause, "but by choice." His face and shoulders only are in shot and his shoulders are hunched, showing the quilted suede on his cardigan. The old-fashioned solid garment, signifying his fixed traditional views contrasts with the news of problematic identity issues. This is the end of the episode, a 'cliff-hanger' ending meaning there will be more. The following episode continues with a fuller explanation of 'Hayley's' transgender status.

Park, B. (1998). Coronation Street. 'Hayley' tells 'Roy' she is transsexual. [Television]. Manchester: ITV. 27 February 1998. 7.30pm.

## Appendix 3.1

### Interview with the East London Group 11 April 2005

EL2. I'm alright when I'm watchin', and er I can talk after. [laughs)]

I. That's fine. I mean... The questions...ok I want to just ask you something **before** I concentrate on the soaps. What.. because soaps deal with a lot of different issues and things. What erm campaigns or social.. movements do you remember, from the past, like political or social movements.

EL1. What it, where soaps are concerned?.. Or-

I. Just anything, like, from your past, what do you remember about move, social movements, or **campaigns**,

EL1. Well I remember Greenham Common/

I. Right

EL1. and the CND movement/ which was very strong/

I. Yeh

EL1. Erm and also .... just before the Iraq war there was a million people out on the **streets/**

I. Yeh

EL1. and I am **totally** and **utterly** against the Iraq war/

EL3 ..... the miners' strike /

I. The miners' strike yeh? Anything that you...

EL1. Oh yes the miners' strike yeh erm..Anne can go first

EL2. Mosley, the black shirts /, and what 'ave ya/

I. Mm

EL2. They used to .. all meet at the York Hall and they was er .... really **bad**, really bad people, really bad people, which frighten people .. right?/ and er .. another thing was er ..... the erm ..... 4 day, 3 day a week er strikes /

EL1. Callaghan /

EL2. with er with er , they couldn't go to work.. the men couldn't go to work for 3 days and we had to really put up with it /... didn't we?

I. Yes?

EL2. We had to do things like that, and we had a big rent strike in Russia **Lane** as well,

I. Oh yeh

EL2. Big rent strike

I. When was that?

EL2. That was erm, how can I say; ... my eldest son's 60.. and the other one is 57,  
a good er ..50 years ago.

EL1. That was all over as well as well

EL2. Yeh, yeh and er

EL1. Poplar, Poplar all went on strike

EL2. Yeh

EL1. None of 'em paid rent

AL2. We couldn't pay no rent.. we never paid no rent for weeks and weeks and weeks,  
and er anyway at the finish it all fell through, but we didn't have to pay it back

EL1. We stuck together Anne didn't we?

EL2. Oh yea

EL1. Everyone , everyone refused

EL2. Everyone everyone

EL1. 'cos George Land-

EL2. Stopped paying their rent .. and when it come they all **paid their rent**. They wasn't  
against er whatsaname, and it worked out that I 'ad 2 rooms in Russia Lane and I paid 7  
and 11 a week, so if you can work out much 7/11 pence each

[laughs a lot] It's not even 5 shillings is it?

EL1. That's got to be the late 30s

EL2. Yeh

EL1. Because er George Lansbury was the MP for Tower Hamlets

EL2. No no it wasn't labour it was -

EL1. We did have a very bad one in Poplar because everybody **refused** to pay their rent

EL2. No no

EL1. Which they don't now

EL2. There there was, er like you know but now they don't they don't **bother** to pay the rent do they let's face it? Most of them **anyway** do they ay? ..don't bother

EL1. And **yesterday** there was a big one in Bethnal Green, the Jewish people were holding their er memorial to the dead, the Jewish dead, and they were pelted them with eggs and potatoes and tomatoes

I. Really?

EL1. By .. Bengali boys, yeh

I. In Bethnal Green?

EL1 Yeh, place called Hughs, Hughs House, Hughs Square

EL3. ( )

EL1. They were all standing in the Square, doing their thing, yeh, and they were pelted from the balconies by about 20 Bengali youths, who were covered up hooded and ... the police were **supposed** to be there, the police arrived at the beginning of the meeting, saw it was all quiet and went;.. and as soon as they went so the **trouble** started.

I. But ...a lot of interesting

EL1. It's a demo isn't it it's a demo but it's an awful demo I think because the Jews have been here far longer than anybody else/ really.

EL2. As I say the people were different then

EL1. Yes they were [firmly said]

EL2. They all stuck together I mean if you didn't er.. if you didn't have a bit of coal for the fire they'd lend you a bit of coal for the fire. If you didn't have a slice of bread/ you could go and ask to lend us a slice of bread, but you always paid back didn't you you always paid back/

EL1. Neighbours were neighbours

EL2. Neighbours were neighbours

EL1. Not now

EL2. Today they don't wanna **know** they don't wanna know; they don't wanna be **friends**/

EL1. The community

EL2. With anybody they don't **want** that, they don't want that **today**.

I. Why do you think that is then?

EL2. I don't know know whether er it's because..

EL3. Respect is gone

EL2. they wanna be 'igher than the next person next door, they've got to 'ave more

EL1. It's fear ..E It's all me me me me

EL2. It's all me me where we were satisfied with what little bit we **had**, we had a table  
we 'ad a chair we had a **bed**.

EL1. That was it

EL2. And we 'ad a cooker, and we could get on with it. We didn't have to .. I mean I  
never had / .. I only 'ad a couple of dresses and a couple of skirts .. right?/ But today  
you ain't got that.. you go out

EL1. Greedy

EL2. You but this you buy that

EL1. People are greedy now

EL2. This is it

EL1. And they're all living up to the **Jones's**

EL2. Jones that's right that's right

I. The history of the area is very ..

EL1. Yes

I. Fascinating I mean there's such a lot of things all the things you've mentioned and you  
mentioned

EL2. That's right

I. Slightly more recent things like Greenham which is interesting too.

EL1. Yeh eh

EL2. Mmm

I. Now the 60s and the 70s and

EL1. There was quite a lot of demonstrations

I. There was quite a lot of

EL2 Demonstrations with the mods and the

EL1. Rockers/

I. What did you think about 60s and 70s

EL2 'Cos I 'ad boys growing up then, you know what I mean?

EL1. Liked it.

I. You liked it?

EL1. I thought it was a good time

EL3. Freedom wasn't it sort of

EL2. This is it this is it

EL1. It was flower power .....you went out and you got given a flower...It was peaceful and that's really, all we **want** is peace we don't want continuous harassment and **fear**, and **fear** is the thing

EL2. fear is the most important thing because now

EL1. Everyone's afraid

EL2. Now you're **frightened** to go out, you're even frightened to go out during the **day** now. I mean I like to go round the hairdresser's Saturday morning, but all the time I'm walking round I'm running from one,

EL1. Mmm

EL2. Here to there, you might as well say all the time 'cos I go out at a quarter past **eight** you're looking **behind** you and what 'ave you ench ya /

EL1. To see who's coming

EL2. To see who's coming up and you can't.. you're frightened to take your purse and that's why I put **trousers** on when I go round there/ cos I can put me purse in me pocket, and I know I've got 'em there.

I. Associated with I suppose just after 60s things like and you said Greenham, there's feminism, women's movement stuff

EL1. Yes mmm

I. What do you think about that..women's?

EL1. Well I think they had a **point** [up intonation but these are not questions-note this]

EL2. Oh yes yes definitely

[All talk at once]

EL1. And I think

EL2. And this is another thing is..about the **women**, who got knocked **about** with their husbands, right,/

EL1. Yeh

EL2. Now they're doing something about **for** these people where they weren't **doing** anything was they?/ And it was all uncalled for; why should a per - a woman get knocked about/.. no reason.

EL1. When I was a little girl growing up in Tootin' cos I moved from Mitcham er from Poplar 'cos I said the F word and my mum moved me away, and we lived in Tootin', where the F word was said on a regular basis anyway; there was a couple opposite Mr. and Mrs. Moxham and **every** Saturday night he would beat 'er to a pulp, and along would come the black maria and take him away, and **every** Sunday morning it would bring him back, and that was that. That was her **whole life**. She 'ad about **6** kids, she never was without a black eye or a cut lip, and yet she stuck it. **Today** you see the women got more chance, they're emancipated from that standard

EL2. There was a different again to mother and my father in law/ it was my **mother** in law .. [pauses as if for punch line] she was so jealous of **'im** [laughs] she saw 'e couldn't say hallo to 'er and she'd 'it him/

EL1. My daughter in law with my son

EL2. Know what I mean? It was different **altogether** then. And she 'ad

EL1. My daughter in law beats up my son even to this day

EL2. And as I say and she 'ad **17 children** my mother -in law, [laughter from EL1], one every **year**. So she thought the world of 'im you know what I mean

EL1. She was jealous

EL2. She was a jealous you know ; she weren't jealous of anyone what they **'ad**, but she was. As I say, though she had 17 children she was one of the most spotless people that you could that could walk on the earth. 'Cos she was, she used to 'ave a beautiful, every time you watched her, she used to have a beautiful white

EL1. Pinny on

EL2. Pinny on, and she used to come in the square of Russia Lane then, we lived er they lived outside and we lived inside and she'd come, abart 'alf past eight of a night.

Everybody was frightened of 'er, to say anything you know? /

I. But as you say

EL2. And she used to **come through** right/? and she used to say 'any of my boys here?' 'no Mrs. Warden No Mrs. Warden, well we used to we used to **'ide** em

I. But

EL2. 'Cos they 'ad to be in, half past 8.

I. Things that women

EL2. Never let 'em **do** anything

I. That happened to women that are no longer acceptable, that came out of the that kind of you know feminism, women's movement, so some things you think are good?

EL1. Yeh yeh

EL2. Yeh yeh

I. Now, looking at, and I'm going to bring it to soaps now I will get round to them

EL2. Soaps yeh

I. Do you think, is there anything like some of the **issues** in the soaps do you think that remind you of any of them campaigns? ..I mean you said

EL1. Oh I don't know not so much now

EL2. Not now years ago it was

I. Any of the issues

EL2. When wha's er name

I. In the soaps themselves?

EL2. Was in it what's her name?

I. Thinking about the storylines

EL2. 'Ena Sharples'

EL1. I think the **old** storylines....

EL3. Yeh

EL1. Had more going for them than they do now they're all very light and er...

EL2. 'Ken' and er what's a name /

I. Right

EL2. 'Dev' well!

EL3. He was in prison wasn't 'e for **something**

EL1. So was 'Deidre' /

EL2. So was 'Deidre' /

EL1. That wasn't for demonstrations tho'...

EL2. No that was over 'er '**usband** weren't it.



EL1. The pilot

EL2. 'Cos the **pilot** weren't he that was over the **pilot**?

I. Mmm

EL1. She 'ad **28 men** in 'er life, 'Deidre' [laughs]

EL2. Yes she's 'ad a few, she's had a few,

EL1. [laughs]

EL2. She's been **married** four times

EL1. **Twice** to the same man

EL2. Same man yeh, twice to the same man

EL1. That doesn't sound quite so bad

EL2. But

I. So you think some of the older issues relate more to the

EL3. **Definitely**

EL2. Yes As I say it's coming back **now** it's coming **now** to what **they** done then.

Where they're jumping in and out of bed with one another **now**, they were doing that **then**... 'cos she went with whasisame didn't she, 'Deidre?' /

EL1. Mmm she went with she had '**Ray**' didn't she? I never used to watch it then

EL2. Yeh and that was and 'e went off with someone else right /

EL1. So it's yeh

EL2. Right? And then 'Ray's' come back enneh?

EL2. **But**, she went with whasisname

EL1. She had er

EL3. 'Des?'

EL2. No erm

EL1. Yes she 'ad 'Des'

EL2. 'Mike Baldwin!' [with triumph] She 'ad an affair with 'Mike Baldwin'

EL1. She also had a small a one night stand with 'Dev', don't forget 'Dev'

EL2. 'Dev' yeh 'Dev' yeh [laughs from all]

EL2. So it's erm it's coming about know what I mean?/

EL1. It does portray real life

EL2. Real life

EL1. It depicts real life because it's going on all the time ennit?

EL2. It's the same in the *EastEnders* this **family**, I mean, 'e wouldn't let no-one **know** that he couldn't read or couldn't write

EL1. Well 'e was ashamed

EL2. Yeh 'cos 'e was ashamed but if 'e fetched children up / he got through didn't he? and there was a lot of people then years ago that couldn't read or write

EL1. But they went to work Anne

EL2. They went to **work** but 'e don't go to work because 'e was frightened

EL1. He's a lazy man

EL2. 'Es a lazy man

I. So you think they've done that quite well that issue really? [Anne saying something at the same time and I had talked over]

EL1. I don't particularly see the reason why the 'Millers' are there but you're beginning to see it now with this (issue?) not being able to read and write

I. There's more

EL1. It wouldn't stop 'im getting a job he could be a **roads**sweeper.

EL2. That's right

EL3. ( ) read and write

Exactly (all agree)

EL2. There was a hell of a lot of people that couldn't read or write that's gone through There were hell of a lot of people that couldn't read or write that's gone through it. I mean I weren't a very good scholar, right, from school, I weren't very clever./ My Millie and that was, I wasn't, / but, I got through. I got through, I brought up three er five children up and I've 'elped other people as well so that education didn't hold **me** back

EL3. Yeh

EL2. Did it so I I know what I mean? /

EL1. If he were to go to a job centre and say I would like a job but I can't read or write

EL2. Can't read or write

EL1. They'd either send 'im to classes to learn or they'd find 'im a job where he don't need to

EL2. That's right

EL1. 'E's just a **lazy man**

I. Also it's a soap and they're making an issue of it. They've got to 'aven't they

EL1. They've got to because **so many children**, what they reckon, there's 16 percent are leaving school

EL2. Now listen I've got a 21 year old grandson that lives with me... Now 'e went to school.. 'e couldn't read...and for, every Sunday, my son paid £20, on a Sunday for 2 hours, see? To, to learn 'im to read right?

I. Yeh

EL2. Not until he was nearly 15 did they find **out** at **school** that 'e was electric

EL1. Dyslexic

EL2. Selexix

EL1. Dyslexic. So **all that time** 'e paid all that money my boy that 'e never knew that **tutor** never knew **right?** /. A So it 'er

I. Yeh

EL2. Years ago you could 'ave had people like **that** that didn't know what was **wrong** with 'em couldn't you?

EL2. Yeh ( )

EL2. It 'aint just come out, it's been going on for years innit?

EL3. Yeh, yeh so

I. So can you tell me now when did you first start watching the soaps do you think?

EL2. Oh my gawd

I. A long time ago

EL1. Goodness gracious

EL3. *Coronation Street*. I remember seeing me **first** one 'cos I was up in **Yorkshire** at the time and it was

I. When do you think that was?

EL3. 61? 65? Forty odd years ago

EL2. 61( ) must a bin

EL1. I watched it then I left it for a while, the 'Ena Sharples' lot I left behind, I came back to it about 5 years ago I suppose.

I. Right

EL1. Erm so I'm fairly new and picking up the pieces, it's a bit like the Bill

EL2. Yeh

EL1. I, I used to watch *The Bill*

I. So which ones do you watch now?

EL1. I watch 'Corrie', I watch *Neighbours* funnily enough

EL2. I watch it now and again ( )

EL1. I watch *EastEnders*

EL2. Only just recently I started watching that

I. Right; and which ones do you watch now [to EL3]

EL2. I only watch *Coronation Street* or *EastEnders*.

I. Right. Did you used to watch *Brookside*?

EL1. Yes

I. At all when that was on

All. Yes

EL2. Only first ( ). I used to watch, I did watch from day one erm *Emmerdale*. Me and my - but when 'e died I just couldn't get into it no more and I've **never seen it since**

I. So EL3. what do you watch?

EL2. No, I won't have it on

EL3. *Coronation Street*,

I. Yeh

EL3. *EastEnders*, *Emmerdale*.

I. Right, all of them, the main ones.

EL3. Yeh

I. Right, do you watch them on your own or with other people? Now.

EL2. I watch mine with my grandson. 'E's there most of the time when I watch mine, 'e likes it an' all, 'cos I say 'es only young un 'e but 'e enjoys it [laughs]

I. Yeh?

EL1. Thing is Nicola you don't like it but you can't help but watch 'em

EL2. Watch 'em, that's right

EL1. You pull 'em to pieces all the time they're **on** but you still watch 'em.

EL2. Watch 'em

EL3. You know what's gonna **happen**

EL1. Yeh 'cos cause you get people

I. So do you watch them with other people?

EL2. **This is what spoils it**

EL2. Now I do me grandson

I. Do you watch with your grandson too?

EL3. Yeh

EL2. What **spoils** it is - it's in magazines what's gonna happen. And that spoils it

EL3. Yeh it does

EL2. 'Cos you know what's gonna go on. Which they should never do. They **should not do that.**

EL1. And F. and J. keep you up to date on a Wednesday 'cos they read all these magazines

EL2. That what I'm saying you shouldn't, they shouldn't

EL1. Which you don't really want to know

EL2. You don't wanna know. I'd sooner watch it, and then you know

EL3. Surprising

I. So in the past did you used to watch it as a group, with other people

EL2. Yeh

I. More do you think?

EL2. Yeh, yeh, yeh

EL1. My children as I say wouldn't watch any of them and they still don't.

I. Even when they were small?

EL1. No no they weren't into that

EL2. My ones do /

EL3. My children do

I. So you used to watch it with them then?

EL1. My daughter watches *EastEnders*; she doesn't watch anything else.

EL2. My Cynthia watches erm ..*Casualty* and.. all that you know all them soaps she watches. Affairs and ooh...

I. Right, now I want to get on to that now... How do you think that **relationships** are represented in the soaps, you know relationships between people

EL1. There's a great deal of adultery goes on. There's *Emmerdale*'s joined the flow lately innit with er with er

EL2. [laughing] Yeh I 'eard about that

EL1. 'Chastity' and 'Charity' and... There's an awful lot of **adultery** they could do with less of that.

EL2. Yeh yeh

EL1. It doesn't send out a very good message to the young.

EL2. Mmm

EL1. It's **bedhopping** all the time and that sometimes

EL2. I don't think you'll change that don't think you'll change that

I. So what do you think; do you think they'

EL2. It's a different world today

EL1. It's a reflection of modern life that's the trouble

EL2. It's er it's er

EL1. It's the way it is now

EL2. The world has changed completely

I. So..do you think that's true of all the relationships generally of the relationships

EL2. The world has changed completely

EL1. On all the soaps

EL2. On all the soaps 'cos they all have a little bit but what I don't agree with

I. What about the older people?

EL2. Listen this is what I don't agree with, you got... *EastEnders*... and you got... *Coronation Street*, [soft voiced] 13 year olds, ( ) babies

EL1. Yeh

EL2. Now then you know what I mean/ and then, their mothers letting em after, the kids is a couple of months **old** or what 'ave ya, and then let them go and sleep with other chil other, other

EL1. Yeh

EL2. Boyfriends, at a young age. I don't think that it's fair.

EL1. Mmm

EL2. They **shouldn't** do that. Not on the **soaps** 'cos it's **encouraging children to go and have sex wherever they want.**

EL1. Yeh

EL2. And it's not right is it?

EL1. Don't you think Anne that they should do a **storyline** showing girls going down with er sexually transmitted diseases, and boys going down

EL3. They did in er *Family Affairs*

EL1. Did they? Yeh. They need to do this because they want to show kids the other side of sleeping around.

EL2. Yeh

EL1. 'Cos I think one in five have suffered ( )

EL2. I think that's - 'cos you, you don't get that you 'aint got that in *Emmerdale*.

EL1. No

EL2. Now 'ave ya? [firm]

EL1. Yes you 'ave, 'Debbie', 'Debbie's' pregnant... Yes you have 'Debbie's' pregnant, by 'Andy'.

EL2. How old's she?

EL1. 14, 15?

EL2. 'Cos I don't watch that so I wouldn't know.

EL1. No, no

EL2. What it is

EL1. They don't **present** safe sex at all

EL2. No no. So, this is what I'm saying, it **should be stopped.** That sort of thing

EL1. Yes

EL2. Because it's

I. What about older people.. do they have a sex life do you think on the soaps? I know in life you know there's a range of people..

EL2. Yeh yeh

EL1. 'Deidre', she does and she's touching 50 int she?

EL2. Mmm

I. What about 'Dot' and 'Jim'?

EL2. [laughs]

EL1. Oh well they were married a long time before they did didn't they yeh. Yeh there's it's not at all distasteful no

EL2. No, no no...

EL1. But now it's

EL2. It's either you know ( )

I. Erm now so you think relationships generally show not much

EL2. Affection is there. Affection is **there** innit it's like er whatsaname er whatsername?

EL1. 'Deidre' and 'Ken'?

EL2. No whatsername; Oh, 'Jack' and er

EL1. 'Vera'.

EL2. 'Vera'. Now they're **she's** like that

EL1. But they are real people. **They are real people** [emphasising each word slowly]

EL2. 'Why don't you dance with me? Why don't you dance with me and....'

EL1. But they are a real couple in't they?

EL2. You know at the wedding

EL1. Everybody knows.. they're genuine; she'll get hold of his '**and** and things like that...Everyone knows who 'Jack' and 'Vera' are.

EL2. That is what life's all **about** from day **one** you still think the world of that **person** don't you you don't **change**.

I. Right

EL1. And that's the difference between 'Corrie' and the other two

EL2. Even if I say

EL1. There is light relief with 'Corrie' 'cos you have a little giggle

I. What about...now I'm gonna ask you does....the relationships they show are all different kinds

EL2. Yeh

I. What do you think about the **non** heterosexual relationships. The lesbian relationships say or the

EL2. **Oh no** I don't agree hold with that **ooh no**



I. Can you remember any of those?

EL2. I can't **stand** anything like that

EL1. No

EL2. I'm sorry I turn it off simple as that

[All talk at once]

EL1. There was a there was a, in *Brookside*

EL2. Years ago, I mean years ago

I. Hang on

EL1. There was an was it 'Oliver' and his sister? Was it 'Oliver'?

EL1. Oh yeh an **incestual**

I. That was incest

EL1. Yes that was incest they were brother and sister weren't they. Has there been a lesbian... storyline?

EL3. In *Brookside*

EL1. In *Brookside* yeh. I don't think

EL2. Didn't she er wasn't she a lesbian that had a baby after? What was her name in 'erm...

EL3. 'Zoë' in *Emmerdale*

EL2. *Emmerdale*? I remember them saying about that...

I. So what do you

EL3. And *EastEnders*

I. What do you think about how those are represented, those relationships are represented?

EL1. Yes I think..I .. I don't think they go over the **top** erm whether you don't like 'em or not.

I. Mm

EL2. I can't watch 'em. I can't watch those..

EL1. I think they're reflecting **real life** aren't they really?

EL2. Ooh turn that of ooh that makes me feel ill ( )

I. And

EL3. It's helping people

EL2. I don't mind

I. It's ok just....I'll talk to you in a sec. You said they could be helping people

EL3.. .They could be helpin' other lesbians come out and other gay people..

EL1. Mm

EL3. And you know

EL1. But nowadays there shouldn't be any social stigma anyway

EL2. No no mean I don't er I know it's er the world today but there's so much of it. It's being treated like ... kids going out 'aving sex with 11 year old 12 year old

I. Right. That's sex that's sexual activity yeh...so do you think they shouldn't be on?

EL2. Not

EL1. No they reflect...

I. Gay men and lesbians

EL2. They're accepted

EL1. They're accepted

[EL2. and EL1. talking over each other in the next piece]

EL2. In their own way know what I mean but not as if it's a great thing as they make it to be a **good** thing now let's face it

I. Well ok, 'cos, *EastEnders*, it's often forgotten that 'Derek' is a gay man

EL1. Yes

I. Because they don't refer to it very often

Yes [all]

EL2. That's right, that's alright you don't take any notice of that, that's better

I. I mean you don't take any notice of it because he never [laughs] gets to have a relationship

EL2. That's right.

EL1. Poor man

I. How do you think that he's presented?

EL1. I think he's alright I like old 'Derek'.

[All] Yeh

EL2. As I say I get on I get **on** alright with 'em.

EL1. I worked with them

EL2. But I can't stand to see, on the telly, they're **kissing** one another. That is the one I don't ..that's what I **don't** like. I can't .. It makes me feel sick.

EL1. You didn't watch *Fingersmith* did you? [to interviewer]

I. .... Yes. I mean .. I've read the book. What did you think about, did you?

EL1. Er yes I thought it was very well done. Er I thought the end.. failed it a bit./ I thought the first and second episodes were **extremely** good.

I. It was quite true to the book

EL1. But I think that.. Was it? Well that's good news

I. Yeh. Did anybody else see it?

[EL2 and EL3] No

EL1. I think er young 'Sue' came out there absolutely superb....but as for 'Maud' I would have kicked her up the street and back. I thought she .. she used 'er and played 'er up I really do

I. They were both used though....Yes. Interesting having that on Sunday evening. Erm right.. so [to EL2. ] so you don't mind them being on but you don't like seeing them kissing?

EL2. No no no I don't like you know getting' .. to one another

I. The physical business

EL2. I don't like that

I. Right

EL2. I can accept em you know I talk to 'em.

EL1. We have to don't we?

EL2. You know I don't **mind** you know

I. That's what..

EL2. Because as I say years ago when I was a youngster

I. Mmm

EL1. It was all hidden anyway wasn't it

EL2. I 'ad erm there was a **fella** that cooks in the Broadway, the pie shop.. they 'ad a **son**, and we used to call 'im 'Diamond **Lil**'. Now it's all them years ago right? And worked at Silverstone's in Bishop's Way, right, it's still there the building.. and er 'e used to work with us, and 'e was a very nice fella, right? And we used to give 'im all our

earrings and all our lipsticks and all that you know? But 'e was a very **'elpful fella.**  
And then we lived in Russia Lane and we 'ad **two** in there... Used to talk to 'em and things like that?

I. Men?

EL2. Men, yeh, we used to talk to 'em and things like that. Didn't matter. But when you see 'em like their, you know.. sexy and that no, no I don't think that's fair.

I. [to EL3.] But you don't have any problems with it?

EL1. No no

I.....Do you think..oh, there's just one other, which is also quite interesting, is transgender people; in ..for example **'Hayley'**.

EL1. Mmm

I. In *Coronation Street*. She's had an

EL2. Oh right she yeh.

I. Previously...a man

EL2. Well this is it. This is it. This is it. They don't know sometimes what they are and what they're not. So that is

EL1. They are to be

EL2. **They are to be pitied.**

EL1. I feel dreadfully sorry

EL2. Yeh. Sorry **for** them.

EL3. Yeh I do

EL1. 'Cos they say a man trapped in a woman's body or a woman trapped in a man's body..

EL2. That..that is different that is different entirely I feel sorry for the people

I. Do you think

EL1. I think 'Hayley'..

I. What do you think about 'Hayley'?

EL2. She does very well

EL3. Yeh but if she'd been played by a man. 'Cos you forget that she is a man that she was a man...woman you know

EL1. She plays that part very well, Gerry whatsername

EL2. Yeh

EL1. But **occasionally** you see they rake that all up don't they?

EL2. Yeh, yeh

EL1. And 'Roy' I mean

EL2. **Which is not fair**

EL1. They really do, they really do have a hard time of it when you

EL2. It's not fair you see

EL1. Malicious people, they remind you of it anyway

I. Do you think that those, ok, 'Hayley', 'Derek', 'Beth' in *Brookside*- there aren't many.. 'Zoë.' Do you think they are realistic portrayals?

EL1. Yes I think they are

EL2. Mmm

EL1. I worked for BT for many years and I worked with gays at night and you couldn't wish for a [better?]

EL2. That's what I'm sayin' that's what I'm sayin', they're nice people to get on with.

EL3. Genuine

EL1. I think the thing with gay men is..

I. What about

EL1. They have a little bit of a feminine

EL2. Mmm

EL1. Thing in them that makes them relate to women in a much nicer way

EL2. See and now they

EL1. Oh yeh

EL1. If I was doing an all night and we used to start at 7 and finish at 8 in the morning I would look down the rota and see who I was gonna be on with all night..and if I was on with 2 gay men I knew it was gonna be a doddle. If I was on with 2 **straight** men..

EL2. Mmm

EL1. I knew I would be doing the

[Both A and E]: majority of the work; they'd be down the pub and got pissed.

EL3. Probably feel safer as well

EL1. Absolutely

EL2. I'm very friendly with one anyway.

I. A man?

EL2. Yeh

I. A gay man yeh?

EL2. 'E is the 'ead of the 'ome 'elp.

EL1.... Sweet.

EL2. And very very nice ..do you know' im? Jo

I. I know who you mean I think yeh.

EL2. 'E's one of the nicest person you could speak of.

EL1. You have to speak as you find; it's **people** after all.

EL2. I do me and 'im, me and 'im are like that [two fingers together raised] we get on ever so well we get on ever so well

I. Right, so what about women..I mean you've mentioned .. you know more gay men than lesbians I think

EL2. Yeh

EL1. I did know two lesbians but I'd rather glance over that if you don't mind.

EL2. No no

EL1. I will tell you when we're alone.

I. Right. All right [laughs]. But erm do you think that erm.. ok you think that the ones you've seen are quite realistic on the telly?

EL1. Yeh I think they've done very well really

I. Could you identify with them at all at any point? Even...

EL1. I don't like

I. The issues

EL1. To see them get stick.. but then you're going to get narrow minded people

EL1. and EL2. [talking over] People everywhere.

EL1. And in soaps, and they do portray that quite well.

EL2. That's right

EL1. Erm and they **do** get a lot of stick .. not so bad as it used to be though

EL2. See I mean.... what it is.. there's good and bad everywhere

EL1. I think you've just got to look at it as people

EL2. You've got to look at it

EL1. You don't (discuss?) colour or race or anything like that

EL2. No you don't

EL1. And there's plenty of white people who are absolutely horrendous anyway

EL3. Of course there is yeh

EL2. I mean there's one - I go to the Gala you know ... since I've been 'ere I don't. But I go to the Gala Saturday and Sunday night and there's one there and 'es **ever** such a nice fella.... John. 'Es the most .. brilliant fella and he'll do **anything** for anybody..

EL3. Yeh

EL2. And I get on alright with '**im..** you know what I mean? /

I. Yeh, yeh

EL2. So it's the.... I can't stand...

I. No I understand

EL2. The soaps where they're **kissin'** and all this lark

I. Do you remember anything particular about any of these episodes...of these lesbians, gays, transgender, any particular bits that you remember..

EL2. Oh no

EL1. No not off hand. I know 'Charity' and 'Zoë' had a bit of a fling at one time didn't they

I. They did

EL3. In *Brookside* there was.....

[I cut her off here and that was a mistake]

I. In fact that was bi....interestingly, really, 'Charity' was bisexual but that was never referred to as bisexuality

EL1. No, that's right yeh

EL3. That's right they just gradually

I. Do you think that's a different issue bisexuality?

EL1. Yes it is, it's not quite so common anyway is it? I don't think so anyway.

EL2. No no

I. Right... Erm do you think they change people's views; these ones... particularly, these issues.. **you** said they might make people more aware?

EL1. Mmm.

I. Do you think they do?

EL1. They should do. They should make you more open minded anyway.

I. Do you think it's, like with 'Hayley', do you think it's made you more aware..of issues?

[All] Yes

EL1. Yes because I've known a few in the pub I used to work you had transgenders coming in.

I. Oh right

EL1. And they were they were dreadfully **sad people**

EL3. Yeh. they can't talk to anyone can they; explain

EL1. No. And the 'Sebright' used to 'ave a couple that came in there and that was very sad as well because they you know you did feel for 'em they used to get quite a lot of persecution

I. And these were transgender not trans not drag

EL1. No no no no yeh and it is sad

I. Do you think there's less persecution then, that things like this might..make it nicer

EL1. Well **should** / do yeh should do

EL2. ...What's the time?

I. I've just got **one more question**

EL1. Quarter to 12

EL2. I've gotta go

I. One more. Quick. Do you **talk** about the soaps and things like

EL2. Yeh yeh yeh

I. Outside of when you're watchin'it?

EL2. Yeh yeh. We do up 'ere don't we?

I. What, if, just. Anything in particular do you ever talk about these things, about sexuality, or different...or is it just general?

EL2. Just general.

EL1. Don't think so no. Mostly just people that go in and go out and now we've got the 'Mitchells' all coming back



EL2. Coming back yeh

I. Oh yeh

EL1. A **million pounds** they've asked Ross Kemp to come back.

I. Because..I would like to talk to you about that another time, because it's so set in, you know, the East End, and referring to.. the Krays

EL1. It's set in the East End but it's not real

EL2. It's not the East End

E1. It's not the East End. I'm sorry but

EL2. Definitely not **definitely not** the East End

I. What do you think about the gangster thing in *EastEnders*. Do you think it's ...interesting? Ridiculous?

EL1. Yeh, it is a reflection of the Krays really, and the Richardsons.

EL3. That's it absolutely yeh

EL1. And of course now you've got '**Phil Mitchell**' comin' back, and Ross Kemp, 'e's gonna follow in a little while so you're gonna have the 2 lots aren't you?

I. Do you think it's a real rep..do you think it is like the Krays or an idea of what the Krays are like, how they do it?

EL1. It's like they were in the 60s and 70s, that kind of gangsterism

I. Do you think it really **is** like that?

EL1. I don't think happens today much

EL2. They was alright, they was alright in the er 60s

EL1. The Krays were alright

EL2. When they were young

EL1. To ordinary **people**

I. Were they?

EL2. Because... my Millie

I. Yeh?

EL2. They went and done my Millie's garden when she first moved out.

EL1. Absolutely

EL2. Years ago to Loughton from Debden.

[Talking at once and agreeing]

I. So who's Millie?

EL2. My sister.

I. Really?

EL2. Yeh. See they went and done er **garden** for 'er; they were **alright** then.

EL1. If you 'ad a **problem** and you could go to the Krays and say I've got a problem **with**

EL2. And they would help.

EL1. And they would **sort it**

I. And did you find that as well? Did you know them?

EL3. I didn't really I wasn't livin' 'ere then

EL1. No too young

EL3. So I didn't really

EL1. But they..I tell you **what** .. in a strange sort of a way

I. You knew them

EL2. I didn't I..I just knew them by sight and what have ya

I. And you found them helpful?

EL2. They were helpful to my sister

EL1. You wouldn't have the **jobs** around.... I think we felt safer when the Krays were around. In a strange sort of a way.

EL2. Can I hold on to you EL3?

EL3. Course you can

Code: ( ) indecipherable

[ ] my addition

/ upward tone i.e. tag questions or style of speech

.... pause

Bold Type Emphasis in tone

## Appendix 3.2.

### East London Group One to One Follow up Interview 18 April 2005

I. For the purpose of the tape it's the second interview at the drop-in. I just wanted to ask a few things from last week, because it was very interesting when we got on to talking about soaps and other relationships and things, and when we were talking about lesbians and gay men in soaps, you were very positive about them

EL3. Mmm

I. And you said it helps, it helps lesbians **come out**

EL3. Yeh yeh

I. So, how do you think it might do that. How might it be helpful do you think?

EL3. Well just like lesbians watching it or a gay man it.. and they might be **scared** to say anything and they realise, people **aren't** so against it as what they **think**.

So I **could** tell me mum, tell whoever whoever you know they must be terrible, they don't know my secret you know

I. Yeh

EL3. And all that so it might help them in **that** sense. And also there's people, like say you're with your...phobic do they call it, and you might think, oh well they **are** normal it's just they're different; you know, it's contradictory but you know what I mean

I. Yeh yeh

EL3. Yeh, they're just

I. Yeh so..so seeing them being.. treated well maybe

EL3. Yeh and treated the same as anybody else

I. That would mean they would have to have quite a **positive** representation really wouldn't it?

EL3. Mmm

I. Yes that's interesting.

EL3. Yeh

I. So do you think that would be the same with all of those, like gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, transgender, you could say the same about all of them groups really?

EL3. You **could** but then you couldn't because there's not much about em ... oh what do you call it, there's not much about **transsexuals** is there? There's only '**Hayley**'. And what annoys me with that you forget that she's a **man**, that she was a **man**, 'cos she's in reality she's a **lady** in't she? If it was a **man** playing the part oh yeh you'd think, you forget don't you 'til you're **reminded**

I. Yeh so do you think if it was a a man playing it it would have more impact?

EL3. Yeh I think it would. 'Cos it reminds so you you'd say oh,

I. It's true they don't

EL3. And you forget it's

I. Yeh

EL3. That she was a **man**

I. Yeh. Do you remem...Out of all those episodes, about those kinds of **people**

EL3. Mmm

I. Lesbians gay men .. do you remember any particularly, more than others, do you remember any special.. things that have **happened** in the soaps that related to them things?

EL3. Not really I remember there was a big **outcry** I think it was the first kiss between two lesbians in *Brookside*. That was a bit of a .. you know at the time oh/ you know

I. Yeh. Do you think that was

EL3. I just take it all in ... it's life innit, I think so

I. Do you think that was done.. well? Or what do you think of it, how that was done, that *Brookside*

EL3. I remember it come as a bit of a **shock** 'cos you weren't expecting it. .... Well you know I suppose it was a bit daring for the **time**

I. Mm

EL3. But.. it was about **time** you know everything come out isn't it ..you know all

I. Did you find it – got other people talking, that episode, or.. did you ever discuss it?

EL3. It got 'em **talkin'**, for two reasons, erm one 'oh shouldn't oh how dare they show that on telly, isn't it disgusting', that sort of side of it, then I suppose it **did** get people talkin'.. you know, 'oh it does '**appen'**

I. Do you think...Did **you** discuss it with anyone, say?

EL3. Can't remember now

I. It was quite a long time ago actually. Did you **watch** it with anybody?

EL3....Can't remember that

I. After

EL3. Half the time I don't really watch it it's on in the background and .....

I. Yeh

EL3. Can't remember

I. And who do you watch 'em with **now**; do you watch 'em with anybody now?

EL3. Sometimes me grandson's there but we're usually **talkin'** and not really watchin' it

I. Yeh I see. And that is something you said was interesting as well, last week you said ..that a lot of younger people seemed **more intolerant**

EL3. Mm

I. And you said about your **son**; I mean this is all confidential

EL3. Yes, that's all right, yeh, grandson, yeh

I. And you said, who was it, your son or your grandson who is **anti** gay, you said

EL3. Yeh. 'es not anti **gay**, but if.. it was 'is **son**

I. Who is this you're talking about?

EL3. My **grandson** he says 'if that was my (he hasn't got any children by the way) 'If that was a son of mine, 'e said ' I'd knock it 'art of 'im. And this is the one's at **university**

I. No

EL3. 'E's got a **brain**. You can't get through to people that are

I. He'd knock it out of him?

EL3. That you go that way because you **want** to. They don't realise that's the way you **are**. And it's like talking to the wall to some people.

I. How old is he?

EL3. 'Es twenty, twenty one. But then 'e hasn't got any **children**. Once 'e had **children** it might be a different matter; you know 'e's my son'

I. But you've talked to him about.... **you're** more tolerant

EL3. Mmm/

I. What about your son. Is he?

EL3. Yeh 'E don't **mind** it but 'e... but 'e's the **same**. 'e's got nothing against it if it was like **you** or yours that's alright, but if it's my son no

I. Right.

EL3. And my son-in-law's the same. Said if it was one of 'is children. I said you but can't knock 'oh I'd throw 'im out.' ... See I don't have nothing against it and the gels, they've been brought up.. you know people are **people**, you are what you **are**

I. Right

EL3. You're you're not hurting anyone **else** just get on you know with it

I. You find your daughters - are they more tolerant

EL3. **Oh yeh they are they're very tolerant**, they're not bothered yeh

I. Right so they've got a different approach?

EL3. Yeh. One of 'em goes **out** with 'em.... like 'er boyfriend left 'er ages ago and she feels **safer** going out with gays 'cos she can have a laugh and a dance and.. they look **after** 'er and that. Yeh she's got a lot of gay friends. Men. I don't know much about **lesbians**. We don't know any

I. Mmm

EL3. I know erm 'that so and so is' but I don't 'aven't... you know don't know 'em as well as. I think they make good **friends** gay men do. 'Ave a **laugh**

I. And does your daughter live in the East End?

EL3. Yeh they all do. She lives just down the **road** there

I. Right. That's interesting

EL3. Yeh

I. So..that **did** come out last time, (I've nearly finished now)

EL3. No that's all right. [enthusiastic]

I. This is fantastic er, that people in here were I think quite tolerant

EL3. Mmm

I. And what **you** said about younger people being more **intolerant**, that is very interesting. Why is that do you think?

EL3. It's half and half innit?

I. You think there's a younger.... Well **you're** saying, it seems like you're saying your daughters **are** are tolerant

EL3. They are yeh

I. Where your sons **aren't**

EL3. Yeh yeh

I. Erm

EL3. Could be a **man** thing. ... 'It reflects on me, my son's gay ooh that's my fault, something to do with me so'.. you know it's probably in **that** sense

I. Right. But that.. and that's **different** to lesbians. They probably.. Do you think they'd be as anti lesbian or they

EL3. I dunno, do you know I've never **thought** of that. .... I'll 'ave to **ask** them that, yeh

I. Yeh ....ask them

EL3. 'Cos I've always spoke from a gay **man's** point of view, yeh. It's like we know a lot of gay **men**; well a **few**..... Yeh I'll 'ave to **ask** 'em that. You've got a point there

I. So you've got.. gay men who are friends?

EL3. Alison wouldn't be bothered. Yeh

I. Alison wouldn't be bothered with.. lesbians or gay men or

EL3. Oh no she don't. She don't **care**, you know, what people are, as long as you know,.. reasonable and all the rest of it. Nicky don't.... Theresa don't, Vera don't

I. Mmm. Also one of the things on the soaps when they **do** portray lesbians

EL3. Mmm

I. They often say oh they're you know they're lesbians, or they're gay men but what in fact has happened is they're bisexual

EL3. Yeh

I. 'Cos they've often been

EL3. Yeh yeh you don't. No that's not mentioned is it 'cos that Charity, someone pointed it out, and **she** was bisexual. .. Yeh you don't get much of that

I. Or you sort of get it but it's not addressed

EL3. Yeh you don't sort of **realise** 'cos I didn't realise 'til they said it and I thought **well of course she is** but you don't sort of .... realise yeh. Well, about young people again.

A lot of 'em..a lot of 'em is liberated I suppose I could say and then a lot of 'em go by what their **parents** say. That's where I think a lot of this um people don't like **black**

people they're you know what their **parents** say, you know it's **pathetic**. I remember my nan frightening **me**

I. Mmm

EL3. Or she **thought** she did she .. we 'ad, we lived in a **house** and 'e must 'ave been from **Africa**. I didn't know, to me people were just black or white. Really black 'e was and 'e was ever so nice. 'E spoke to me as a **person**

I. Mmm

EL3. Then all them years ago you were seen and not **heard**. And he was right **interesting** to **talk** to. 'If I go down them stairs 'e might get a knife' and killed 'er.' But she didn't frighten me

I. How old were you?

EL3. Seven.

I. You liked him

EL3. Very **naïve yeh** ... You know 'e spoke to me as I was a **person**. 'E didn't speak oh you know, that's what they **did** then. 'E was and 'e took an **interest** in what you... not in a **horrible** way, you know 'e was interesting

I. Yeh. 'Cos there weren't many black people in the East End?

EL3. There weren't many, no

I. There weren't so

EL3. Yeh. It weren't the East End, that was when I lived at the Angel, Islington. Well it is the East End innit?

I. You were born ...not in the East End were you

EL3. No

I. Where were you born then?

EL3. Born in erm Royal Free Hospital Mount Pleasant. You know round Kings Cross that sort of area, there

I. And then where did you live then, by the Angel?

EL3. Mm, with my nan, yeh. But I...I was erm, thirteen, different schools, all over the place. Surrey, Yorkshire, Scotland, Berkshire

I. Why, so many. Moved about?

EL3. No, mum didn't want me. That's why [laughs quietly]



I. Really?

EL3. Yeh. And I'm the **eldest**

I. Who looked after you then?

EL3. Me nan when I was at **home**, sort of boarding school, in the holidays,... and then when I was **fourteen** - you could leave school at **fifteen** at the time ....so this was the summer; I went back to school and I could've left at Christmas. I was fifteen at Christmas so me mum moved me nan in with 'er, thinking oh she's earning money. But I stayed on another two years. ....[laughs] She comes 'ere **now** but

I. Who does?

EL3. Me mum

I. Gosh so how do you get on with her **now** then?

EL3. Oh I **talk** to 'er but ....to **me** she's not me mum

I. So when you, so when you left school and everything, where did you live then?

EL3. Erm in Surrey, where I was at school, in a hotel, 'til the Christmas...from the summer to the Christmas, then I went up to **Yorkshire**, ooh I loved it up there, then I went up to **Scotland**, loved it up there

I. So when did you come back here then?

EL3. Erm like I was an unmarried **mother**, was expecting me daughter, then I come back down here, I was going to get her **adopted**; that's what you did at the time... I just stayed down 'ere after that

I. Mmm

EL3. But I kept, like Alison but then me mum said, I remember, I'll never forget it, she was 'oh 'aven't you got **that** adopted yet?.... In a shop in front of all the **people**. [sad voice]

I. So how long have you lived in... back in London?

EL3. Back in London?

I. Since when you were

EL3. Before I 'ad me children and they're in their **forties**, so yeh

I. And how long in the East End?

EL3. Mm?

I. How long in the East End then? How long have you lived here?

EL3. Yeh erm first I got a place at Shoreditch **Church**, and that was when ... me second daughter was born, so since 63 ...I've lived round 'ere. But I remember the **first** episode of *Coronation Street*... 42 years.

I. Blimey

EL3. 42 years, yeh 'cos my, she's 42, well coming up for 42

I. Where were you when you saw that?

EL3. Oh, up in Yorkshire. But it was yeh think it's Lancashire innit meant to be and I thought oh it's brilliant. 'Cos they used to speak like that

I. Do you remember it then?

EL3. Oh yeh

I. Do you remember what happened?

EL3. Yeh yeh.

I. What happened?

EL3. She 'ad the first, erm she 'ad the **shop** .. this lady took over the new shop, 'Florrie Lindley', 'cos they was gonna call it Flossle Street or something, some other street, it was just meant to be on for a few weeks. And then 'Ena Sharples' said the name above the door: '**Are you the widow woman?**' I remember **that** bit. But she was right .. religious and everything 'ad to be right. I remember that. I don't remember ... it's just 'cos I was up in **Yorkshire**

I. Yeh

EL3. And it was sort of Yorkshire, and I thought I'll watch that. 'Cos I used to speak right broad Yorkshire like.. they don't now do they, thee and thou, an', can't do it now

I. No they don't do they they have a lot of London

EL3. Yeh

I. Characters in it as well

EL3. I don't mean the **show** I mean the **people** up in Yorkshire

I. Oh right.

EL3. They haven't got that erm.... thing anymore

I. Erm, so, that 'cos **you** said that a lot of people are influenced by their mums, or parents' attitudes. Where was your dad by the way in all this?

EL3. Oh 'e was, 'e was with me mum, they were still together

I. He agreed with her sending you away

L 'E was, yeh, me mum, oh, I can't say this, me dad used to call me an **imbecile**.....because, it might be, that me uncle was really me **dad**. .... And so you know this em inbred thing, so it all fits in but, there's a possibility, 'e was in the war, there's a possibility 'e **thinks** I'm me uncle's when I was really 'is, I know it gets right confusin', if me uncle is me dad, 'e's my great uncle, then me dad's me cousin and me children are me half this and ooh

I. You'll never know really I suppose it doesn't really matter

EL3. No, no

I. Is your dad still alive?

EL3. No.....no and 'e wouldn't 'ave said, 'e never **spoke** to me. But with me dad I didn't mind 'im cos I knew where I **was**. 'E said 'e hated you and that's it. But with me **mum** it's all.... 'Oh my Lydia' oh. .... **Falseness**, I don't like that but...

I. So..you'd probably be less influenced by them? 'Cos what you said before about

EL3. Oh yeh

I. You know about people being influenced by their parents' attitudes, you weren't with them that much were you?

EL3. Oh no I wasn't

I. So do think that's why you're different? Because

EL3. I don't know

I. 'Cos your attitude is more

EL3. Yeh

I. I don't know accepting of difference and diversity and everything

EL3. Do you know I've always thought I was different ( ) laughs. Yeh I've never thought of that yehhh. Could be

I. 'Cos you must have been

EL3. But we didn't know nothing about gays then. I remember reading 'em in the paper. 'Disgustin, ooh, 'cos you didn't know nothing else

I. Yeh. How come you changed your mind then?

EL3. Dunno 'cos

I. Where do you get your ideas from do you think?

EL3. I dunno that was like when I was thirty, forty, you read the paper, an' you go by what the **paper** said, said it's disgustin' so **you** did, but now I think, they're all people, what does it matter? 'Cos I remember when I was little I thought ooh, who is it **says** you 'ave to get married, cos then you '**ad** to be married, why **do** you 'ave to be married, what does it matter if you're married or not. I couldn't, couldn't understand that

I. Yeh

EL3. I thought 'who makes the laws, who is it?' ..I know there's got to be laws that

I. Yeh who indeed?

EL3. She was a Chinese, no she was English, div..she weren't married to 'im and she lived with 'im and they was all against; I thought what does it matter she's not sleepin' **around** she's only with the one chap

I. Mmm

EL3. Oh

EL3. Did **you** get married?

EL3. ...Er no I didn't get married 'til after I'd had **all** my children; they went to school, 'cos I've got another four, Alison's one dad, and then the other four

I. Right

EL3. Another dad, and I got married erm when they went to **school**

I. Right

EL3. [Laughs] I didn't realise 'til my son said 'you know when you got married, 'e said, did you go in a **car**?' I said no. 'Did you go in a - '. No. 'What did you?' I said a **bus** [laughs].... I didn't realise it sounds so funny. He said 'oh trust you'

I. Interesting

EL3. Yeh I do everything back to front

I. As you say tho' does it matter?

EL3. I'm a rebel aren't I? That's it what does it matter? As long as you're not **hurtin'** anyone else

I. That's brilliant. Is there anything else? I mean say anything you like.

EL3. No, no/

I. That's been very helpful because your perceptions of the soaps

EL3. They're good

I. And you've had a chance to say it more 'cos that group was very

EL3. No you can't

I. Difficult to get a word in; there was a lot of **interest** in it

EL3. Yeh yeh

I. That's really filled it out better for me

EL3. I was wondering what it would have been like if gays were more open when I was little. You know then it was all **bad** for you, hidden it was all secret wannit?...I wonder if and how I would have felt then? It isn't the same

I. Don't know. 'Cos also they knew 'cos they knew gay men do you remember?

EL3. Oh yeh

I. When they were talking there were some people in the East End who were quite open

EL3. Mmm

I. And in the Sebright and er

EL3. Oh yes

I. But that's the **East End** I think. Maybe that's different?

EL3. Could be yeh... I know we went to a pub one Christmas. It was when it was a bit oooh you know, and erm my friend said to me she turned round she said 'look at **'im**'. And 'e was **lovely make-up**, not over the top; he had a man's suit and a hat and all 'is fingernails, sitting there. I thought good on ya. I couldn't help **laughing** tho' he just sat there, couldn't care less, and I thought good on ya

I. But it's clear that people are much more familiar

EL3. Mmm

I. With and know gay men

EL3. That's it familiar; that's the word

I. And know gay men but not lesbians

EL3. Yeh

I. And I wonder why that is

EL3. Yeh **I've** just thought of that; I'll have to talk to me girls. I know they won't be bothered you are what you are, that's it

I. But the thing is there seem to be more out gay men

EL3. Mmm

I. About the place. People **know** them

EL3. Yeh

I. They all knew them

EL3. Yeh

I. They don't know lesbians. Why is that do you think?

EL3. With a lot of men you can tell. Well, you **can't** always. Many of times I've thought, and they say no he's not gay. Ones that are right **butch** and you think ..well you can't always **tell**

I. No .But they're friends with them and you

EL3. Oh yeh

I. Know them. I wonder why it is that lesbians aren't ...visible in that way

EL3. Yeh I know what you mean yeh. Dunnooo. ... See the little gel as well.. can wear **trousers** anyway can't they?

I. Mmm

EL3. Dunno. .... I'd like to talk to them about that

I. Yeh

EL3. I know they won't be **bothered**

I. Yeh do that would be interesting

EL3. You are what you **are** and that's it

I. Well that's ever so helpful

EL3. But funnily enough they've all erm...the one that goes with like she's got friends what are gay..she's got two boys anyway, the other one's got two boys, ..... I'll 'ave to **ask** them

I. Do they live... oh you said

EL3. They all live round 'ere yeh

I. So you've been in the East End, your family's here

EL3. Yeh

I And do you live with a chap now?

EL3. No I live on me **own**

I. Do you like that?

EL3. Oh **I** do yeh. I've always been a loner in I? I'm in my element, come in when I want, go **out** when I want, do what I want. But that's **me** you know, other people ....might not like that, ooh yeh

I. Mmm. Thanks that's fantastic

EL3. Your welcome; that's really helpful

Code: ( ) indecipherable

[ ] my addition

/ upward tone i.e. tag questions

(3) Length of pause where unusual i.e. 3 seconds

Bold Type: Emphasis in tone

.....Pause

### Appendix 3.3.

#### South London Outer Suburb Group Interview May 2005

SL1. 73: lived in Suburb 37 yrs

SL2 79: has little sight and lived 60 years in Suburb

SL3. 73: came to England in 1960s, lived in Clapham, has been in Suburb 8 years

SL4. 80s: came in late, hearing impairment.

I. Interviewer.

I. I live in Stoke Newington. [**Oh dear** is the response] I work in the East End and in Holloway Road as well but I come from near Newmarket and then brought up in Bedford.

SL1. I came from that way/; **apparently** I was born in Holloway. Not in the prison

SL3 [Much laughter] You can say that agen.

SL1. I don't tell many people because they .. pull my **leg** about it you know? /

[More laughing.]

SL3 ( )

I. Well I work part time in Manor Gardens; that's erm just up from where the old Royal Northern Hospital used to be. Up from Seven Sisters.

SL1. I wasn't old enough then I was still a baby when I was taken away from there/.

Right.

I. Erm now the questions I'm asking may not seem to have much to do with soaps to start with but it will make sense.

SL3. Mmm

I. Because I'm looking at, about the histories you remember first and I want to just ask you, and what, anyone speak but, if you could speak one a time if possible or I'll never be able to hear what you're saying.

SL3. Mmm



I. What do you remember about, **social or political** movements, from the past from any ...erm (no response pause to make clearer) well does that mean anything to you? If I ask you about social or political

SL2 No not any more no, no, it's, it's, well everybody's got their own

SL3. Mmm

SL2 Job they all do it to keep their own job so you just have to go with the flow don't you?/

I. Right, but do you remember anything particular about any political issues from the past or social movements?

SL1. No, only Churchill, he's the only one we'll always remember.

All. Yeh

S2 Yeh Churchill meant more to us than yes

SL3 [Coughing. She has asthma] 'Scuse me. Yes I remember about er Margaret

**Thatcher ...a lot**

I. Yeh

SL3. Because **my daughter** was in private school

I. Right

SL3 ... in **Guildford**, .... (Glenham? ) college... (coughs) and that time they used to have **milk** /... **orange** .., in the morning and that woman **snatch it off**.

I. She did

SL2 They did all that didn't they

SL3. Yees, they **did** [serious tone]

SL2 I-I liked her in a way; she meant what she said didn't she?

SL3. [coughing] Sorry for coughing

I. It's alright

SL3. She never turned back did she?

SL3. Nooo, she **snatch it off**, so ... I used to buy it because my, my **son** and my daughter was at private school so there

I. Erm.. It's just interesting; I suppose the East End is different; 'cos when I talked to them

SL1. Oh yeh

I. You know rent strikes and different things that had happened that they remembered, but obviously you would remember things like the miners' strike and things like that

SL3. Yeah

I. I mean they're all political

SL3. Yes I remember them too the rent strike

SL1. Well I do **just** .. not a lot about them or anything/

I. Right. erm what ... I mean obviously in the 60s and 70s there were a lot of things going on.

SL3. Mmm

I. Erm do you.. remember anything from that time particularly or were you involved in anything like, 1960s,

SL2 No not really

I. Actions, anything that was going on

SL2 Only the girl guides - that's all [laughs]

I. Right you were involved with the girl guides

SL3. [coughing has asthma:] excuse me

I. Are you alright?

SL3. Mm asthma my asthma

I. Oh dear, would you prefer to have a window or door open?

SL3. That's all right, is ok ok

I. Oh ok. Right. Erm what about erm.. I mean there was a kind of - hippies and you know, things in the 60s and all that, did you, what did you think of - were you were **involved** in any of it.

SL3. No

SL1. No

I. Not really? It didn't sort of touch you?

SL1. My trouble is remembering what was, what **did** happen in a certain year

SL3. Yes

SL2 I agree

I. I mean 60s and 70s tend to get a bit converged

SL1. Yes

I. As well the way they're written about. But there was a sort of politic-

SL1. **Cliff Richards** [triumphantly spoken] I remember [laughs]

SL3. Oh yes

I. Right, and hippy things? You know like the Beatles, and the Stones

SL3. **Oh yes**

SL2 **Yes**

SL3. I liked the Groups a lot

SL1. I used to like the Beatles

SL3. Mmm because where my.. brother live at ( ) the back of there is ( ) **music** and even this erm, .. another one, one Mister Dipaz (?) was taken to meet the chairman yes, and he died recently.

I. Right.

SL3. Uh mmm

I. Erm, what about women's movement things, feminism, in the, that was late 60s early 70s did that, did you have any view on that, did you, were you involved in any of those women's movement things?

SL1. I wasn't involved in any of it. I, I **should** know because erm of the **statue** opposite the office I worked in 'cos of the **suffragettes**.

I. Right

SL1. I don't remember **anything** about it unfortunately /

I. But do you remember anything about the 70s feminism , or Germaine Greer, you know that

SL1. I sort of know **of** them

I. But not directly

SL1. But I couldn't have told you what **year** that was or anything like that

I. You weren't directly involved, women's issues or

SL1. No No [firmly]

I. What do you think of them. I mean, what do you think about the Women's Movement and the things that they did or demanded or, do you have an opinion on it?

SL1. Well only that I think it's quite **good**.

SL3. Yes

SL1. You know because I think why should women be left **out**?

SL3. I **know** that's **true**

SL1. Why should it be a men's orient

SL3. Mmm mmm

SL1. - orientated **world** sort of thing/

SL3. Right

SL1. I mean yes they may have small **brains** very often **but** women should have their **say**

SL3. Of course / [up but not in a question tone; more like that's obvious]

I. Do you think that?

SL3. Yes I think that **yes**

I. Do you agree with that? That there is, you know

[All] Yes

I. Something good about women's equality or women's demands for equality?

SL3. Yes

SL2 Because I hadn't much use for it in those days. I think all I liked to do was **dancin'**, and **work**. [Laughs]

I. Right

SL3. Because I remember- to follow that way with the **church-** before they don't want any woman to be in any position like **that**. 'Cos now they have women priests and **everything**

SL1. Yes

SL3. **Now** the church will deal with women's meetin' and everything and before it was only men men men

I. Yes

[All] mmm

SL1. Yes I'm **not** sure I should have (damaged?) myself whether I approve of women **priests ... no way** a woman bishop

SL3. Uh huh?

SL1. No way

I. But women in other, I mean obviously some young women are now, well women are working in work in different -

SL3. Yes we work in everything [as if obvious] women can be a judge or anything like that. What's about women being a priest? Because women can be do the work of judge many of them, many of them, many priest like that

SL1. Oh yes

SL3. Weeeell

SL1. Yes

SL3. I don't think any **different** I don't think any **different**

SL1. No no

SL3. 'Cos they know what they're **doing**

I. Just to make sense of, I mean you might think, why am I asking these questions but it's just kind of looking at people's attitudes. Now, I wonder – because sometimes issues get put in the soaps- I am going to start talking about the soaps now

SL3. Yes yes

I. You know, how you can sometimes pick out things that relate to some of these campaigns.

SL3. Ummm

I. Erm is there anything in the soaps that you watch? Well, first of all, no, yeh, just tell me

[laughter]

I. Is there anything in the soaps that **remind** you of any of these campaigns or, about

SL3. You now have so many soaps I watch *Eastender* / I watch erm, what's that thing/ even this **Trish yes** because they ( ) are going against *Trish*. Many things ( ) I watch them, ITV, well

I. Mmm

SL3. I like *Trish*- she's a part of ( ) they're going against her what happened ... trouble with this lady, erm whatis name, she she her name '**Sally**' 'Sally' something, you are sure, television. 'Sally'.

I. Hang on, which soap are you talking about?

ESL3. About the soap, the thing on the television isn't it?/

I. Yeh So what is? You're talking about a particular storyline are you?

E

SL3. Yees/?

I. That relates to

SL3. Yes/

I. So tell me again, I didn't get it.

SL3. *Trish*

I. *Trish*?

SL3. Mmm

SL1. Oh well I wouldn't have thought [dismissive]

I. Which soap is that?

SL3. Erm what do they call it? ( ) take over the family

I. That isn't a soap

SL3. That is not, that doesn't come under the heading of **soap**

SL3. ( )

I. No that's a really kind of reality television thing.

SL3. Oh ok. [calm]

I. Ok, the soaps are – you watch them you know what they are, soaps really are things like *Emmerdale*, *Coronation Street*,

SL3. Uh huh

I. I'm including *Brookside*

SL3. *Brookside*, yes, yes

I. Because it was in the last ten years that I'm looking at. And *Coronation Street*. All of them

SL2 Yeh

I. And *Neighbours*.

SL3. Yes?

I. What they are **defined** by is they go on for **ever**.

SL1. Yes ok.

I. Like- although they might be stopped, but theoretically.

SL3. *Eastender*

I. Absolutely. Yes, so, looking at the soaps themselves is there any storylines that remind you of them campaigns, or the women's movement, or anything like that?

SL3 .....No I don't think so.....

I. That's ok. When... did you first start watching the soaps?

SL3. Ooh [laughs] the longest time

I. 10 years 20 years 30?

SL3. **Yes** because I was in this country since 1960

I. And you've watched them since

SL3. Yes

I. Ok. That's a good long time. What about you?

SL1. Probably around the same. I can't really remember what year it was.

SL3. I remember the year it was

I. Probably *Coronation Street*?

SL1. **No I never watched *Coronation Street*.** I don't know **why**

SL3. Mmm

I. Do you remember which ones you did watch then to start with?

SL1. *EastEnders*... Erm I've never watched *Emmerdale*

SL2 [Quietly talking] *Home and Away*

SL1. *Home and Away* yes

SL3. Uh huh

I. The old soaps were – *Compact*. Do you remember *Compact*?

SL1. Oh *Compact* yes

All. Yes

I. *Emergency Ward Ten*?

All Oh yes

SL3. Ooh is it not come on again?

I. No. When- Have **you** watched them for a long time as well?

SL2 Yes I have sometimes, although I watch in the past I don't know what's going on

SL3. [laughs]

I. It doesn't really matter does it?

SL2 No. I only just try and follow the story

I. Yeh. So which ones do you watch now then? Start with you – which ones do you watch?

SL1. Erm *EastEnders*

I. Yeh

SL1. Erm... occasionally *Neighbours*

I. Right

SL1. Not, only' cos I like hearing the erm [this is almost dismissive as if embarrassed]

SL3. The **music**?

SL1. The er **accents**

SL3. Ok.

I .....Right

SL2 Tell you what I do like, the one with the er, Australian with the crocodiles. ...

That's er... I don't know what it is that's er.

SL1. Somebody *Dundee*

I. Is it *Baywatch*?

SL2 No it'e erm

I. *Baywatch*

SL1. Oh no erm

I. ( )

SL2 They he gets with the erm **Crocodiles** and all those sorts of things. It's, it's probably around in the afternoon and perhaps that's why people don't **see** it.

I. Yeh

SL2 But it's very **interesting**.

SL1. Yeh

I. So which ones do **you** watch?

SL3. I watch *Coronation Street*

I. *Coronation Street*, yeh

SL3. I watch *EastEnde*

I. Did you used to watch *Brookside*? Anybody?

SL3. **Oh yes**, yes, I do

I. Did you used to watch *Brookside*?

SL3. Yes

SL2 Er, no not very often



I. But occasionally. Did you ever watch it?

SL1. Don't think I ever watched it.

I. It stopped about 2 years ago?

SL3. Yes ( )

I.. Right, now, do you watch them on your own or with other people?

SL3 I watch it with my children

I. With your children? Do they enjoy - like it?

SL3. **Oh yes they do. Oh yes**

I. How old are they?

SL3. My daughter is now ...married [laughs], when she was young, about eighteen - ( ) when they were young my husband wouldn't let them watch anything until **8 o'clock** you know in the early days, like that days, when they come back have their lunch have their lessons 8 o'clock but not these days. Children- [laughs]

SL1. No you can't do that now

SL3. **Noooo**

I. Do you watch them with anybody?

SL2 Errr well when my daughter stays for .. one night, going to work she loves that

I. Right

SL2 And my daughter will always phone and she asks.

All laugh

SL2 She likes *Coronation Street* and *EastEnders*; they're the two she watches when she's there

I. And S1 what about you do you watch them with anybody?

SL1. Very seldom; I'm **normally** on my own

I. Right

SL3. Mmm

I. Right and in the past when you first started watching them did you used to watch them with other people or

SL3. Oh yes

SL1. Well I occasionally watched them with my mother...she couldn't always follow them

I. Oh right.

SL1. But er

I. Did she not like them very much? She wasn't into them?

SL1. She wasn't into them no

SL3. ( ) like those things? ( ) that time one time when they on holidays he let us watch with us, when they not on holidays he wouldn't **let** them watch with us. Because when the children have their lesson then he helped them finish their homework and let them **be**

I. Mmm. Right, now, I'm going to get a bit more specific. What I'd like to know now is what – how do you think that, in the soaps, and anything, whatever comes to mind, it doesn't matter which soap, how do you think that **relationships** are represented - you know like, relationships between men and women, men and men women and women, relationships generally. [Silence]. How do you think they're represented...do you think they're – well just whatever comes into your mind.

SL3. I don't think... I don't **like** it much, the way they spoil themselves ( ) but it's just like a play but between me I don't like to do it.

I. So you think that the relationships are? What? How would you describe them?

SL3. I well I would describe them that if they do it in a **way**, that because many children watch it them...because parents leave them to watch - **corrupt** them, but in their own time, you watch it as an **adult**, some of them, little children

SL1. You view it differently

SL3. **Yes**

I. Right so you think that the relationships sometimes aren't

SL3. Shouldn't **show** it in the front of **children**

I. What about you how do you think that? ... I mean just any you know, any relationships at all. How do you think they're dealt with?

SL2 Er well I think every time it comes on they're either **in** bed or getting **out** of bed

SL3. Yeh that's it /

SL2 I think it's nothing else but **sex**

SL3. **Yes, and it's no good for the children**

SL1. No

SL2 You find now even if some of these erm **programmes**. You know, I mean in doctors in hospitals, you know, they don't go over and pull the blind across

SL3. Mmm

SL2 Do they surely that don't go on in hospitals [laughs]

SL3. That's true

[New participant comes in, S4]

I. Hie, you're joining us, welcome, you're welcome to sit there and just join. I'm Nic

SL4. Yeh

I. And I'm doing this as part of a phd research thing.

SL4. Yes

I. What's your name?

SL4. S4....

I. S4.... I know that you might not want to join in, but you're welcome to just do what you want.

SL3. Mmm

I. I'll just make a note, it's only erm just for my purposes

SL4. About the soaps?

I. Yeh. So you think that there's a bit... too much hopping in and out of bed?

SL2 **Yees**

SL3. Mmm

I. In all of the soaps? Do you agree with that?

SL3. Mm, I do

I. And you, S1, do you think that's true, about relationships?

SL1. Yes yes

I. So generally you think that

SL1. Generally yes,

I. There's too much sex then you'd say?

SL4. **Yeh** that is it innit?

I. Right now - so what do you think, just out of interest, you know the older characters, how do you think their relationships are presented? You know, say like, erm let me think

SL1. 'Dirty Den'?

[All laugh very much and long especially SL3.]

SL3. 'Dirty Den' yeh you can tell that

I. I was thinking of erm – 'Jack' and 'Vera',

SL4. Oh yes they're all right they are

SL3. He's quite nice

I. 'Dot' and 'Jim'? What do you think about them?

SL4. Erm, yes yeh, you don't see them in bed do you.

SL3. No [all talking at once]

SL4. You see them getting **up**, you don't see 'em

SL3. Yes

SL4. The *Summer Wine*, that's quite good

SL3. Uh mm. Yes that's ( ) yes

I. So you think that the older relationships are done quite well then?

SL3. **Yes yes yes they're done very well.** / [in thoughtful tones] Like I said before these things spoils children. There's, sometime, with my own children, if I, with everybody's children, because my **husband** won't let them **stay**, to watch all these type of things. They watch, that time they watch a television programme in bed and he don't leave a television in **their** room.

SL1. Yes

SL3. But these days **Yeees**

SL1. Yes ( )

SL3. But now it **spoil** many children to tell you the **truth**.

SL4. That 'Sadie's' taking '**Robert**' away from 'Katy' in 'e'? You know 'Sadie' in *Emmerdale*.

SL1. I don't watch *Emmerdale* /

SL4. Oh yes she's taking 'im away from, .. 'Katy'

[Laughter]

SL1. to I. Do you watch them by the way?

I. Oh absolutely.

SL3. Yeh

I. I mean, I wouldn't be doing this-

SL1. No

I. I watch 'em

SL3. Yes

I. A lot and I love them, a lot

SL4. Yeh, we do

I. That's what I'm interested and I'm interested in

SL4. **Every** night

I. You know

SL4. Yeh

I. What we make of them and how we discuss them

SL1. I have a friend in **Canada** and he always watches, erm *EastEnders*.

SL3. Uh mmm

SL1. The only thing is it isn't shown as often, when I tell him a little bit of what we know we're **far** away they're far behind

SL3. Mmm

SL1. What they show over there than what we have over here.

I. Yeh. Yeh. Erm, right, so, now I'm going to narrow it down a little bit more now because I'm interested in what you think about...same **sex** relationships and how **they are** presented.

SL3. Uh hum?

I. I don't know if you can remember any 'cos they come and go with , sometimes they are **there** and sometimes there's **nothing** so I don't know, you know if you can even **remember**

SL3. Yeh

I. Any, but, just - what do you **think** about how those relationships are in the soaps.... if you can remember any at all?

SL1. Yes I don't think they're **too** bad, because you, I mean at one time you never used to **hear** of it

I. Right

SL3. Mmm

SL1. Now it's all **over** the place

SL3. That's right

I. Do you think the soaps treat it – quite well?

All. Mmm [hesitantly]

I. It varies?

SL1. It varies I think yes

SL4. It does vary yes

SL3. Mmm

I. What do you think about that. Same sex relationships? In the soaps?

SL3. Yes I think it's I think it does vary, but sometimes but I'm **against**... Because they do it so **openly**, children, anyone watching it

SL4. Yeh, It's **sex** all the **time** innit?

[All talking over each other to agree]

SL3. It's **wrong**

I. What about erm?

SL3. I don't like it

I. I don't know if you **can** remember any; there have been one or two lesbian relationships on the soaps.

SL3. Mmm

I. Occasionally.

SL3. Uh mm

I. Can you remember any of them? Can you remember any of those episodes?

SL1. I'm just trying to **think**

SL3. Yes I can [overlaps]

SL1. There is only one I saw one. I can't remember what the show was **anyhow** [making light of it]

[Pause.....]

I. Would that have been.. *Brookside*?..... The 'Jordache' one? Or erm

SL4. *Coronation Street*

I. Or *Emmerdale* have done

SL3. Uh mmm?

I. Erm with 'Charity'?

SL3. Yeh

I. Does any of those ring a bell to you?

SL3. Oh **yes** \ [lower tone] ( )

I. 'Charity' and 'Zoë'. So you don't remember which one? If it comes to you say.

[Pause]

I. Erm, so..... does anyone else remember any of those episodes? At all? Same sex relationship ones?

SL3. **EastEnders** (firmly)

SL2 Yes, yes

I. Which one do you remember?

SL3. Ermmm

SL1.... I can't remember ( ) *EastEnders*

SL3. *EastEnders*..... Oh what's his name again

I. Is it a man?

SL3. Yes a **man**

I. And he's in it now isn't he?

SL3. **Yes** with er, this er ( )

SL1. That may be the one I was thinking of

SL3. Yes

SL1. But I couldn't remember which soap it was in.

SL3. **Yes**

I. I think you were trying to think of women ' and you're

SL1. No

SL3. Yes

SL1. No well this was two men

I. Right ok. *EastEnders* did one a long time ago with 'Colin'

SL3. Yes

All. Yes

I. Michael Cashman who **really is** a gay man and

SL3. He is

I An MEP; done quite a lot of campaigns

SL1. Yes

I. Erm, but 'Derek'

SL3. Yes

I. 'Derek', in *EastEnders* is a gay man

SL3. Oh Yes

SL4. Yes.

SL2 Oh is he?

SL3. Yes

I. We often forget because it's very rarely referred to

SL3. and SL1. Yes

.....

I. There's – yeh it's also unusual 'cos he's older.

SL3. Mmm

I. So what do you think of 'Derek' then, do you like him as a character? What do you think about him?.....

I. Don't like him?

SL2 Who's that?

I. 'Derek' in *EastEnders*

SL3. In *EastEnders*

I. You know, he lives with 'Pauline'?

SL4. Yes yes he's nice innee?/ I thought they'd come **together** but it don't look as though they

I. Because he's **gay** you see

SL3. I don't like the way

SL1. I didn't recognise that. I don't, I don't recognise them very often

SL3. I do

I. It's understandable because it was only clear when he came in and then it's not referred to much so it's easy to forget

SL3. Yes

I. erm....

SL2 The one I think that should be recognised is the little boy in *Coronation Street*



SL3. Uh mm

SL2 He's such a **good** little actor, he's going a long way

I. He is yeh

SL2 But he never gets any **thought** of getting anything does he you know?

Congratulations or

I. You mean 'Cilla's' little boy?.. He did get an award

SL4. He did get congratulations

I. Yes he got an award last year

SL2 He got an award

I. Yeh last year

SL4. It's about time.

SL3. A small boy, yes, very good

[All agree he's a good actor]

SL4. Of course his mum's not like that in real life [the actress] I've seen her

I. Oh no she's not

[Laughter]

I. Yes he is good

[All] Yes

I. So, looking at those lesbians and gay men,

SL3. Mmm

I. There's not many for you to pick out; you don't really remember much about them and 'Derek' you weren't even aware really

SL3. Mmm

SL1. No

I. What about '**Hayley**'?

SL3. Oh yeh

I. Because she's a **transgender** person isn't she?

SL3. Yes

I. I don't know if you've followed that plot line

SL1. **Yes**

SL4. **Yes**

SL3. **Very yes I did**

I. How do you think they did that storyline?

SL4. She was a man wasn't she?

SL3. A man you see before she turned to a woman. That one was funny. Mm [laughing]  
My eldest son he asked me '**how can that happen?**' I say well you turn to be a woman if  
it's the thing he say no. I think it's the **right** thing ( )... Mmm

I. There are transgender people

SL4. I was wondering how they could **change** 'er

SL3. Mmm

SL4. To a **woman**

I. They do... I mean there **are** transgender people

SL4. Yes [all]

I. But she is played by a woman not a man so

SL3. Mmm

I. But do you **like** the character, do you think that she's done

SL4. Yes she's **nice** isn't she?

SL1. Yes

SL3. Yes

I. Right, and yeh ok so, you saw it, do you think they did that story well, or not well?

SL3 . They did it well, they did it well.

[All agree]

SL4. They did yeh

SL3. Yes I like it

I. And do you like that character?

[All] Oh Yes, yes

I. Erm, right. So **looking at** those, which you can't remember much of so, you'll just  
answer however you can, what you remember, **with** the more controversial I suppose  
characters like the lesbians and gay men, and '**Hayley**', transgender

SL3. Mm mmm?

I. Do you think they are realistic? .. Do you think they are like **real** lesbians or gay men  
or trans people?

SL3. No [At the same time] SL1. No  
SL4. No I shouldn't think. I don't think so  
SL3. I don't think so  
SL4. It's just a part they're actin'  
SL3. Yes  
SL4. It's just a part they're actin' 'n'  
I. Right, but do you think they're....so.. you wouldn't think that **real** lesbians and gay  
mean are like that?  
SL2. No  
SL4. No  
I. Do you know any?  
All. No no  
SL3. Yes **I** know someone  
I. Lesbians or gay men or trans?  
SL3. I know somebody they live East Ham where we but ( )  
I. Gay men or lesbians?  
SL3. Lesbians. I know two **ladies**.  
I. Yeh  
SL3. They live there  
I. Right  
SL3. They live together and they're both **women**.. Even my husband doesn't like me to  
say hallo to them [Laughs]  
I. But you **did** say hallo to them?  
SL3. [Laughing]. I do say hallo to them. The two girls, where we live at East Ham.  
SL4. If they speak to **you** you should speak to **them**  
[All make noises of agreement and nod]  
I. So do you like them or do you have an opinion  
SL3. My husband's opinion.. doesn't like them  
I.. Not **his** opinion, yours  
SL3. My opinion? I like them (they live for the life?)  
SL1. Oh yes

I. So.. would you say that..ok you met some, real ones, would you say that the television ones are like the real ones or not really? Can you see any... similarity?

SL3. Mm I **don't**

SL2 Nooo

SL3. No I don't. I think that being this is a play; I don't think that it's like this one. I don't think so. These ones, they marry themselves, they go into the pastor where we live at East Ham to marry them he say he will marry them **and they live like a man and wife and they're ladies.** Mmm

I. Right. So... that's interesting, all different views here.

SL3. Mmm

I. And...would you be able to **identify** with any of those characters **yourself**? .....  
With their problems or the issues they...? Or would you find it impossible to?....

SL2 Well **I** think they're as human as anybody **else**.

SL1. Mmm

SL2 They've got ( ) feelings same as we are,

SL3. Yeh

I. Right

SL2 And **they** probably didn't **wanna** be like it. It's the way they're **born** like it, innit

I. Right

SL2 So I mean...

SL3. Mmm

SL2 Some, and I mean, what I can gather – I've never actually **met** some

SL3. Mmm

SL2 I should think they're so gentle and **caring**, more so than most of the other men

SL4. Yes

I. So you think that, ok, gay men

SL1. Yes yes I.. I.. I can't spot them at **all**. I mean I was in a pub once, and I was talking to the....girl behind the count... behind the bar.

SL3. Mmm

SL1. My stepfather(?) [might be stepmother] was with me and I asked her – I don't know what question I asked her, but something, and when we got home my stepmother said 'Fancy asking that question. Didn't you **know?**' And I thought know **what**.

SL3. [laughs]

SL1. That she was a lesbian

SL3. Nooo

SL1. I said I'm afraid I don't **think** in that way.

SL3. Mmm

SL1. A person is a **person** to me and I

[All talking at once and it is impossible to hear the words]

SL1. Whatever they may be, I mean we did have two girls in the **office**

I. Right

SL1. But you'd **never** have know it. **I** was told and I had known them for **ages**.

SL3. Uh mm

SL1. But nothing **struck** me.

I. Mmmm

SL1. These things don't **hit** me because I just, I just don't **think** of them.

I. No

SL1. If they want to be gay, if they want to be lesbians **let** them be

SL4. They don't interfere with us

SL3. But you know something **different** from the real one, if you see the **real** one, no-one will tell you, the real ones, you'd **notice** them

SL4. They're very....

I. Well clearly not because as you said you can't always tell [I shouldn't have said this]

SL2 No no you can't

SL3. Well maybe because I live near those people that I get used to them anyway

I. Well everybody's different I suppose. It's **interesting**

SL1. When I got ticked off for asking a **question** I thought **well** what's they, what's she talking about

SL3. [Laughs]

I. So that - and you were with your mother. Was she, was your mother alright about it?  
She didn't say anything?

SL1. Oh no she just said I shouldn't have asked that **question**.

SL3. [Laughs a lot]

SL4. You didn't know did you?

SL3. [Laughs]

SL1. Well she **guessed**.

I. So with the **television** ones; you would.. you're saying that..I suppose really you're saying that...you think.. they have the same issues as other people? Could you identify with some of the problems they have in the soaps or

SL1. No not really

SL2 That one in *Coronation Street*, there's a chap?! And I think 'e's **nice**.

SL3. Oh yes

SL2 I really do think he's **nice**

I. He works in the sewing factory with the girls?

SL4. Yes yes he's nice

All. Yes

SL4. Oh he's so gentle, I love him I think he's lovely [Laughs]

I. Right, so

SL1. Yeh

SL3. Like this problem 'Sally' had in that soap; well I think it, I think it's going to cost a lot, you'll find the children going **against** her, that's what they say. Uh mm./ They will cost money, I think trouble come, soon, or later [refers to 'Sally' in *Coronation Street* wanting to send daughters to private school and having an affair. She will be punished for trying to escape her class?]

I. Something's up. They're building up to it.

SL3. They're building **up** to it.

I. Now - I've nearly finished now. I know you want to get going. This is very helpful to me, really.

SL3. Mmm/

I. And your views are **really interesting** Now, do you think that things like that, like, you could call them controversial, where you have..sort of .. lesbians or gay men, or transgender, in fact one of the things they... you know.. like with *Emmerdale*, with 'Charity' and that, **really**, she was **bisexual**

SL3. Mmm

I. You know she had relationships with men **and** women

SL3. Women yes

I. Erm, is that something you've ever **thought about** - like in relation to the soaps?

Because they often don't **name** it as such but they

S1 ..... Mmm, I know what you **mean**

SL3. I know what you mean **yes**

I. Yeh. Ok , do you think that having things like that on, does it change people's attitudes do you think..do you think it makes people view things differently?

SL2 ..... It does some people I suppose/

SL3. Some people, who likes, feel like that sort of **life**

SL2 I mean they don't know any different [meaning different from these?]

I. But the general **audiences**, say **all** the audiences, there's 20 million people watch soaps

SL3. Many people **don't like that**

I. Do you think that some people **change** their views because of it

SL3. Yes a **lot**

SL2 Yes

SL4. Yes they **do**

SL3. They do a lot

I. And become more aware then

SL3. Mmm yes

I. Right erm

SL2 There's **another** woman in the *Coronation Street*, isn't it, in the er tea bar. She - he was, she was just a man at first wasn't she? /

I. Yes that's right that's 'Hayley'

All. 'Hayley'

SL2 'Hayley'. Is it 'Hayley'?

All. Yes

I. Yes married to 'Roy'

All. Yes

I. Well married, they couldn't get officially married but they had a blessing.

SL3. Yes

SL2 You don't think anything when you're **watching** it do you.

SL3. Mmm

SL4. You wouldn't **think** it would ya?

SL2. No, no

SL4. You see those girls in that factory started **laughin'** didn't they,

All. Yeh

I. I mean, yeh

SL4. She was a **man** once

SL3. Yes

SL4. See and that's **cruel** innit ( ) I think it is yeh

I. And, since, it's interesting, because since that came on there's been a lot of  
....government acts.. that have been passed

SL4. Yeh

I. And one of them is the gender recognition act which means that if people if they do  
change their sex by operation they can be **recognised** as that new sex

SL4. Yes

I. And they **can** in fact get married,

SL4. Yes

I. So 'Hayley' in **real** life **would** be able to marry 'Roy' now.

SL4. and SL2 Yes

SL3. Yeh

I. Do you think that's right?

SL3. Yeah [of course it is tone]..... I don't think so I don't like it. [contradictory]

I. You don't like it?

SL1. No I'm not really very keen on it myself

SL3. No I'm not



SL2 I think they're all as good and fine, don't you think? They don't in - hurt children do they, nor women.

SL3. Mmmm

SL2 I mean there's a lot of **wicked** people in life that are

SL3. Mmm

SL2 And you never see them touch a child would you and I'm sure **they** wouldn't

SL3. No... **Yes** I don't like it

I. And a **final** question: do you talk about the soaps much with, you know with other people, do you say what happened the night before and, all that.

SL4. We do, we say did you see *Emmerdale*, what did you think and that

SL1. Nobody else seems to watch, watch what I watch anyway

SL3. [laughs]

SL1. And they don't watch it, you know, I mean, or else I've forgotten the main **plot** of that **episode**

SL3. I don't watch it with my **children** because they're all grown up.( )

I. But do you talk about it here?

SL3. We talk about it here

I. Oh you do what do you

SL4. I've talked about it since it first **started**

I. I love *Emmerdale*

SL4. Yeh I love it.

I. I think *Emmerdale's* come, cracking

SL4. You get so used to it.

I. It's got much more popular, *Emmerdale*.

SL4. Ooh I'm gonna hurry and to wash up. *Emmerdale's* coming on. [laughs]

I. It only used be on in the afternoon and then they moved it to the prime time slot.

SL4. Yeh, Yeh.

I. Cause they get bigger audiences

SL3. I like it.

I. So you..you might **talk** about the things that happened?

SL2 No I don't no

I. You don't

SL2 No

I. So, with some of them

SL1. I can never remember 'cos I often ask this friend in Canada, how far they've got up with **their..** *EastEnders*

I. Right

SL1. And I said ooh that, that happened **ages** ago

SL3. Uh mm/

SL1. And I can just **vaguely** recollect it you see./

SL3. Mmm

SL4. Watching it for **years** you take it...well to me it's **real**

SL1. Yeh

SL3. Mmm

SL4. You know you think ooh

SL1. The one I did watch regularly was erm, *Emergency Ward Ten*

SL3. Oh yes

SL4. Oh yes

SL1. That was nice, that was very true to life really

SL3. Mmm, yes

SL4. And they took that **off** didn't they?

I. Yeh. Do you watch *Holby City*?

SL3. Oh yes

SL1. **Occasionally** but sometimes their arguments and they

I. It is very dramatic

SL3. Yes

SL1. Oh yes. It is overly

I. I like to but it is dramatic.

SL4. Yes

I. So – [E. coughs] I mean, sometimes you know people do say well you've said they could change people's attitudes

SL3. Mmm

I. The more controversial things, and if people **talk** about them then they might talk about them and discuss it outside of the soaps

SL1. Yeh

SL3. Mmm

SL1. What got **me** was once when I went on the.. I don't know if anybody knows the 57 **bus route**, through to Tooting,

I. Yeh

SL1. I saw some .. cross dressers

I. Oh right

SL1. And I'd **never ever** seen that before

SL3. Mmm

I. Was that male to female? Or.. female to male?

SL1. **Both**... Mostly male to female

I. Right.

SL1. And.. I thought **what**? I thought I was **seeing** things you know what I mean?

SL3. [Laughs]

I. They were in drag? Do you think they were going to a party or something or

SL1. They could be yes

N. Or dressed up

SL1. But I knew so **little** about it

I. Yeh

SL1. Anyhow, but you know I was glad to get off the **bus**

SL3. [Laughs]

SL2 What you see less about is, female to male.

SL1. Yeh

I. I mean we see, we're more familiar, on the screen, of seeing people dressed up as women

SL3. Mmm

I. Or, or transgendered people from male to female, but it's very rare we see the other way

SL3. Mmm

[Long pause].....

I. Erm, right, so really, you probably don't talk **that** much about it then? You talk probably just like this

[All talking at once] Yes, no, no

I. But not in terms of did you see that lesbian thing?

SL3. No

I. Scene last night..not so much that

SL3. No

SL1. No

I. Well I've gone through my questions and you've give me marvellous answers.

SL3. Yes, yes

I. Is there anything else you'd like to say

SL4. Yes

I. About them generally, or?

SL2 'Cos normally you're talking about things that have gone through the **day** 'aven't you,

I. Right

SL2 Off the news and everything and it's more intense now ( )

SL3. Mmm

SL4. Now '**Kevin,**' 'Kevin' in *Coronation Street*'s gonna **hit that man** innee, 'o's come in

SL3. Oh yes [laughs]

I. 'Ian'

SL4. 'E's gonna give him one so he finds out about **her,**

I. Yep

SL4. Oh dear [laughs]. You can't wait 'til the night comes to watch it

SL3. To watch it yes

I. That's right. Tonight it's on, 'cos there's two episodes on Mondays isn't there?

SL3. Yes

SL4. Yes, yeh,

I. So there'll be yes I think it's going to reach a crescendo tonight.

SL4. Tonight

SL3. Mmm

SL1. You ought to have my friend who lives in er near **Guildford** because they used to be **terrific** addicts .....with *Coronation Street*.

SL3. I don't like to miss it [laughs]

SL1...I never I never watched *Coronation Street*. I couldn't stand it because they were always **arguing** and **shouting** at each other

SL3. I like to watch it.. I like to watch it a lot

SL4. We look **forward** to the

SL3. We look forward to it... Mmm

I. So do you like *EastEnders*? As a soap, as well?

SL4. Yes

SL3. Mmm

I. 'Cos it's very erm.. gangsterish

SL4. Yes gangster, yeh

I. Erm and it's very much modelled on the Krays and things I think,

SL3. Mmm

I. Especially when Barbara Windsor was in it

SL4. Yes

I. Because she used to know the Krays

SL1. Yeh

I. And, you know with playing their **mother**, and those two **brothers**

SL3. Mmm

SL4. Oh yes she used to **go** with the Krays once didn't she?

SL3. Mmm

I. She did indeed

SL3. [Laughs]

I. Yeh, Charlie

SL3. Yes

SL4. **Yes** that's right. But we don't know whether she's going to come **back** in it

I. I think she is

SL4. Is she?

SL3. Mmm

I. I think she done too much and made herself ill, basically

SL3. Mmm

SL2. Is that right that one of the soaps is coming off, either *Coronation Street* or *EastEnders*? I've thought we heard that one of them is gonna be taken off?

I. Well, there is, I've read some funny things about.. there's such a competition for ratings and *EastEnders* has been going down

SL3. Yes going down

SL2. Yeh

I. And they are a bit worried I think and *Coronation Street*'s come up, and *Emmerdale* has

SL3. Oh yes very very good

I. Such a lot of competition, for viewing figures, that they have... I've read something about the BBC and all the cuts and everything

SL3. Uh mm

I. So.. but I don't think they will because it's their only soap and they'll have to have a soap

SL2. Yes

I. To compete at all unless they come up with another one but.. they'll probably just-

SL4. I like it 'cos it's **Cockney**

SL3. Mmm

SL4. I'm a Cockney and I like that

I. So do you come from... you don't come from [Suburb]?

SL4. **Battersea**,

I. Oh right

SL4. I come from Battersea.

I. Right... Yes you've got, got a Cockney

SL4. Yeh

I. Accent... Well, I really appreciate your time. Thank you ever so much.

SL3. We enjoyed it

I. I'll turn it off now and it's, as I said it's all confidential. It's just.. I've got to transcribe it all now which takes

SL4. Oh 'ave ya? [sympathetically]

I. Yeh

Code

( ) indecipherable

[ ] my addition

/ upward tone ie tag questions or not

... pause in speech

**Bold Type:** Emphasis in tone

## Appendix 3.4.

### One to One follow up Interview with South London Outer Suburb Group July 2005

One to one follow up with SL3. She comes from Nigeria, owns land there and intends to go back to arrange the house for renting or residency.

Married. 3 children

Setting: in the lounge of the centre; some other people were sitting close by and there were others in another area. This contrasted with the first interview which was held in a side room.

I. I'll tell you why I'm here

SL3. Uh mm

I. Because when I came before that group was fantastically interesting, when we talked about soaps, do you remember?

SL3. Yes

I. And I've got lots of good information

SL3. Mmm

I. And erm you had, all of you, interesting opinions.

SL3. Yes.

I. And when I talked to my supervisor she said it would be good to get some more **background** information

SL3. Yes /

I. And have a few questions about.. context and what I was thinking was, it would be good to know, basically, a bit about where you get your information from, how you .. 'cos your views are interesting, all of you

SL3. Mmm?

I. So, just for example

SL3. Mm?

I. Erm, what newspapers do you read?

SL3. Oh I read er the *Daily Mail* /



I. *Mail*, yeh

SL3. And *The Times*,/ yes

I. *The Times*. Every day?

SL3. Yes

I. Right

SL3. Because my daughter bought the *Mail* every day [Loudly, to a man walking to a seat:] Mind Assa. **Somebody help him, there**

[A member of staff comes and takes his arm]

SL3. Mmm

I. Right and .....and erm anything else that you..you know, when you get **news** and things

SL3. Yes?/

I. Your views. How do you get those? Do you watch the news on the telly?

SL3. Well yes /. I watch news on the telly

I. Yes

SL3. Yes every time I like to **see** the news

I. Yeh

SL3. Like the other day they playing tennis I want to see who win and who I think I **support**. I like to watch, yes I do

I. Yes. So erm.. newspapers you've told me; do you read any magazines?

SL3. **Oh yes**

I. Which ones do you read?

SL3. *OK Magazine*/

I. Yeh

SL3. And I have erm.. some other magazines, erm, erm, I got a lot I used to read myself. The one they used to have in the church

I. Oh right, yeh. And you are involved in the church still?

SL3. **Oh yes oh yes**

I. Which church is it?

SL3. Christ Church in New Malden. Anglican Church

I. Oh it's, the Anglican Church is in this area?

SL3. Yes

I. Right. ...So you watch the news. What prog, what news do you watch, er what television programme, side, you know channel?

SL3. ITV, yes, because they give you that in **details**. More than BBC or BBC1, on ITV give everything in details

I. Right

SL3. **Yes.**

I. So would you say you watch it **every** day?

SL3. I watch the news **every day**. Every day unless I'm not there for any news going on but **always** want to listen to the news

I. Yeh?

SL3. You know what is going on in the **world**

I. That's why you've got views and opinions on things because you know what is going on

SL3. Yes

I. Erm ...do you listen to the radio news at all or radio programmes?

SL3. Sometimes

I. Right but mainly telly?

SL3. Mmm

I. So.... What..you know when we talked about soaps

SL3. Uh mm

I. And you told me about watching the different soaps

SL3. Yes yes

I. That was interesting and do you watch any **other** television programmes, much do you think?

SL3. Yes I do

I. Are there any things you regularly watch or

SL3. I watch erm .... *Emmerdale*

I. Yeh?

SL3. I watch erm ..... what's the, *Coronation Street*!

I. Yeh

SL3. And I watch erm [music, 30s dance style suddenly comes on very loud. We can hear each other still.]

SL3. Erm erm ....

I. *EastEnders*?

SL3. *EastEnders* yes I do

I. And apart from the soaps do you watch any other television programmes?

SL3. **Oh yes I do** like erm, like erm, erm what do you call it erm.....what's going on now they're doing all this erm ( ) the tennis and everything [Wimbledon has just finished]

I. You watch the tennis?

SL3. I do watch a lot. Oh yes

I. Did you watch the women's finals? Fantastic

SL3. Oh yes I did. Oh yes Oh. The other lady oh I was **pleased** for her **pleased** for her

I. Yeh

SL3. Yes

I. It was a good match wasn't it?

SL3. Yes good match. I was ( ) the **sister**

I. She was so pleased to win. It was nice to see that.

SL3. Yes yes I **like** it

I. And do you watch erm anything like police things, *The Bill*?

SL3. Oh yes ah yes *The Bill* lots

I. And er *Holby City*?

SL3. Yes, oh yes *Holby City's* very nice, interesting

I. I like that too...So you watch quite a bit of drama then and

SL3. Yeh I do I do. Because mostly since I retired, I watch all these things keep me busy and everything

I. Yeh

SL3. Yes I watch them because I stayed doing my my **knitting** and I watching them

I. What erm what **work** did you do when you worked?

SL3. I was a **nurse**

I. Oh were you? In..round this area?

SL3. Not here. Area ( ) I used to live in erm New **Malden**; before I used to live in **East Ham**

I. And you used to live in Tooting?

SL3. Yes. I live in East Ham. I used to work in erm erm... London Hospital, Whitechapel. **Yes**

I. I work in the Mile End, just down the road

SL3. Uh huh?

I. Oh right

SL3. Yes

I. So what was it like then at the Whitechapel?

SL3. Very nice. Very big hospital because they had the teaching hospital got many from there yes

I. There's a lot of rebuilding there now

SL3. Yes a lot of building

I. They're knocking it down and making it into a

SL3. I tell you that hospital is more, even [local] hospital used to be nice before but not now. Before, you go to hospital they'd get **Matron**, you'd get nice **Sisters**/, that make **good hospital** not like they're still building now yes **yes**

I. Right

SL3. Because that's why they're complainin' about that er MRSA

I. Oh really?

SL3. Because **no Matron**, some of the **cleaners** .. do it anyhow... they put in the corner and go

I. Yeh

SL3. Because not many people watchin' them closely..that' why it's so bad

I. You feel it was better when you were there and that was what

SL3. Yes

I. At the Whitechapel you're saying?

SL3. **Any** hospital was good before. Even this in Newham... Newham **General**,... used to have there they had **Matron**, they had nicer **staff**, and even [Suburb] have Matron. 'Cos Matron gone now and it's **not good**. That's what we need to bring **back**

I. Yeh they are starting this **Modern Matron** business 'cos there's one at the Mile End where I am

SL3. Uh **Mmm**

I. Which is.. they've only got one for six wards so it's you know nobody can really cope with all that, but it's a

SL3. But they **need** it. They **need** it

I. You think that's a good idea yeh?

SL3. Yeh it **is** very good idea. Many hospitals come in them.. **control** ..because some **nurses** their eyes can go much to see, but the cleaners do it. But when the sister go round and they look and they say what is there, who is in charge of this ward to clean it, and if it's not well done they will make sure all the work's up to standard. And the Sister go round and the Matron come in the afternoon and go round. But now they don't do many things like **that**

I. No

SL3. Ridiculous

I. No that's yeh 'cos where I am there are quite a few people with MRSA

SL3. Mm mm?

I. They're in the the isolation wards

SL3. And it's too bad.

I. And it's not an operating hospital

SL3. No. It's not good

I. It's just rehab you know. Right did you ever go to the Mile End, do you know where it is?

SL3. **Oh yes yes** I know Mile End Hospital. Yes I know that

I. 'Cos it's all older people there.

SL3. Yes

I. Erm, so just **finally**; this is ever so helpful to me

SL3. Yes

I. Erm. you've told me what you read, newspapers

SL3. Mmm

I. Magazines, do you ever read books, novels, or anything like that?

SL3. **Oh yes, I do**

I. Any particular ones you like?

SL3. Church books, book I bring one here today..... [looks in bag] Like the one they give us from the church. Many kinds of books like this. I .. find let me see [long pause as she looks in bag]. Sorry darling. Can I put it on that chair please?

I. Yeh of course

SL3. I have too much here. This kind of book. Left it indoors

I. Doesn't matter if you did

SL3. Mmm

I. This is a book..that you... has the **church** got a **library** then?

SL3. Mmm

I. So you can borrow books from it?

SL3. Oh yes I do. Oh let me see if I didn't leave it at home. Very nice and ( ) For the church. People. Yes. I think I left it at home

I. Don't worry. Is it erm .. **about** the church or are they

SL3. About...How you do things, how God can forgive you

I. Oh right, ok

SL3. Many things like that

I. So it's about church beliefs and things

SL3. Yes how you do things to other people, what you use to people 'cos you don't want people to **do** to you. Yes I think I left it at home

I. Ethical. Don't worry you've explained to me

SL3. Yes

I. You've left it at home

SL3. Yes

I. You've explained it to me. That's brilliant

SL3. Yes

I. Thank you for this

SL3. Yes

I. You've given me lots of your time

SL3. Yes **that's it**

I. And I appreciate it and I'll make sure you have a summary of what I write

SL3. Ok

I. Thanks I'm putting it off now

SL3. You're **welcome**

Code

( ) indecipherable

[ ] my addition

/ upward tone ie tag questions

..... Pause

**Bold Type:** Emphasis in tone

**Bold Type:** Emphasis in tone

## Appendix 3.5.

### Older Lesbian Group Interview 15 October 2005

I. It's Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> October.

Right now the first question is.. not about soaps, it's about ..what do you, what **social or political** movements do you.. remember, or are important to you....and just say anything you want, and please talk one at a time. Any...social or political movements that you think

LG4. **Greenham Common** [Firmly said]

I. Right

LG1... Women's Liberation

LG4. CND marches /

LG2. Women in **Black**/

I. Yeh, were you involved in? We've all been involved in different yeh

LG5. [Very strong Teeside accent] The gay life?

I. Anything

LG5. ( )

I. It's what?

LG5. I'm totally phased as to

I. Right. So, political campaigns or social movements, would you say that you've been in involved in any?...Anything like...I mean this is one here really

LG2. Yeh OLN

LG4. Yes

I. So...I mean on socialism or anything,

LG2. Should we say **older** lesbian network?

LG1. and LG2. Yes

LG2. It is

I. It is.. it wouldn't have come about without political pasts..right so... 60s and 70s is very, for our age sort of **significant** I think for what happened, so.. well you've



feminism and Greenham, and they're key ones, erm .... is there anything in the **soaps** that **reminds** you of them movements, or campaigns..... Even loosely

LG4. Er..... Well for **me** nothing stands out, too obvious, I don't think/. I think a lot of that is kind of glossed over/ In film, in a lot of er

LG5. Well I I consider the soaps.. are er **exaggeration**, you know? 'Cos when I see them, the soaps, I can't...the actors like that, no. You know what I mean?

I. Do they remind you of any of the kind of

LG2. Well **Brookside** was quite issue based wasn't it?

I. And, yeh

LG2. And that was..was that the first lesbian?

I. Erm

LG2. *Brookside*?

LG4. In *Brookside*? Well no there was a gay guy

I. Yeh that was the first lesbian though

LG2. There was Michael **Cashman** in *EastEnders*

LG5. **Oh yeh** there was

LG4. Oh that's right

I. There was a gay

LG4. There was a gay guy in **Brookside**, before

I. Right

LG4. The **lesbians** was in it I

I. Right...gay men in *EastEnders*

LG4. I remember **that**

LG5. There was one in **Emmerdale**, wannit, 'Zoë'?

LG2. 'Zoë' yes

LG4. Blimey in her case ( )

[Distraction as someone comes in]

I. Actually while we've got a moment there so that I don't **forget** I just want to get who's who, cos otherwise I'll never be able to distinguish

LG4. E.

I. LG4., how old are you?

LG4. 55 years young

I. 55. LG1., I know, and you're 69...LG5 is?

LG2. LG5?

I. S'alright. How old are you LG5?

LG2. She's eating a chicken leg

LG4. Sorry/

I. How old? I just need it for the record

[Laughter]

LG4. 21 [laughs; she is in her 70s. They all laugh]

I. Ok. And ..LG2.

LG2. I'm 65

I. Right . It's so I can distinguish between who's saying what

LG2. Yeh

I. And I have to say .. the age range...Right

LG2. Where did we get to?

I. Yeh, the issues in er soaps. And *Brookside*

LG4. Yeh. *Brookside* was er er

I. Had more yeh political..

LG1. Wasn't it the first...kiss?

LG4. Yes

LG1. The first lesbian kiss

I...What about the political campaigns you've mentioned, like Greenham, and women's movements, lesbian.movements, do you think they're reflected in the soaps at all, in any way?

LG4. Well I don't think **Greenham Common**, when 'as Greenham Common ever been mentioned in a soap, when has lesbian, gay rights ever been mentioned in soaps.

Although you've got lesbians erm portraying lesbians, you've got straight people trying to play the role of the lesbian,

LG2. Yeh

LG4. It really hacks me off, big time. 'Cos what do straight people **know**, about lesbians, anyway. You know we 'ave a lot of gay actors out there, so why do we 'ave

les- straight women, and straight guys, playin' the role of of **my** sexuality, and the lesbian woman, and I don't think **any** of these issues, Greenham Common, as I said ..**where are** these issues?

I. No, not reflected

LG4. They're not

I. What do you think about the women's movement, do you think that

LG5. Well 'Zoë', 'Zoë'

LG2. Only **negatively**

I. Do you think, how..

LG2. I think often, negatively. Well **you** know

I. Yes

LG2. Being, you know, if your politically correct in a soap, you know

LG5. Well 'Zoë', Zoë actually is a lesbian part, in *Emmerdale*, she's not really a er she's not really a **lesbian**

LG2. No I know and she's not **political**

I. No none of them

LG2. No they're not political

I. No they're not

LG5. Though actually she's married got two sons I believe

I. Oh yeh...Do you think there's any..

LG1. I don't think it shows

I. Any campaigns that means anything to you that comes out in the

LG1. Nah. I watch it purely as light stuff; I don't **really** take a lot in.

LG2. No

I. Yeh yeh

LG. There was erm there was a social worker,, was she a black social worker? In erm *EastEnders* at one stage.. .and suddenly she just **disappeared**. I think she was a lesbian.

I. Oooh. In *EastEnders*?

LG2. I think it was *EastEnders* and she just disappeared.

LG4. I don't remember that, LG2

LG1. She **played** a lesbian or she was?

LG2. She, she **played** a lesbian

I. Right

LG1. Yeh, yeh

I. Right. So right we'll get back to the narratives in a minute

LG2. Yeh

I. When did you first watch soaps? .....

LG1. I watched *Brookside*.

LG5. I watched er..1960 I think

I. Yeh?

LG5. And I think the first one was er *Coronation Street*

LG4. Yeh well that was probably **my** – when I was a **kid**, I mean how long has **that** been going on for

LG5. Oooh

LG2. Well I didn't have a television 'til I was [all taking at once]

LG4. I didn't watch a lot of 'em I know I was

LG2. '79

I. And did you start watching them?

LG2. Probably yeh

I. Hang on...And did you... which soaps?

LG2. I used to watch erm *Coronation Street*, and *Emmerdale*, and then I watched *Brookside*

I. Yeh

LG2. Then I watched *EastEnders* and then I gave *EastEnders* up. [laughs]

I. And what about you, when did you first?

LG1. Erm I don't really remember; I think it must have been *Coronation Street*, yeh then *Brookside*

I. Yeh?

LG1. And then erm... I didn't watch *Emmerdale* for **ages and ages**. But I did watch erm *EastEnders*. And I er still ( ) turn the television on. [laughs]

I. What about *Crossroads*? Does anybody remember *Compact*?

[Laughter]

LG2. Oh yees

LG5. I remember that er the chap in *Crossroads* he was in a wheelchair, but he died

I. 'Andy'.. the character was 'Andy'

LG2. See *Eldorado*

I. Yeh

LG2. Had a lot of erm political stuff

LG1. Oh that's **right**

LG2. Like erm you know a **disabled** ....was she a woman/

I. Yeh with a wheelchair? A wheelchair user

LG2. With a wheelchair

I. So ... which ones do you watch now, all of you?

LG4. Sometimes I **might**, if I'm bored out of my **skull**, [laughs] er I would watch erm *EastEnders*, erm .... that's about it

I. Right

LG1. I watch *Emmerdale*; I think that's the one I like to watch most, and then erm.. I watch *Coronation Street*, yeh now and again. I know you can catch up on a Friday well at least you get the ( ) on a Friday

LG4. Yeh

LG1. Then a Monday, I sit down and you know... **sink myself** in it [her and V. laugh] and it leaves me free for a few days. Mmm

I. What about you, what do you watch now? Which ones?

LG5. Erm I watch er sometimes I watch *Home and Away*

I. Yeh

LG5... Then I watch er *Family Affairs*, *Emmerdale*, depends on what night, right? Say a **Friday** ...erm..I watch *Emmerdale*, then *Coronation Street*, 8 o'clock I put on er er *EastEnders*

LG2. Yeh

LG5. That's **it**, on a Friday used to watch er *Brookside* but that's closed down. *Family Affairs*, that's closin' down next month.

LG2. Is it?

LG5. Yeh

LG2. Ahh

I. Yes it is.... So what about you, which ones?

LG2. Well at the moment I watch erm.. *Emmerdale* and there's *Coronation Street*.....

I've given **up** *EastEnders*

I. Right

LG2. ..And I used to watch . *Brookside*

I. So why have you given up *EastEnders*?

LG2. It's just it's just .....it has no...I, I cannot **relate** to anybody really in it. Apart from 'Pat' [laughs]

I. Yeh

LG2. You know? I... there's nothing there for me. ....

LG1. What about *Crossroads*. Did you mention those?

I. Right now I'm gonna get on to the relationships now. In the soaps, generally how do you think relationships are represented? Just **any** relationships? You know, **any**

LG2. I'll tell you what really annoys me is, you get a very ..erm **positive woman**... coming in, and in **no** time.. she is reduced to **nothing**. As soon as she meets a man that's **it**.

LG1. Mmm

LG2...You know they're you know they're I'm, I'm **constantly** disappointed in ..the way women

I. Do you think it's a general thing?

LG2. Oh yeh it's a general thing but I

I. As soon as they meet a man they're

LG2. Yeh

LG5. I think with these soaps, there's too much ..**bed hopping**. I call it bed hopping.

Then there's always drinkin'. Don't matter what...indoors with a bottle or a can.

*Emmerdale*, you just get fed up with it ( )

I. There is a lot.... How do you think they're represented? Relationships? Just generally?

LG1. Just, yeh... I suppose I'm watching '**Shelley**' at the moment. You know?

I. Yeh

LG1. Yeh, and ...good to see that she's getting **stronger** and stronger. But.. when I'm watching 'Gail', and that bloke... she's getting ... you know I think for **god's sake what is she doing?** And she's, I know she's not that old but she's she's acting like a **kid**

I. Yeh she is

LG5. ( ) she was on *The Paul O'Grady show*. And

LG1. I din't see that

LG5. Yeh she was on there, you could see she was well I mean what is ...see they're only actin'

I. Yeh that's right.

LG5. No one **really knows**

I. Well how do you think relationships generally are

LG4. Well personally, I don't relate to them to **that** extent, because the **majority** of them... they're all **heterosexual**, and I cannot relate to heterosexual **relationships**. So I just **look** at that, and I just think... I don't think too much at all to be quite honest with you because I'm not... I'm not **straight**

I. Right .. something like... I'm quite interested in how the **older** relationships are represented. Do you think that the older people are given any

LG2. Oh there's some **lovely** bits of business between 'Emily' and er ...you know ....the shop... '**Rita**'

I. Yeh yeh

LG2. There's some **lovely** bits of business going on in different circles between the older ..among the older

LG1. There is with 'Dot'

I. Yes I was gonna say 'Dot Cotton'

LG2. Yeh

LG1. Yeh yeh. That is sweet stuff yeh

I. Right now what ok now this is the basic thing.. what do you think about...erm this is about the lgbt relationships. How do you think les, the lesbian relationships are portrayed, when they're in soaps. If you've seen any

LG2. Well they all end in **tears**, don't they?

LG1. Yeh. They all **end**

LG4. **Yes**

LG2. [Laughing ironically] And they all **end** [laughs]

LG4. They're not.. I don't think they are .. I think gay life style is portrayed in a very negative way, because I think there's this **attitude** out there that lesbians don't stay together less than ( ) weeks or a **year**. There **are long term** relationships out there for **homosexuals**; it's not only the **straight** world that stays for twenty to thirty odd years. So

LG2. Yeh

LG4. I think, when, I think when the gay erm when **we** are portrayed it's on this level there's this attitude oh well they're lesbians, they won't stick together, so I think that is very **negative**, around lesbianism.

I. Right

LG4. Then

LG5. When I watch...sorry pet

LG1. S'alright, you go on.... Ok I was gonna say that the **lesbians** end in that way yeh, you know there's **never** a long term, they break up

LG4. **Yes**

LG1. But the men oh, the men are so **funny**, they're you know all **dressed up**, everybody thinks they're ( ) and they're all sort of **joyful** I think aren't they?

LG4. Yes

I. Yeh

LG5. On erm on *Family Affairs*, you've got gay blokes on there( ) gay blokes, the son there's quite a few. And the pub that '**Eileen**' runs

I. Yeh

LG5. They're gonna they're talking about changing that into a **gay bar**

I. Really?

LG5. Yeh. *Family*

I. ( ) Laughter

LG5. Yeh but the thing is that that pub is gonna catch **fire**

I. [Laughs]

LG5. Everyone's gonna get caught in it ... I don't know



[Much laughter]

LG2. So as soon as it becomes gay it catches fire.

I. So who

LG4. So what's **that say**?

LG2. Yeh what's that say?

I. So how do **you** think the lesbian relationships or have you seen any representations?

LG2. Well with 'Zoë' I mean ...

I. Yeh that's interesting

LG2. It's all, you know, suddenly they meet.. you know, and immediately they're..they're **kissing**..and then, you know, it's very short term, ... and it it's it there's no connection with anybody else **outside** of that relationship

LG1. Yeh

LG2. There's nobody **else there**.

LG4. No

LG5. You'd think they lived in a **desert**

LG4. **Yes yes** that's true

LG5. Well she does actually goes to bed er as soon as with the nanny

LG2. There's no background

LG5. Well she was **paid** to do that.

I. [to new person who has joined the group] So.. how, do you, do you think the representations .. what's your name tell me?

LG3. LG3

I. How do **you** think the lesbian relationships are represented in soaps?

LG5. 'Scuse me just for one moment

LG3. Very **sad** situations.

I. Right

LG3 Very **sad** situations....all end in disaster, yes

I. Right. I don't know whether you're interested but what about gay men? Do you think they're represented in a different way or

LG1. **Yes**, totally different

I. Right **how** would you describe that?

LG1. Just, happy and ...they have relationships and it doesn't **matter** that you know it doesn't go so well, it's not you know it's not a tragedy, and er

LG3. Supported by the **community**, as well

LG1. **Yes, yes**

I. They're what?

LG3. Supported by the **community**

LG1. 'Cos they're so **funny**, and er

LG2. Well, they're tokens aren't they. ; 'cos **Lesbians** are tokens, **they're** the tokens, as well, because they, they only depict one side of being **gay**, they

I. Yeh and the age tends to be ...quite ... young?

LG4. I'd say young

I. I mean lesbians

LG4. Well they're young as well. When do you ever see an **older lesbian**, and when do you ever see a lesbian on the tv, **lookin'** like a lesbian and not a face full of make up, no disrespect to .. but when do you ever see any lesbians with short hair, big boots on, they're all portrayed as twittery, aren't they? And none of us are **twittery** here, so where **are** we all isn't it?

LG2. Yeh....And if we **were** there in our years, they'd be laughing

LG4. Absolutely. Absolutely

I. You might remember *Emmerdale* where they originally had 'Zoë' getting off with a **lorry driver**, the first character was much more butch; I'm using it in inverted commas here

LG2. Mmm

I. Subjective but, they changed that character into someone much more softer, almost, feminine, clearly it wasn't acceptable, after a few weeks

LG2. No, no

LG4. No, because there's that image out there, that if, if you are lesbian, you you're not supposed to have short hair, because it, or walk round in whatever kind of clothes you wanna wear, because you are not seen as **feminine**, well we're all very very feminine here, regardless of what type of, what have clothes got to do with it isn't it?

I. Do you remember '**Derek**', the gay man, in *EastEnders* at all?

LG1. No, was he the one that was with 'Pauline'?

LG5. Was that the one with erm 'David'?

LG1. No that's a different one

I. 'Derek' stayed with 'Pauline', shared

LG2. **Oh yes!** You see **he** was made **sexless**, wasn't he?

LG4. **Yes, he was**

LG2. You know, the only time he met that man, even tho' he'd.. before, and that was problematic, but that was that was soon shelved you know

LG4. Yes

LG1. Yeh

I. So.. what about '**Hayley**', or **trans** characters, in *Coronation Street*, what do you think about them? ...Any opinion?

LG5. Which one's 'Hayley' again?

I. Married to 'Roy', in *Coronation Street*

LG5. Oh yeh, yeh

LG1. Yeh, she's slightly set **aside**, she's not yeh, she, in this **sewing thing**, whatever, but she's slightly **set aside** somehow

I. How do you mean, set aside?

LG1. Erm, if they **ask** her something everybody **looks**, you know, they're all watching to see what she's **doing**, what she's saying. But.. anybody else they you know oh, shut up.

LG4. But there's nobody in that programme for her to **identify** with, is there? And most of the time, she **is** being **ridiculed**

LG1. Yes

LG4. By **other people**, because there's always derogatory comments made about '**Hayley**'. And there's nobody there to back her up. There's nobody else in that programme that is the same sexuality as herself that she can actually identify with. She's surrounded by locals all the time isn't she?

LG1. Yeh yeh

LG2. And she's also married a chap who is an **outsider**

LG4. Yes, yeh

LG1. Yeh, yeh. It's almost like well he's the only guy that would take her on

LG4. **Yes**

LG3 Comic characters

LG1. Yeh yeh

I. So.. well ..I think, I mean I was gonna say are they **realistic**, any of these lgbt characters. I think well actually I was going to say about bisexuality. Do you think that's **ever** represented?...You know, these characters we're talkin' about. Do you think they **are** lesbian or gay, or do ever see bisexuals?

LG5. Well, I get the impression.... 'Pauline Fowler'

. 'Pauline Fowler', yeh?

LG5. Erm, I get the impression, sorry Pet [to someone who came past] I get the **impression**, that she's **gay** in real life.

[Laughter]

LG5. I could be wrong but this is the impression **I've** got

I. Do you think that in the soap stories there are any bisexuals?...

LG2. Ah

I. Characters?

LG4. **No**. I don't think there is. If there is..**No**. I'd say no. I don't think they're portrayed at **all**

I. Right. [There is a lot of background noise from now on] ...Because, sometimes, when characters become... gay or lesbian, their past is .. is kind of. suddenly gone, the gay man in *Coronation Street*, 'Todd', he was **straight**

LG5. Yeh

LG2. **Yes**, he was straight.

I. It's kind of sometimes, either or and

LG2. Mind you ( ) when he went to London, ( ) because, you know, that's the only **place**

I. So could you identify with any of these characters, these LGBT or the lesbian in this case, could you identify with any of them at all, do you think?

LG2. What, lesbian or heterosexual?

I. Looking at LGBT characters, but, you know, I'm mostly concerned about

LG2. Lesbians

I. Lesbians here, but whatever, any of the non heterosexual characters...do you think you could identify **with** them, with any of the problems they're having or issues, or anything?

LG4. Erm,.. I think maybe you can 'ave a little bit of **sympathy** if that's the right word, or maybe a little bit of understandin' but personally, for myself, **no**

I .....Right

LG2. No. not really

I. No? ....no? Erm do you remember anything **particularly** about of the episodes? Do they **stand out** ...I'm still on the non-heterosexual storylines. Does something, 'oh yeh that happened'?

LG1 ....I remember when they were **laughing** at 'Hayley', and ...I'm just trying to think what the instance was

I. Yeh

LG1. You know, it's like they were all **together**, making fun of her because...

LG2. But in a way that can be **realistic**, see

LG1. Would it be? It **could**, it could be realistic, yeh.

I. You remember that do you? That sort of sticks in your mind?

LG1. I **remember** that yeh

I. Do you have anything specific about er the lesbian things? .. You know that

LG4 .....Not me no

LG2. I can't think of anything

LG3. No

I. Really?

LG2. Can **you**?

I [Laughs] Yeh, I've watched them all!

LG2. [Laughs]

I. Yeh I certainly can, I can say it because you haven't said

LG2. No

I. The lesbian kiss in *Brookside* became like ..the scene.. you know when they **mention** *Brookside*

LG2. **Yes**, and it was cut out for the Saturday repeat ..Cut out on the Saturday repeat

LG4. So

I. Oh yeh. I can remember it because

LG2. It was **surprising**

I. It made a big splash

LG2. Yeh yeh

E1. I think it made a big **splash** but then why **erase** it?

LG2. Yes yeh

LG4. So that to me didn't really make a big **splash**, that was saying one thing, and then it was turnin' it on its head isn't it, sayin' we're not 'avin' any more of **that**, so to **me** that is something that I couldn't celebrate, because it was given in one hand, and then the rug was pulled away in the other.

LG2. Yeh

I. Yeh, right. So ...I think it helps to jog your memory

LG2. Yes, we need... because you've been **thinking** about it all this time. We haven't 'cos we've just come in [laughs]

I. Yeh, sure. Erm... do you **think**, that they change audience views?

LG4. Say that again?

I. Do you think that these characters, these non-heterosexual storylines, change people's attitudes? People **watching** them.

LG2..... Well **I** think it's useful to have the subject **raised**.

LG4. Yes, yeh

LG2. Whatever, you know even if it's negative

LG4. Yes

LG2. It's still there, **out** there

I. Yeh

LG2. People, you know, have to **put up** with it

LG4. Yeh

LG2. You know we have to put up with a lot of heterosexual stuff

LG4. **Yes**

LG2 We don't **want**,

I. Yeh

LG2. And if they, they feel like that about **us** then, you know they have to put up with that at least

I. Yeh, so it might change them

LG2. It's better to be **in there** than **not** yes

LG1. People are confronted with it

LG2. Yes

I. Do you think they change people's attitudes?

LG1. I don't think so but I think like Val says it's bringing them **up**, whether people say,

LG3. Yes

LG4. Yes

LG1. You know, 'ooh, what about that new, that 'Zoë's' new **girlfriend**,

LG3. It may not **change** but they **tolerate** some section of the viewers some may **tolerate** it

I. So that might be a change..I was thinking

LG3. It's not **long enough**, and it's not

LG2. It doesn't **threaten** them

I. They need to be followed up

LG3. Non threatening ( )

I. The last question is, do you ever **talk** about these storylines, with other people?

LG3. Yes

LG4. I personally don't

I. You wouldn't say, oh, there's a lesbian thing on tonight, I'm gonna watch it?

LG4. If there's a **documentary** on, and it's worth watching

LG1. Yeh

LG4. And **lesbians** are por, portrayed in the way that we **should** be, then I would watch it. But if it's people **mimicking** lesbians, then forget it, I won't watch it

I. So ... you wouldn't, for example, I'm saying this because I've done this, mentioned it in an **abstract** way in order to find out people's attitudes

LG2. **Oh I see**

I. You know if you're in company with people

LG1. Yeh

I. And I might have said, 'did you see what happened ....to 'Charity' and thingy last night?'

LG2. Yeh

I. And see how .. have you ever done that, or do you ....would you do it without thinking of ..you haven't. I mean I do it

LG2. I er I don't because

I. You don't?

LG2. I, I feel that.. because it's such a ..a **skewed** sort of representation, I don't want to get into a conversation

I. Right

LG4. Yeh

LG2. About it

LG1. Yeh

I. Right

LG2. Or about my **life**, you know, because it you know, unless I I particularly want to be **out** to that person

I. Right

LG2. I wouldn't **do it**

I. Therefore you wouldn't wanna be identified with those characters then either?

LG2. No

I. Because they're that skewed, you wouldn't want people thinkin' oh, they're like them

LG2. Yeh

LG1. Yeh, if I was fairly close to them and I **knew** them, I would say well that's not how a lot of us, as well, us, lesbians **work**

I. Right

LG1. They're not like at **all**

I. Right, absolutely

LG1. I would say that, but I would be **careful**, with my **sister** I would say it

I. Right

LG2. Yes you'd be careful who you said it to

I. But you wouldn't actually initiate that



LG1. No

I. So..have you heard other **people** talkin' about them, these characters? Lesbian characters, in a...any

LG1. I don't think they even **see** it, see, well of course, they don't see what **we** see. But they see it as such a **laugh**, you know, lesbians, erm 'oh right, she's gone off with '**er** now'. [**Mimics working class accent**] you know

LG4. Yeh yeh

LG1. She's gone off and she'asn't got it

I. Right, so they're making light of it?

LG1. Yeh, yeh

I. Well, I've gone through all my questions.

LG2. **Good lord**

I. Thank you.

LG2. I hope you can hear it; there's so much noise behind us

I. I know. Is there anything else, that occurs to you now? Whatever. I mean I can turn that over, if you've got anything. Sometimes there's a thought that comes afterwards, you know different moments that you suddenly

LG2. Yeh

I. That are so **obvious**

LG5. I mean, these soaps, sometimes I, I'm inclined to be a bit **observant**, you know, I, I keep on finding **faults**

I. You keep on?

LG5. Finding **faults**. You know **slip ups** that they make

I. Oh right

LG5. You know, like erm you know erm, erm, him that's got the vet's, in *Emmerdale*

I. Yeh

LG5. 'E's got er, '**Paddy**'

I. 'Paddy'

LG5. Well, 'ave you noticed, inside 'is office, right?

LG2. [Laughs]

LG5. When 'e...when the door **shuts**...you can see on the back of the **door**, ...a board

I. Yeh

LG5. You can see an **optician's**, big print, little print

LG2. Oh can you? / [laughs]

LG4. Yeh

[All laugh]

I. In a vet's

LG2. [Laughs]

LG5. It's **true**. Next time see. Next time

LG2. Blimey

LG1. And animals don't have their eyes tested do they?

I. [Laughs] No

LG1. [Laughs]

I. 'Read that board'

LG5. Yeh, some things like that, and another thing... erm, I know they're only **actin'** but like *Emmerdale*, that time when 'Zoë' actually **left**

I. Yeh

LG5. In the **car**

I. Oh, this last time and she's gone now hasn't she?

LG5. Yeh, well

I. What actually happened?

LG2. She set fire to the house

I. She got away? She didn't get caught did she? So she's got **away**

LG2. She's got away, at the moment

I. And she's not dead

LG2. No

LG5. But the thing was

LG1. Like 'Kim Tate'

LG5. The thing I'm curious about, is what's happened to the dog

LG1. She did yeh, she left to go across

I. She loved her dog; that's not right

LG5. She can't give it away if she's gone abroad.

I. Yeh 'cos that man was gonna look after it for her wasn't he?

LG5. Yeh well I thought 'e went with 'er?

I. Did he?

LG2. **No**

LG5. The gamekeeper

I. She didn't go with a woman did she? That that's definite

LG5. Nanny?

LG2. No no

I. She tricked her

LG5. Yeh it was a **trick**

LG3. That's a game, making a lesbian relationship

I. Yeh

LG3. If ... why can't you see, a lesbian relationship, as **normal**, as a **heterosexual**

LG4. Yes

LG3. Relationship

LG5. I mean, no disrespect, but I don't think it's everyone's cup of tea.

LG2. [Laughs]

LG1. Sod that, we have to sit and watch the other side

LG5. I **know**, that's what I **mean**

I. They could show a different representation, a variety of representations, couldn't they?

LG3. Well since she has been in, lesbian, in this ( ) she should, at some point settle her, at least a while

I. Do you she was part of that community of the soap or do you think she was always set **aside**, 'Zoë'?

LG1. Set.... always set aside, yes always set aside yes. Never **with** a lot of people was she?

LG3. As a privileged person, first, and as a **lesbian**/

LG1. When did she ..when did we **know** she was a lesbian? I don't remember

LG3. I haven't been watching it at the **time**

LG5. There was one that ( )

I. It was a long time ago, when she first came out, erm she had a boyfriend called '**Archie**'

LG2. Did she?

I. And she told **him**, I think she was a ( ) heterosexual, and then she told 'Archie', who found out where the **university** lesbian and gay society met

LG2. Was that the **lecturer**, was that a lecturer? Or was that another soap?

I. She did have an **affair** with an older man

LG2. Did she?

I. Or maybe not....Who was the lecturer? Oh an older **woman** you mean.... Oh hang on, no that's 'Beth'

LG2. That's 'Beth'!

I. 'Beth Jordache'

LG2. 'Beth Jordache'

I. Yeh, a woman in her thirties. Referred to as an older woman! [laughs]

LG2. [Laughs] Well she was older than 'Beth' after all yeh

I. Yeh she was

LG3. When, before I started to watch it, erm, when I hear there's a lesbian in there, *Emmerdale*

I. Yeh?

LG3. Was she in a relationship that was sort of stable?

I. I wouldn't say so. There was always dramatic

LG3. Mm mm

I. She got 'married' to one of them, and her ex girlfriend came... there was a marquee in the garden, the ex tried to run her over. She came in a car and smacked the door open, nearly killed her

LG2. Laughs]

I. She had that relationship with '**Charity**'. That was a very **interesting** thing

LG2. Actually that **was** quite interesting

I. 'Cos they presented that as .. you didn't know 'Zoe'

[All talk at once]

LG5. She 'ad a baby

LG2. You could call that er bisexual

LG3. Yes. That's one bisexual.

I. Yeh 'cos 'Charity' ...they presented it as 'who is 'Charity's' lover, who is it, and then all of a sudden it was 'Zoë' that you saw. And that was a real shock I think. I loved that. But it was ... drama

LG2. Yeh

I. Very ...dramatic

LG5. Well there again, in **real** life, 'Charity' when she left she 'ad a **baby**

I. Yeh. Oh in **real** life

LG2. Yeh. We're not **talking** about real life tho' are we?

I. No

LG5. That's what I'm **sayin**. It's odd though

I. You know... talking about real life

LG5. Oh right

I. You know, the **real** lesbians..the only one we know of is Pam St. Clements

LG2. Yeh

I. In erm *EastEnders*, who plays 'Pat'?

LG2. Oh yeh

I. There aren't any ....other real

LG3. The, the **lesbians**, like '**Pat**', they always seem to have a very erm strong heterosexual relationship in the whatever character they play, you know, it's, it's always a **mad**, exciting, torrid relationship with husbands, or whatever

I. Unless their **older**

LG3. Mmm

I. Do you think 'Pat' has with ..do you watch *EastEnders*?

LG3. No

LG1. Is it 'Roy'?

RLG3 Going back to erm, with ...'**Charity**', there's a sort of stereotype there, that straight women use lesbians

LG2. Yees

LG3. At some point

LG4 Yeh

LG1. Yes

LG3. To get at their **target**

LG4. **Yes**

LG3. Or whatever they want to get

I. Yes, subtext

LG2. Yes, you could also say that's that's erm almost **realistic** as well

LG3. It is,

LG2. That happens

I. That straight women?

LG2. Lesbians are **used**

LG3. Yes..... It happens with the men, also.... That's quite **disturbing**, at times and ...then you walk away erm when you've achieved, you know, whatever you want to achieve

LG1. Yes

LG2. Yeh, I used to, I used to like the **idea** of there being a lesbian in it, even if it **was** unrealistic... but nowadays it sort of worn a bit thin

LG1. and LG4. Yeh

I. And now

LG2. No

I. Don't think there are any characters now

LG3. One of the erm hospital things...it had a kind of brief lesbian relationship goin'.

*The Bill?* Has *The Bill* had any?

LG1. Lesbians? I never watch it, but the **prison** one

I. Oh, *Bad Girls*

LG1. Yeh

LG3. Only

I. Done by Shed Productions, who are lesbians

LG1. Yeh, yeh, I tell you what I **do** like. I like the fact of **hearing** the word, lesbians.

All. Yes

I. You like to hear the word

All. Yes

LG1. And erm, you know, like it probably did a lot of us, it took a long while to **say** it, I am a lesbian

LG4. Yes, yes

I. Just hearing the word,

LG1. Yeh

I. In a soap, where it was never spoken

LG4. Yeh

L. Can have an impact

LG4. Yes

LG1. What about... *The L Word*. Now I've never seen it

I. I've never seen it

LG1. Is it on one of these Sky channels or something?

I. Yeh it is

[Noise overwhelming now and thank them and turn the tape off]

Return visit 19 November to ask about the context of viewing. It was not possible to have another Group interview. This was a rushed moment in the meeting and again there was a lot of background noise.

I. I've forgotten what your name is

LG3. LG3.

I. Do you, you don't watch, do you watch the soaps with anyone **now**?

LG3. No

I. Did you **used** to, when you first watched them did you used to watch them with anybody?

LG3. Nooo

I. [Laughs] Oh, that's very good then

LG3. ( )

I. So you always watched them on your own, you prefer to watch them on your own?

LG3. Yes.

I. Thank you very much

LG3. Ok

I. At the moment, when you watch the soaps, who do you watch them with?

LG1. I watch them with my family if I'm there but if not I watch it by **myself**.

I. And you said, when you're in the **flat**

LG1. Yeh

I. Some of the other lodgers might be in and out but mainly you're watching it

LG1. Yes

I. And you said you'd rather watch

LG1 Yes I'd rather watch it on my own...I don't have to **talk** I don't have to ( ) it through

I. Right and in the past

LG1. Yeh

I. Who did you watch 'em with?...Family?

LG1. Family yes.. yeh family

I. Right ..and.. did they enjoy watchin' 'em, your..do you mean your husband?

LG1. Yeh

I. Did you ever watch 'em with your husband?

LG1. Nah

I. So you mean kids?

LG1. Yes

I. So you watched 'em with your children? And they enjoyed 'em?

LG1. Yeh. We're more on the same **wavelength**. Me and my **girls**. [laughs]

I. Yeh [laughs]

LG1. We watched er we watch it together. We 'ave a **laugh** and just you know discuss what's happening

I. Yeh yeh

LG1. And that sort of thing

I. So... So ..do you think.. when you watched 'em, there wouldn't have been any **lesbian** things on would there or gay things?

LG1. Oh not **years** ago no



I. No, so, so **now** when they're on, you wouldn't really..you're **living** in a house with lesbians

LG1. Yes

I. You ..might discuss it with 'em..

LG1. Yeh

I. Or you wouldn't really?

LG1. No well I might just **say**

I. They're not really interested?

LG1. 'I see they have a new lesbian in *Emmerdale*'

I. Yeh

LG1. Something like that...not discuss it

I. Are they **interested** in 'em, the other people in the house?

LG1. Er don't **think** so, I'm not sure if they....

I. You're not aware of it

LG1. No

I. Ok well than you very much M.

I. Now I'm talking to LG4. Do you watch the soaps with anybody?

LG4. **No**

I. And did you used in the past?

LG4. Yes erm

I. When you first started watchin' em?

LG4. Erm

I. Family?

LG4 No

I. So mainly you've watched 'em on your own

LG4. **Yes yes.** 'Cos when I was with my ex partner neither of us a reall...we've never..no

I. Ok so you just...and now you might watch 'em. I know you weren't wildly into them, were you?

LG4. No I've never been wildly into them I'm not wildly into them now

I. You were interested in talkin'; you were interested in **talkin'** about them

LG4. Yeh

I. Ok so if you **did** happen to watch them it would be on your **own**

LG4 **Yes**

I. That's all I need to know

LG4. Ok

I. Thank you very much

LG4. No problem

I. Now... what I forgot to ask, and it'll take one minute...They've all answered it singly 'cos it's easier..was..when you watch the soaps now, do you watch 'em on your own or with other people?

LG2. I watch them on my **own**

I. And

LG2. I watch the **soaps** on my **own**

I. Usually

LG2. Usually

I. And..in the **past** have you watched 'em on your own? ..Or you know when you first started watchin' em did you used to watch 'em with **family**..or **friends**?

LG2. No 'cos we didn't have a **telly**

I. Oh right

LG2. No

I. Ok so you've always watched

LG2. Always watched them on my own

I. Them on your own really

LG2. Yeh

I. So you wouldn't make an effort of getting' other people to watch it if there was something significant on or say there's something on

LG2. No

I. Watch it together

LG2. No

I. Ok...Thank you very much

LG2. [Laughs]

## Appendix 3.6

### Older Lesbian Group One to One follow up with E2. and T. 14 November 2006

This interview is carried out because LG5. had talked about liking soaps and expressed views on lesbian representations which were not repeated in the main interview. The interview takes place in LG6.s house; LG5 has come there by bus. LG6. owns the house and has a very excitable rescue dog which barks at intervals and is eventually sent out of the room.

I. First of all I didn't ask how old you are; do you mind telling me?

LG5. 72

I. 72. Right. I'm just putting that on the tape.LG5, 72, just a follow up from the soap interview and it's November the..I don't know what the date is today actually er

LG5... I think it's the 14<sup>th</sup>.

I. Yeh I think you're right.. I just wanna follow up, erm 'cos I didn't get.. it was in such a turmoil when I did the interview I didn't get a chance to ask one of the basic questions which was, when you watch the soaps, **now**

LG5. Yeh

I. Do you watch them with anybody **else**, or on your own?

LG5. On me own... Apart from me two cats. [laughs]

I. Oh, you've got two cats. And..did you in the **past** used to watch 'em, **with** other people, like when you first started watching them

LG5. Yeh, yeh

I. Was it, with who? Family, partner

LG5. Erm..

I. Different ..

LG5. Well.. how far you goin' back?

I. As far as... ever, when you first started watchin'

LG5. It was at **home** when I first started *EastEnders* and *Coronation Street*

I. Yeh

LG5. More or less me. Watch it with me well me **daughter**, was only 4 or 5 years

I. Yeh. Right, so did she used to watch it?

LG5. Naa she was too much er a **bugger**

I. Right, so really you've wa... it's been on your own you've watched 'em mainly, not

LG5. Yeh

I. Not with other people. It's just really, about how people talk about them when it's over

LG6. Yeh

I. And erm

LG5. Well, when I used to go **home**, I used to watch it with me **sister**, and the girl

I. Oh right, right

LG5. You know, erm when I used to stay with 'er ( )

I. So...how long would that be ago?

LG5. About 5 year ago, over 5 year ago

I. Right..and when, if, if ever you watched 'em, and there would be a lesbian or gay, storyline, did you ever talk about it with them?

LG5. No

I. And did they ever

LG5. No

I. They didn't really mention it

LG5. No, I used to erm keep it to **meself**

I. Right, ok

LG6. What, you just dealin' with LG5. at the minute?

I. Yeh

LG6. Ok, I'll make a cup a tea then. Do you want tea or coffee?

I. Coffee please

LG5. Not for me thanks

I. Oh thanks

LG6. Milk and sugar?

I. Just milk please no sugar. Thanks. Erm just a bit of background. Now what do you read, what papers and different things,.. do you read newspapers?

LG5. Yeh

I. Yeh you do you've got

LG5. *The Mirror*. On a Saturday if there's any free CDs go in a newspaper I'll buy 'em  
[laughs]

I. Oh, yeh

LG5. [Laughs] Free CDs

I. Absolutely... Now – I want to address this; I remember you telling me a long time ago, when we first talked about this.. that you were very interested because *Family Affairs* had a lesbian storyline, and one of them was a mum, and they were talkin' about lesbian mothers, and **you** said it was the only time it was discussed, in a soap. So .. I mean I was very taken with that 'cos that was really an issue that would be an

LG5. Well I'm goin' **back** a few **years**

I. Yeh it was

LG5. With *Emmerdale*, I don't know if you watch *Emmerdale*

I. Yeh, I do

LG5. I remember 'Zoë', talked to 'er **dad**, at the time, and she was, admitted to 'er **dad**, that she was not interested in **men**

I. ...She did, didn't she?

LG5. Yeh, yeh

I. And do you remember how 'e responded?

LG5. ..No I can't remember, no

I. No

LG5. Too far ago innit

I. But it was ..yeh, I think that I think that it was an issue

LG5. Mmm

I. Not very nice and then ..came round to it in the end.

I. ..Yeh I mean like er it was before 'Zoë' **left**

I. Yeh

LG5. I mean er like er '**Viv**', that woman in the post office shop, she used to take the **mickey** out of 'er

I. Always

LG5. Yeh, yeh

I. So...Then ..when there's an **issue** like that, do ever talk about those things with other people at all, like if they're on the soaps. Like, or **hear** other people talkin' about them.

LG5. Noo, not really, erm ..... I'm more or less that kind of thing, I more or less keep to **myself**. Just in case you know?

I. Yeh

LG5. 'Cos you see

I. Right

LG5. I mean...where my daughter used to live down here, I used to have to lead two different **lives** .. you know what I mean? Because of me **daughter**

I. Right

LG5. You know go to school and whatever

I. Yeh yeh

LG5. So I more or less.. I didn't have any boy friends

I. Right

LG5. Or things like **that**

I. No

[Dog barks very loudly at the builders outside]

LG5. I was more or less erm..I still 'ad, I've always been interested in er same sex type you know

I. Yeh

LG5. And erm

I. Were you married at one point?

LG5. Well I, I was married, I got married in 58

I. Yeh

LG5. It was 58, I think and er ..I divorced 'im in about **1960**

I. Right

LG5. 'Cos 'e was, he went over erm... 'e rejoined the army 'e was on tank regiment, and 'e went over to **Germany**

I. Yeh

LG5. And 'e sent me a **post card**, a picture **post card**

I. Yeh

LG5. From **Blackpool**

I. Yeh

LG5. On 'is **leave**, instead of coming to **me**, 'e went over to Blackpool and was havin' an **affair** with 'is mate's **wife**

I. Really?

LG5. So I took it to the **solicitor's**, he says well just leave it **with** me

I. Right

LG5. And I 'ad to go, it was un, at, erm

I. Uncontested? But really perhaps you didn't mind? It's not very nice though is it?

LG5. Not really, and er erm of course erm ..... I had a.. nervous **breakdown**, actually when I was workin' at the erm Royal Masonic **School**

I. Yeh

LG5. In Rickmansworth

I. What were you doing there?

LG5. Caterer

I. Oh right. Yeh yeh, oh.. the Masonic school

LG5. Yeh, **Rickmansworth**

I. Yeh

LG5. And erm ( ) Jean.. well she's dead now like.. she came **on** to me..and of course, you know, and it caused er eventually when 'er man got to **know** I got the **backlash** of it

I. Ah

LG5. It was all my **fault**

I. Really?

LG5. Yeh, and Jean er

I. You mean she was a student there?

LG5. No, she

I. She was working there was she?

LG5. Yeh, in fact it was me that got 'er the job there

I. But you got, oh dear

LG5. But I erm ..got the backwash of it..it was all my fault



I. Yeh yeh

LG5. But erm I 'ad a nervous break I came **home** and I had a nervous **breakdown** from it.... I went to the hos the hospital in South **Shields**... I explained to the erm whose er what do you call 'im?...erm .. **shrinkers**

I. Yeh, psychiatrist

LG5. I explained to 'im

I. Yeh

LG5. And 'e, 'e 'e thought I was changing me **sex**, or something like **that**, but 'e had a **look**

I. [Laughs]

LG5. He says, well in that **time**

I. When was that?

LG5. Oh, I I'm, goin' back erm... 40s?... 40s?... 50s?

I. Yeh..blimey

LG5. Late 40s yes. 51, 52, 53

I. Yeh, yeh

LG5. Anyhow erm,...I was one day at the erm **doctor**, e's **retired**,... 'e said **oh**, just a minute, 'e says there's a **brochure**... in the *Sunday Times*, ...**relates** to something about you, anyhow 'e said just a minute I'll go and see if I can **find** it

I. Yeh

LG5. Anyhow, erm 'e erm, 'e went away, came back and there was this crappy old *Sunday Times*

I. Yeh

LG5. And **inside** was something **about** er lesbians, and er they referred to er **Esmee Langley**

I. Oh right yeh

LG5. You know?

I. Yeh

LG5. And so I wrote back to 'er

I. Yeh yeh

LG5. And I joined 'er um like a **newsletter**.... And in there was **penfriends**

I. Right

LG5. This is how I got to **know**

I. That was good, that the doctor had seen that then

LG5. Yeh, and the first one, was called.. Audrey, and she came, and we 'ad an **affair** like

I. Right

LG5. But that didn't last long. .. You know **long distance** .. relationships; live too far away

I. Right, so, where do you...where did you live then?

LG5. South Shields, Tyne and Wear

I. Right, so how long have you been in London then?

LG5. 69. Was 1969

I. Right yeh. Cor blimey. So.. that's interesting. See, I don't get that background in the group because you didn't get a chance, there wasn't enough chance to talk about this

LG5. I know, I know

I. You know ...the soaps, do you think that when they have these lesbian things on, or gay men, or whatever, that they **change** people, or that they make **audiences** more ...tolerant, or **intolerant**, or, in any way?

LG5. I don't know; it depends on **yourself**. I mean if you're gay **yourself**, you **accept** it. But then, when you read in the **paper** that erm ...these girls that takes part in lesbians or gay programme, actually in **real life** they're **straight**, you know and they're er

I. Oh yeh but do you think that

LG5. Heterosexual

I. The audiences who are watching, the straight people, or.. people that might be wondering, do you think it might influence them, when they see it on the telly?

LG5. I don't know, I don't **know** really, 'cos er, nobody's more or less, **remarked** on it, like you know?

I. Yeh. They haven't have they

LG5. Well if they did I did I used to say oh... live and let live, like you know?

I. Yeh, yeh .. that's fantastic, that's filled in a bit now better for me, from that interview. I just wanna reiterate, totally confidential, it's only me that **hears** it, and I'll erm type it up, and analyse it

LG5. Yeh

I. And that's brilliant. I'm gonna turn it off now.

[LG6, also a member of the Older Lesbian Group and who has come in to the room, wants to join in the interview. She was unable to be at the interview meeting and so this was a good opportunity to get another view and also have another small Group interview]

I. Right... I'm resuming just a couple of questions for the **soap** interviews now; I've just talked to **LG5**, and it's **LG6** now

LG6. Yes

I. That I'm speaking to

I. I wanna just promise that this is.. this is for my phd research, completely confidential

LG6. Mmm

I. Only me that hear this, and I transcribe it. Erm, so, yeh I would like to know, actually, what, since I'm here, but erm, what... er how old are you, first

LG6. 72

I. 'Ccos then it means I've got a good range of things

LG6. 73

I. And you live in...Tower Hamlets, Poplar, have you lived here a long time?

LG6. Yeh, I've lived here all my life

I. Right, ok erm

LG6. Not **here**, in this house, but I've lived in this **area**

I. In the **area**. ..I mean the questions I've been doing, I mean, you [to LG5] can join in as well, whatever, I've been asking people, basically, how long they've watched soaps, what they think about them, I mean this isn't a formal interview 'cos I've just burst in like this, but just really.... well just to jump straight to it really, do you, you do watch soaps?

LG6. Yes

I. And, what do you think then, of the lesbian and gay, transgender storylines.

LG6. I don't think they 'ave **enough** storylines. I think they should have **more**, because people don't **know**...people that watch the **soaps** would pick up more from that, and I think they should 'ave more on it

I. Yeh. And when they do do it, do you think they do it well, or bad, or varies?

LG6. Well, I don't think they do it **badly**, but they don't do it **well**, either because they don't, you know, it's not really, it really doesn't show anything, you know that this one's a lesbian, or that one's a lesbian, but they don't, you know, they don't go into the **traumas** you could have, being lesbian

I. Right. So you think it's more of a kind of blanding, sort of

LG5. Yeh, a mandatory thing, because they think they've got to mention it so

I. Token sort of thing

LG6. Yeh... sorry?

I. Tokenistic sort of really

LG6. Yeh Yeh, yeh yeh

I. Right, erm, how do you think they do relationships generally in the soaps?

All..the non lesbian, how do you think they do that?

LG6. Oh, the heterosexual relationships?

I. Yeh

LG6. I think they go too **far** with those.. I think, you know, there's too much, they're trying to involve too much **sex** now

I. Yeh you thought that too din't you?

LG5. Yeh. Bed hopping I called it

I. You did say that yeh

LG5. [Laughs]

I. Absolutely, yeh, but, and then there's the older characters; do you think they're allowed to have sexual relationships, in the soaps?

LG6. Pardon me?

I. You know the older people

LG6. Oh yeh

I. Older characters. Do you think they have....

LG6. Well they

I. How are their relationships done do you think? Are they done well or, non sexual?

LG6. No, the, the, **again**, yeh, they're done reasonably **well**, but it's very toned **down**. I mean they have **feelings**, just the same as **young** people, and you know it's, on some soaps they seem to

I. Yeh

LG6. Look **down** on them because ooh they're too **old** to be.. 'aving a **relationship**, but.. they forget

I. Yeh

LG6. You still **need** a relationship when you're older

I. Yeh, absolutely...so, right I'm just...how, in your, I'm just gonna whip through the whole thing now, in your past, what sort of Campaigns, or political things, were you ever involved in any sort of, movements, or anything that was important to you?

LG6. What, er **gay** movements, or

I. Anything

LG6. Well, was, I was erm very interested in **politics** when I was younger, in fact I er belonged to the **conservative** party.. here.. in the East End

I. Right, right

[Dog growls]

LG6. And of course I spent a lot of my time in the **forces** and I was in the **reserves**, er

I. Right

LG6. Erm, yeh I was quite involved in various things

I. Yeh, you have. You know 60s and 70s, and there was lots of things going on like hippy stuff, and ...feminism

LG6. Oh what flower power, no I wasn't involved

I. Have you got a view on that

LG6. No, I wasn't at **all** interested in that, erm

I. No

LG6. No, I, I, I was inclined to think, erm, there was a lot of **drug**.. abuse.. there..and you see I've had it in the **family**...and so, I was **not** interested in anything like that

I. Right, erm, so when did you first start watching soaps do you think?

LG6. Oh, my god, must have been about 40 **years** ago

I. Right, and do you remember which ones you watched?

LG6. Yeh/, *EastEnders*/, I think, don't know if that started yet, or was it *Coronation Street*

LG5. It'd be 'Corrie'

LG6. *Coronation Street*

I. *Coronation Street* started a long time didn't it? That was the first one wasn't it, of the soaps that we know now. I mean there were other ones, like *Emergency Ward Ten*?

LG6. **Oh, yeh**

I. *Compact*?

LG5. **Oh yeh**

LG6. **Yeh.** Yes I watched *Emergency Ward Ten*, and what was the other one, about the hotel.

I. Oh, *Crossroads*

LG5. **Crossroads.** I used to watch that. Oh yeh, yeh

LG6. I used to **rush, rush** home at lunch time

LG5. I always remember the one.

LG6. To my sister's, used to watch

I. Did you watch them with her?

LG6. I used to watch *Crossroads*

I. I'm just interested in who you watched soaps with

LG6. I watched *Crossroads* with my **sister**

I. Yeh

LG6. I **really** got interested in soaps because my **mother** watched 'em

I. Yeh

LG6. And I used to watch them with my **mother**

I. Right

LG6. So.. that is how I really got

I. And since then have you watched 'em with other people mainly or do you watch

LG6. No, no now mainly I watch

I. On your own

LG6. Since my mother died I, I watch them on my own

I. When did she die then?

LG6. Oh, she died about let me see.... she was 93,.....she died about 11 years ago

I. Oh right. Oh not that long ago

LG6. No, no

I. Erm, right, that's brilliant. Now, ok you said you thought that the lesbians and gay men and all that were presented quite..not very well, not **depth**

LG6. No, not in **depth**. I mean... they haven't sort of made them look.... **bad**

I. Right

LG6. But they haven't gone in **depth**. I mean I think the first.. the first gay ones were the two boys on *EastEnders*...and I mean, really, they could 'ave just been two **mates**

I. What, 'Colin' and er 'Barry'?

LG6. Yeh, 'Colin' and 'Barry', yeh

I. Right. Right. Erm, what, what do you think about...do you remember any of the lesbian ones? Oh, you said, I mean, out of the ones you remember

LG6. No, the only, the only **real** ones that I remember is the *Emmerdale* one

I. 'Zoë'

LG6. 'Zoë'

I. Yeh

LG6. I

I. Do you remember any particular episodes?

LG6. Well no, because they're, I don't there really **was**... you knew she was **gay**

I. Right, right

LG6. Erm..and into women but .....

I. Yeh. So no particular episodes that stand out?

LG6. No

I. No? What about erm '**Hayley**'.. in 'Corrie'. What do you think about her, transgender

LG6. 'Hayley'? Erm, what the the erm, **sex** change?

I. Exactly

LG6. Well, to be quite honest I didn't **know** about her. My **sister** told me. She said oh, there's a.... there's a .....**transvestite**..... on.... one of the soaps

N [Laughs] Right, yeh

LG6. And I said, well I, I didn't **ask** her

I. No

LG6. Too much, I said oh yeh,..erm, but erm, I thought she meant she was actually a transvestite...not, not that she was taking the **part** of one

I. I see

LG6. I thought oh, she was..so what, but then, of course eventually as I watched it, I **realised** ...she wasn't a transvestite at all, she just played the **part** of one....so

I. Right, yeh so

LG6. I thought it was quite good to **bring** that in, because that's a thing that isn't **mentioned** much. Ok, they mention **gay**

I. Yeh, yeh

LG6. But, they don't but I mean [clears throat] that's not, not been **overplayed** anyway

I. Right

LG6. I don't think that

I. No

LG6. I think that was dealt with **nicely**

I ....Right. Do you think they ever represent **bisexuality**? 'Cos many of the things we talk about, like 'Corrie', they're seen as gay or.... very rarely, do we see bisexual **named**...

LG6. Right

I. Do you think they've ever done that, dealt with it?

LG6. No...

I. Right

LG5. Well these ones that takes part of er **gay**.... you find that on the er, in **real life**, they're not **really**

I. Oh no

LG6. No

I. No they're not

LG6. No

I. Well Michael **Cashman**, was a gay man, he's the only one we can name, the one in

LG6. Yeh



I. *EastEnders*. He **is** gay, but he wasn't out when he first did the part, I mean it was...think he'd get too much flak really, but erm... right. Do you think... you're not, you wouldn't say they're very **realistic** then these portrayals would you

LG6. No

I. These lesbians and gay ...

LG6. No...I wouldn't ,I wouldn't think they were realistic

I. And you wouldn't be able to identify with any of them yourself?

LG6. No

I. With their lives, or the issues that they face?

LG6. **No**

I. Right...and, do you think they change audiences' views? .. At all?

LG6. I. No, I don't think so..they just say oh, there's a lesbian on there, or there's a **gay** bloke on that but I don't think it really **bothers** them

I. And you haven't really heard people talking about them

LG6. No

I. When there's been anything on

LG6. No

I. Or overheard

LG5. I think these **heterosexual people**, they, one of the reasons why they watch these erm **soaps** with regards to gays and that is just curiosity. Innit?

LG6. Yeh

I. Right, ok

LG5. Just curiosity

I. Right, and you don't ever talk about the storylines with other people? You

LG6. Sorry? Don't?

I. Do you ever, if there **was** something on, and say there was a lesbian storyline, or a gay storyline, would you discuss it with other people do you think?

LG6. Oh yeh

I. Just out of..You would?

LG6. Yeh/. Yeh because I mean [cough] I 'ave people phone me up and say, oh did you know there's a gay **movie** on, tonight. I mean even my **daughter** does

I. Right, right

LG6. And she'll phone and say, oh, there's a gay movie on tonight, on so and so

I. Right, yeh

LG6. Erm, but the **majority** of my friends are **gay**, and, no no no, I wouldn't say that the majority of my friends are heterosexual

I. Some are

LG6. But, they know about **me**

I. Right, and they might discuss soaps

LG6. They just accept me

I. Yeh. And you might talk about all this on the soaps?

LG6. Oh yeh, yeh

I. Right, good well that's good, 'cos I was hoping, I mean I was thinking some people must discuss it with other people, and it's a way

LG6. Yeh

I. Of talking about it sometimes, you know in a more abstract way, when it's not about yourselves...erm ...and so, do **they** ever remark on soaps?

LG6. Not really, not really, I think it goes over their head, because erm, I don't, as I said, because it **doesn't** go in depth, it's just one of, oh there's a lesbian on there

I. Right, ok, that's very helpful then. I'm gonna turn it off in a minute, then so just ..that will be part of the whole transcript and that will be part of my research. Thanks.

Code: ( ) indecipherable

[ ] my addition

/ upward tone ie tag questions or style of speech

.... pause

Bold Type Emphasis in tone

Code: ( ) indecipherable

[ ] my addition

/ upward tone ie tag questions or style of speech

.... pause

Bold Type Emphasis in tone

## Appendix 3.6

### Older Lesbian Group One to One follow up with E2. and T. 14 November 2006

This interview is carried out because LG5. had talked about liking soaps and expressed views on lesbian representations which were not repeated in the main interview. The interview takes place in LG6.s house in Poplar; LG5 has come there by bus. LG6. owns the house and has a very excitable rescue dog which barks at intervals and is eventually sent out of the room.

I. First of all I didn't ask how old you are; do you mind telling me?

LG5. 72

I. 72. Right. I'm just putting that on the tape.LG5, 72, just a follow up from the soap interview and it's November the..I don't know what the date is today actually er

LG5... I think it's the 14<sup>th</sup>.

I. Yeh I think you're right.. I just wanna follow up, erm 'cos I didn't get.. it was in such a turmoil when I did the interview I didn't get a chance to ask one of the basic questions which was, when you watch the soaps, **now**

LG5. Yeh

I. Do you watch them with anybody **else**, or on your own?

LG5. On me own... Apart from me two cats. [laughs]

I. Oh, you've got two cats. And..did you in the **past** used to watch 'em, **with** other people, like when you first started watching them

LG5. Yeh, yeh

I. Was it, with who? Family, partner

LG5. Erm..

I. Different ..

LG5. Well.. how far you goin' back?

I. As far as... ever, when you first started watchin'

LG5. It was at **home** when I first started *EastEnders* and *Coronation Street*

I. Yeh

LG5. More or less me. Watch it with me well me **daughter**, was only 4 or 5 years

I. Yeh. Right, so did she used to watch it?

LG5. Naa she was too much er a **bugger**

I. Right, so really you've wa... it's been on your own you've watched 'em mainly, not

LG5. Yeh

I. Not with other people. It's just really, about how people talk about them when it's over

LG6. Yeh

I. And erm

LG5. Well, when I used to go **home**, I used to watch it with me **sister**, and the girl

I. Oh right, right

LG5. You know, erm when I used to stay with 'er ( )

I. So...how long would that be ago?

LG5. About 5 year ago, over 5 year ago

I. Right..and when, if, if ever you watched 'em, and there would be a lesbian or gay, storyline, did you ever talk about it with them?

LG5. No

I. And did they ever

LG5. No

I. They didn't really mention it

LG5. No, I used to erm keep it to **meself**

I. Right, ok

LG6. What, you just dealin' with LG5. at the minute?

I. Yeh

LG6. Ok, I'll make a cup a tea then. Do you want tea or coffee?

I. Coffee please

LG5. Not for me thanks

I. Oh thanks

LG6. Milk and sugar?

I. Just milk please no sugar. Thanks. Erm just a bit of background. Now what do you read, what papers and different things,.. do you read newspapers?

LG5. Yeh

I. Yeh you do you've got

LG5. *The Mirror*. On a Saturday if there's any free CDs go in a newspaper I'll buy 'em  
[laughs]

I. Oh, yeh

LG5. [Laughs] Free CDs

I. Absolutely... Now – I want to address this; I remember you telling me a long time ago, when we first talked about this.. that you were very interested because *Family Affairs* had a lesbian storyline, and one of them was a mum, and they were talkin' about lesbian mothers, and **you** said it was the only time it was discussed, in a soap. So .. I mean I was very taken with that 'cos that was really an issue that would be an

LG5. Well I'm goin' **back** a few **years**

I. Yeh it was

LG5. With *Emmerdale*, I don't know if you watch *Emmerdale*

I. Yeh, I do

LG5. I remember 'Zoë', talked to 'er **dad**, at the time, and she was, admitted to 'er **dad**, that she was not interested in **men**

I. ...She did, didn't she?

LG5. Yeh, yeh

I. And do you remember how 'e responded?

LG5. ..No I can't remember, no

I. No

LG5. Too far ago innit

I. But it was ..yeh, I think that I think that it was an issue

LG5. Mmm

I. Not very nice and then ..came round to it in the end.

I. ..Yeh I mean like er it was before 'Zoë' **left**

I. Yeh

LG5. I mean er like er '**Viv**', that woman in the post office shop, she used to take the **mickey** out of 'er

I. Always

LG5. Yeh, yeh

I. So...Then ..when there's an **issue** like that, do ever talk about those things with other people at all, like if they're on the soaps. Like, or **hear** other people talkin' about them.

LG5. Noo, not really, erm ..... I'm more or less that kind of thing, I more or less keep to **myself**. Just in case you know?

I. Yeh

LG5. 'Cos you see

I. Right

LG5. I mean...where my daughter used to live down here, I used to have to lead two different **lives** .. you know what I mean? Because of me **daughter**

I. Right

LG5. You know go to school and whatever

I. Yeh yeh

LG5. So I more or less.. I didn't have any boy friends

I. Right

LG5. Or things like **that**

I. No

[Dog barks very loudly at the builders outside]

LG5. I was more or less erm..I still 'ad, I've always been interested in er same sex type you know

I. Yeh

LG5. And erm

I. Were you married at one point?

LG5. Well I, I was married, I got married in 58

I. Yeh

LG5. It was 58, I think and er ..I divorced 'im in about **1960**

I. Right

LG5. 'Cos 'e was, he went over erm... 'e rejoined the army 'e was on tank regiment, and 'e went over to **Germany**

I. Yeh

LG5. And 'e sent me a **post card**, a picture **post card**

I. Yeh

LG5. From **Blackpool**

I. Yeh

LG5. On 'is **leave**, instead of coming to **me**, 'e went over to Blackpool and was havin' an **affair** with 'is mate's **wife**

I. Really?

LG5. So I took it to the **solicitor's**, he says well just leave it **with** me

I. Right

LG5. And I 'ad to go, it was un, at, erm

I. Uncontested? But really perhaps you didn't mind? It's not very nice though is it?

LG5. Not really, and er erm of course erm ..... I had a.. nervous **breakdown**, actually when I was workin' at the erm Royal Masonic **School**

I. Yeh

LG5. In Rickmansworth

I. What were you doing there?

LG5. Caterer

I. Oh right. Yeh yeh, oh.. the Masonic school

LG5. Yeh, **Rickmansworth**

I. Yeh

LG5. And erm ( ) Jean.. well she's dead now like.. she came **on** to me..and of course, you know, and it caused er eventually when 'er man got to **know** I got the **backlash** of it

I. Ah

LG5. It was all my **fault**

I. Really?

LG5. Yeh, and Jean er

I. You mean she was a student there?

LG5. No, she

I. She was working there was she?

LG5. Yeh, in fact it was me that got 'er the job there

I. But you got, oh dear

LG5. But I erm ..got the backwash of it..it was all my fault

I. Yeh yeh

LG5. But erm I 'ad a nervous break I came **home** and I had a nervous **breakdown** from it.... I went to the hos the hospital in South **Shields**... I explained to the erm whose er what do you call 'im?...erm .. **shrinkers**

I. Yeh, psychiatrist

LG5. I explained to 'im

I. Yeh

LG5. And 'e, 'e 'e thought I was changing me **sex**, or something like **that**, but 'e had a **look**

I. [Laughs]

LG5. He says, well in that **time**

I. When was that?

LG5. Oh, I I'm, goin' back erm... 40s?... 40s?... 50s?

I. Yeh..blimey

LG5. Late 40s yes. 51, 52, 53

I. Yeh, yeh

LG5. Anyhow erm,...I was one day at the erm **doctor**, e's **retired**,... 'e said **oh**, just a minute, 'e says there's a **brochure**... in the *Sunday Times*, ...**relates** to something about you, anyhow 'e said just a minute I'll go and see if I can **find** it

I. Yeh

LG5. Anyhow, erm 'e erm, 'e went away, came back and there was this crappy old *Sunday Times*

I. Yeh

LG5. And **inside** was something **about** er lesbians, and er they referred to er **Esmee Langley**

I. Oh right yeh

LG5. You know?

I. Yeh

LG5. And so I wrote back to 'er

I. Yeh yeh

LG5. And I joined 'er um like a **newsletter**.... And in there was **penfriends**



I. Right

LG5. This is how I got to **know**

I. That was good, that the doctor had seen that then

LG5. Yeh, and the first one, was called.. Audrey, and she came, and we 'ad an **affair** like

I. Right

LG5. But that didn't last long. .. You know **long distance** .. relationships; live too far away

I. Right, so, where do you...where did you live then?

LG5. South Shields, Tyne and Wear

I. Right, so how long have you been in London then?

LG5. 69. Was 1969

I. Right yeh. Cor blimey. So.. that's interesting. See, I don't get that background in the Group because you didn't get a chance, there wasn't enough chance to talk about this

LG5. I know, I know

I. You know ...the soaps, do you think that when they have these lesbian things on, or gay men, or whatever, that they **change** people, or that they make **audiences** more ...tolerant, or **intolerant**, or, in any way?

LG5. I don't know; it depends on **yourself**. I mean if you're gay **yourself**, you **accept** it. But then, when you read in the **paper** that erm ...these girls that takes part in lesbians or gay programme, actually in **real life** they're **straight**, you know and they're er

I. Oh yeh but do you think that

LG5. Heterosexual

I. The audiences who are watching, the straight people, or.. people that might be wondering, do you think it might influence them, when they see it on the telly?

LG5. I don't know, I don't **know** really, 'cos er, nobody's more or less, **remarked** on it, like you know?

I. Yeh. They haven't have they

LG5. Well if they did I did I used to say oh... live and let live, like you know?

I. Yeh, yeh .. that's fantastic, that's filled in a bit now better for me, from that interview. I just wanna reiterate, totally confidential, it's only me that **hears** it, and I'll erm type it up, and analyse it

LG5. Yeh

I. And that's brilliant. I'm gonna turn it off now.

[LG6, also a member of the Older Lesbian Group and who has come in to the room, wants to join in the interview. She was unable to be at the interview meeting and so this was a good opportunity to get another view and also have another small Group interview]

I. Right... I'm resuming just a couple of questions for the **soap** interviews now; I've just talked to **LG5**, and it's **LG6** now

LG6. Yes

I. That I'm speaking to

I. I wanna just promise that this is.. this is for my phd research, completely confidential

LG6. Mmm

I. Only me that hear this, and I transcribe it. Erm, so, yeh I would like to know, actually, what, since I'm here, but erm, what... er how old are you, first

LG6. 72

I. 'Ccos then it means I've got a good range of things

LG6. 73

I. And you live in...Tower Hamlets, Poplar, have you lived here a long time?

LG6. Yeh, I've lived here all my life

I. Right, ok erm

LG6. Not **here**, in this house, but I've lived in this **area**

I. In the **area**. ..I mean the questions I've been doing, I mean, you [to LG5] can join in as well, whatever, I've been asking people, basically, how long they've watched soaps, what they think about them, I mean this isn't a formal interview 'cos I've just burst in like this, but just really.... well just to jump straight to it really, do you, you do watch soaps?

LG6. Yes

I. And, what do you think then, of the lesbian and gay, transgender storylines.

LG6. I don't think they 'ave **enough** storylines. I think they should have **more**, because people don't **know**...people that watch the **soaps** would pick up more from that, and I think they should 'ave more on it

I. Yeh. And when they do do it, do you think they do it well, or bad, or varies?

LG6. Well, I don't think they do it **badly**, but they don't do it **well**, either because they don't, you know, it's not really, it really doesn't show anything, you know that this one's a lesbian, or that one's a lesbian, but they don't, you know, they don't go into the **traumas** you could have, being lesbian

I. Right. So you think it's more of a kind of blanding, sort of

LG5. Yeh, a mandatory thing, because they think they've got to mention it so

I. Token sort of thing

LG6. Yeh... sorry?

I. Tokenistic sort of really

LG6. Yeh Yeh, yeh yeh

I. Right, erm, how do you think they do relationships generally in the soaps?

All..the non lesbian, how do you think they do that?

LG6. Oh, the heterosexual relationships?

I. Yeh

LG6. I think they go too **far** with those.. I think, you know, there's too much, they're trying to involve too much **sex** now

I. Yeh you thought that too din't you?

LG5. Yeh. Bed hopping I called it

I. You did say that yeh

LG5. [Laughs]

I. Absolutely, yeh, but, and then there's the older characters; do you think they're allowed to have sexual relationships, in the soaps?

LG6. Pardon me?

I. You know the older people

LG6. Oh yeh

I. Older characters. Do you think they have....

LG6. Well they

I. How are their relationships done do you think? Are they done well or, non sexual?

LG6. No, the, the, **again**, yeh, they're done reasonably **well**, but it's very toned **down**. I mean they have **feelings**, just the same as **young** people, and you know it's, on some soaps they seem to

I. Yeh

LG6. Look **down** on them because ooh they're too **old** to be.. 'aving a **relationship**, but.. they forget

I. Yeh

LG6. You still **need** a relationship when you're older

I. Yeh, absolutely...so, right I'm just...how, in your, I'm just gonna whip through the whole thing now, in your past, what sort of campaigns, or political things, were you ever involved in any sort of, movements, or anything that was important to you?

LG6. What, er **gay** movements, or

I. Anything

LG6. Well, was, I was erm very interested in **politics** when I was younger, in fact I er belonged to the **conservative** party.. here.. in the East End

I. Right, right

[Dog growls]

LG6. And of course I spent a lot of my time in the **forces** and I was in the **reserves**, er

I. Right

LG6. Erm, yeh I was quite involved in various things

I. Yeh, you have. You know 60s and 70s, and there was lots of things going on like hippy stuff, and ...feminism

LG6. Oh what flower power, no I wasn't involved

I. Have you got a view on that

LG6. No, I wasn't at **all** interested in that, erm

I. No

LG6. No, I, I, I was inclined to think, erm, there was a lot of **drug**.. abuse.. there..and you see I've had it in the **family**...and so, I was **not** interested in anything like that

I. Right, erm, so when did you first start watching soaps do you think?

LG6. Oh, my god, must have been about 40 **years** ago

I. Right, and do you remember which ones you watched?

LG6. Yeh/, *EastEnders*/, I think, don't know if that started yet, or was it *Coronation Street*

LG5. It'd be 'Corrie'

LG6. *Coronation Street*

I. *Coronation Street* started a long time didn't it? That was the first one wasn't it, of the soaps that we know now. I mean there were other ones, like *Emergency Ward Ten*?

LG6. **Oh, yeh**

I. *Compact*?

LG5. **Oh yeh**

LG6. **Yeh.** Yes I watched *Emergency Ward Ten*, and what was the other one, about the hotel.

I. Oh, *Crossroads*

LG5. **Crossroads.** I used to watch that. Oh yeh, yeh

LG6. I used to **rush, rush** home at lunch time

LG5. I always remember the one.

LG6. To my sister's, used to watch

I. Did you watch them with her?

LG6. I used to watch *Crossroads*

I. I'm just interested in who you watched soaps with

LG6. I watched *Crossroads* with my **sister**

I. Yeh

LG6. I **really** got interested in soaps because my **mother** watched 'em

I. Yeh

LG6. And I used to watch them with my **mother**

I. Right

LG6. So.. that is how I really got

I. And since then have you watched 'em with other people mainly or do you watch

LG6. No, no now mainly I watch

I. On your own

LG6. Since my mother died I, I watch them on my own

I. When did she die then?

LG6. Oh, she died about let me see.... she was 93,.....she died about 11 years ago

I. Oh right. Oh not that long ago

LG6. No, no

I. Erm, right, that's brilliant. Now, ok you said you thought that the lesbians and gay men and all that were presented quite..not very well, not **depth**

LG6. No, not in **depth**. I mean... they haven't sort of made them look.... **bad**

I. Right

LG6. But they haven't gone in **depth**. I mean I think the first.. the first gay ones were the two boys on *EastEnders*...and I mean, really, they could 'ave just been two **mates**

I. What, 'Colin' and er 'Barry'?

LG6. Yeh, 'Colin' and 'Barry', yeh

I. Right. Right. Erm, what, what do you think about...do you remember any of the lesbian ones? Oh, you said, I mean, out of the ones you remember

LG6. No, the only, the only **real** ones that I remember is the *Emmerdale* one

I. 'Zoë'

LG6. 'Zoë'

I. Yeh

LG6. I

I. Do you remember any particular episodes?

LG6. Well no, because they're, I don't there really **was**... you knew she was **gay**

I. Right, right

LG6. Erm..and into women but .....

I. Yeh. So no particular episodes that stand out?

LG6. No

I. No? What about erm '**Hayley**'.. in 'Corrie'. What do you think about her, transgender

LG6. 'Hayley'? Erm, what the the erm, **sex** change?

I. Exactly

LG6. Well, to be quite honest I didn't **know** about her. My **sister** told me. She said oh, there's a.... there's a .....**transvestite**..... on.... one of the soaps

N [Laughs] Right, yeh

LG6. And I said, well I, I didn't **ask** her

I. No

LG6. Too much, I said oh yeh,..erm, but erm, **I** thought she meant she was actually a transvestite...not, not that she was taking the **part** of one

I. I see

LG6. I thought oh, she was..so what, but then, of course eventually as I watched it, I **realised** ...she wasn't a transvestite at all, she just played the **part** of one....so

I. Right, yeh so

LG6. I thought it was quite good to **bring** that in, because that's a thing that isn't **mentioned** much. Ok, they mention **gay**

I. Yeh, yeh

LG6. But, they don't but I mean [clears throat] that's not, not been **overplayed** anyway

I. Right

LG6. I don't think that

I. No

LG6. I think that was dealt with **nicely**

I ....Right. Do you think they ever represent **bisexuality**? 'Cos many of the things we talk about, like 'Corrie', they're seen as gay or.... very rarely, do we see bisexual **named**...

LG6. Right

I. Do you think they've ever done that, dealt with it?

LG6. No...

I. Right

LG5. Well these ones that takes part of er **gay**.... you find that on the er, in **real life**, they're not **really**

I. Oh no

LG6. No

I. No they're not

LG6. No

I. Well Michael **Cashman**, was a gay man, he's the only one we can name, the one in

LG6. Yeh

I. *EastEnders*. He **is** gay, but he wasn't out when he first did the part, I mean it was...think he'd get too much flak really, but erm... right. Do you think... you're not, you wouldn't say they're very **realistic** then these portrayals would you

LG6. No

I. These lesbians and gay ...

LG6. No...I wouldn't ,I wouldn't think they were realistic

I. And you wouldn't be able to identify with any of them yourself?

LG6. No

I. With their lives, or the issues that they face?

LG6. **No**

I. Right...and, do you think they change audiences' views? .. At all?

LG6. I. No, I don't think so..they just say oh, there's a lesbian on there, or there's a **gay** bloke on that but I don't think it really **bothers** them

I. And you haven't really heard people talking about them

LG6. No

I. When there's been anything on

LG6. No

I. Or overheard

LG5. I think these **heterosexual people**, they, one of the reasons why they watch these erm **soaps** with regards to gays and that is just curiosity. Innit?

LG6. Yeh

I. Right, ok

LG5. Just curiosity

I. Right, and you don't ever talk about the storylines with other people? You

LG6. Sorry? Don't?

I. Do you ever, if there **was** something on, and say there was a lesbian storyline, or a gay storyline, would you discuss it with other people do you think?

LG6. Oh yeh

I. Just out of..You would?

LG6. Yeh/. Yeh because I mean [cough] I 'ave people phone me up and say, oh did you know there's a gay **movie** on, tonight. I mean even my **daughter** does



I. Right, right

LG6. And she'll phone and say, oh, there's a gay movie on tonight, on so and so

I. Right, yeh

LG6. Erm, but the **majority** of my friends are **gay**, and, no no no, I wouldn't say that the majority of my friends are heterosexual

I. Some are

LG6. But, they know about **me**

I. Right, and they might discuss soaps

LG6. They just accept me

I. Yeh. And you might talk about all this on the soaps?

LG6. Oh yeh, yeh

I. Right, good well that's good, 'cos I was hoping, I mean I was thinking some people must discuss it with other people, and it's a way

LG6. Yeh

I. Of talking about it sometimes, you know in a more abstract way, when it's not about yourselves...erm ...and so, do **they** ever remark on soaps?

LG6. Not really, not really, I think it goes over their head, because erm, I don't, as I said, because it **doesn't** go in depth, it's just one of, oh there's a lesbian on there

I. Right, ok, that's very helpful then. I'm gonna turn it off in a minute, then so just ..that will be part of the whole transcript and that will be part of my research. Thanks.

Code: ( ) indecipherable

[ ] my addition

/ upward tone ie tag questions or style of speech

.... pause

Bold Type Emphasis in tone

## Appendix 3.7.

### Interview with Older Gay Men's Group 8 November 2005

Participants are GM1 R. 57, wheelchair user, GM2 J. middle class accent, GM3 M. labour supporter. I is Interviewer. They are all white.

My name's Nic.

GM1. Right

I. I'll get you to say who you are in a minute

I. Ok... 'Cos then I'll be able to recognise the voices when I play it back. I'm doing it for a phd,

GM1. Ok

I. I'm three quarters of the way through,

GM1. Yeh

I. I'm looking at **soaps** and particularly LGBTs in soaps,

GM1. Ok

I. And I'm I've done an analysis and I'm asking now older audiences

GM1. Right

I. I've chosen to look at older audiences,

GM1. Ok

I. Because... nobody ever bothers with older

GM1. No, true

I. And especially around sexuality issues, it tends to be an assumption that [laughs] that sexuality ends about fifty or something

GM1. That's right

I. So, erm it'll become **apparent** as I start to ask the questions

GM1. OK

I. Can you say your names and how old you are?

GM1. Yes, of course. I'm GM1., and I'm 57

I. How old?

GM1. 57

I. Right

GM2. I'm GM2./

I. Yeh?

GM2. Over 60

I. Over 60

GM2. [laughs]

I. Right Ok

GM3. And I'm GM3./ and I'm one year over 66

I. [laughs]

GM3. 67

I. Ok. So... R., J., and M. erm...just, are you local to this area or not; are you not

GM1. No, I'm not, nor M.

I. Well, I just want to reiterate, it's confidential, of course it has to be

GM1. Yes

I. It's gone through the ethics committee, but if you say to me, well I'd rather it wasn't confidential, 'cos I'd like to have **credit** for what I'm saying

GM1. Ok

I. That is equally valid

GM!. Right

I. And I think that should be said, more

GM1. Right fair enough ok

I. Right. So I'm gonna now ask a series of questions, and, it shouldn't last – well, that's thirty minutes each side so if it clicks I'll turn it over, depends how long

GM1. All right

I. If you wanna stop, we'll stop, have a cup of tea

GM1 . Yeh

I. Or just say I don't wanna answer that

GM1. Ok

I. Now, I'm just getting' a bit of background first, so, the question I'm asking you and which I've asked everybody else is, what do you remember about political or social movements, out of your past

GM1. From the past, erm,

I. Or anything, that comes to mind

GM3. Erm specifically to do with being gay?

I. No anything at all, anything

GM1. I was involved heavily when I was a teenager, with the young liberals.

I. Oh right

GM1. And I was a canvasser and things like that, so er I used to go to meetings and all sorts of things.

I. Right

GM1. Go to er annual conference down in Hastings, ( )

I. Right. So are you still involved with any campaigning

R. No, no

I. Or social

GM1. No

I. Ok, what about you, any?

GM2. I have always been mainly **apolitical** really

I. Right

GM2. I just judge each government on its merits,/ very few / ( ) most of my life, I **certainly** wouldn't fight for ( )

I. Right, but any other kind of movement or campaigning thing that you've been involved in

GM2. No

I. Right. What about you?

GM3. Erm, well I've always been left wing, socialist, I've always voted **labour**

I. Right

GM3. I've never done any campaigning. I've never actually belonged to the labour party, I've **thought** about it but never actually got round to it, it tended to be, er it was necessary to be part of a **union** in order to... be a valid candidate and er I never was.

And as for well, there was no question of campaigning, I used to belong to CHE in Croydon,

I. Right, yeh

GM3. But er agen, not from the **campaigning** point of view, more the erm social side

I. Right. Although it had a sort of campaigning edge, element in there

GM3. Well, it was there always, behind it, you know

I. It was yeh

GM3. Trying to... get the word around, put the message out

I. CHE was a Campaign for

GM3. Homosexual equality

I. Homosexual equality yeh..... Right. Erm, what about.. 60s and 70s erm, anything, does that mean anything to you, anything that you were particularly involved in then?

Erm, I mean there was definite movements about, women, hippies, different things, do you have a view on any of those things?

GM1. I was a **skinhead** if that counts

I. [Laughs]

GM1. [laughing] When I was nineteen I was

I. Were you?

GM1. A skinhead, yeh

I. Ooh

GM1. Does that count?

I. Was that in London? Are you, you from London?

GM1. I used to live in Highbury in north London, yeh

I. Oh, right

GM1. Mmm

I. What about you?

GM2. I just see it as the beginning of the permissive society, ( )

I. What do you think tho' do you think it was a good time? Or a bad time

GM2. **Time?**

I. Mmm

GM2. Released a little bit

I. Mmm

GM2. But a lot a lot of ( ) everybody was saying without regard for anybody else....

GM1. Mmm

GM2. I think it was **very very very** selfish....

I. Certainly different, well a different mood

GM2. Yes

I. But what do you – do you think that too?

GM3. Erm, well yes, I tend to agree, I, I, I **enjoyed** the 70s more than the 60s, the 60s... seemed to be a bit of a **strain** up until the er the time when the legislation was changed, 67. And then we were kind of sittin' back **waiting for** something, nobody quite knew what, to happen, you know

I. Mmm

GM3. It..it was just a very gradual process, and erm.. in those days..there used to be gay pubs, which were..... well they were sort of **friendly** gay pubs, it seemed, then it turned into a kind of a professional thing, the erm the big companies ...jumped in and they became gay clubs that cost a fortune, played deafening music, and erm... suspect er things went on [laughs] and gradually it got more and more permissive, and er I didn't like that frankly, I,

I. Mmm

GM3. I saw it was a ok, it was a step in the right direction in as much as you weren't ..**criminalised** any longer, although that took an awful long time, the penny took

GM1. Yeh

GM3. A long time to drop

GM1. They passed the law 67, but I think it was the social erm changes that are still carrying on

GM3. Well they are

GM2. I think in the 70s the police were still hanging round pubs 11'clock at night,

GM1. Mmm

GM3. It was, it was an **easy** an easy cop

GM2. Like catching **motorists** now

GM3. Well, yeh [laughs]

I. Mmm... yeh it's interesting, 'cos it had ...clubs have become like corporate, business

GM3. Yeh, oh yeh

I. You know gay clubs and things it's a different

GM1. There's a pub in the west end

I. There are some small pubs that are still great

GM1. Mmm, there's a pub in the west end, I can't remember it's name, it, anyway, it's the most poshest of all pubs in the whole ( ) it's a gay pub, can't remember what it's called.

GM3. Is it one of the... runs off Old Compton Street,

GM1. No it's.... more toward Covent Garden,

GM2. Could be anywhere

GM1. Yeh.... *Brief Encounter, Brief Encounter*

I. What's it called?

GM1. ***Brief Encounter***

I. Oh [laughs] very apt

GM3. [laughs]

I. Erm [laughing] We are going to get on to the soaps now, just, is, is there anything in the **soaps** that **remind** you of any of the campaigns, or any of the **issues** that we've been talkin' about

GM2. Well I, I've been an **addict** ...of *Coronation Street* for years and years and years, there's **never never ever** any **campaigning** in a big political way, they camp - campaign about very **local** issues, 'Emily Bishop' gets on her high horse about something.... but there is nothing of **national** interest whatsoever; I suspect the same as *EastEnders*,

GM1. Yeh

GM2. It's all very very **enclosed**, you could be on a desert island

GM1. Yeh

I. Yeh. Do you think that? *Archers*?

GM3. As I said I [laughs] I make a conscious effort to **avoid** soaps on the telly er

I. You're interested in the issue and you said *The Archers*

GM3. Er yeh yeh I'm

I. You like *The Archers*

GM3. Er, yes er

I. Or sometimes

GM3. Well I **did**, I listened to them for **years**, but I must admit I've gone off them these last 6 months. Too many young people

GM2. Some of them take **over**

GM3. Mmm?

GM2. Get fed up of the tune?

GM3. [laughs]

GM2. Silly tune [hums]

I. So is there anything that **you** recognise in the soaps, of **campaigning**, or... I mean just things that we **fought** for or different **issues** that can now be **seen** in soaps or

R. Yeh, definitely, definitely. In er I watch *EastEnders* and they've 'ad they've 'ad a gay couple and that **years** ago, it was **unheard** of before, an' then they 'ad a lesbian couple, a few years later, that was unheard of as well, and what is **interestin'** me is that *EastEnders* seems to be so far **ahead** of anything else.

GM2. Mmm

GM1. It wasn't until **recently** that *Coronation Street* 'ad a gay couple

GM3. It took an awful long time,

I. True

GM3. I was kinda **aware** of that,

GM1. They were at least 15, 20 years **behind** *EastEnders*

GM3. Mmmm, mm

I. Right, so just the fact that they're **in** there,

GM1. Yup

I. That would be a **campaigning**, effect of **campaigning**

GM1. It it yeh they don't necessarily campaign get up and say ( ) but

I. No, the fact that they're **in** there

GM1. Yeh it's the **acceptance** of it, and being part of everyday **life**, oh the couple next door are gay or lesbian

GM2. There's a message, er, there's a **message** there, these people, there's '**Sean**', who is **gay**, **unfortunately**, is camp, and it's a pity, [mobile phone goes and it is loud]



I. In *Coronation Street*

GM2. Yeh

GM1. I was gonna say about that, switch it off

GM2. It's a pity that he's **camp**, we've had...I don't very much like camp people anyway, that's er, **but**, he is a very **nice**, attractive **character**, he's very **warm**, he's got a heart of **gold**, he'll help anybody, but he's obviously very **lonely**, he's got family problems. And I think he's definitely **accepted**. **But**, at the beginning, no, and before that there was '**Todd**'

I. Yeh

GM2. Very dis – very good looking young man

GM3. Yeh

GM2. And

GM1. He was **married**

GM2. Yes, and the first person he ( ) to was his brother 'Jason' –[in a louder voice] 'I've been sharing my bedroom, I've been getting'

GM1. [laughs]

GM2. 'undressed with you in my room,' and that was the first person

GM1. Like it was infectious you know

GM2. His **mother** took it straightaway but there were people in the **street** pointing him out

I. Mmm

GM2. He really went through hell

I. Yeh. Now I am gonna get into **details** of the representations in a minute

GM2. Yeh

I. But just **before**, because I wanted to just see if you thought that there were any ...kind of campaigning **elements** in it, but you know, I think it's quite difficult to ..**pinpoint** anything

GM2. I think they just put them in.... for people

I. When did you first watch soaps? I know you're gonna say you try and avoid them at all costs

GM3. [laughs]

I. [laughs] When did you first begin to watch them?

( )

GM2. Well, I didn't start straightaway with *Coronation Street*, but .....anyway.

Do you watch it? Good

I. Of course! I wouldn't be doing this if I didn't watch them

GM1. No

GM3. No

I. I have a great interest in them; that's why I'm doing it.

GM2. I.. w.. I've forgotten the question Nic

I. When did you first start watching soaps?

GM2 ....Well, about ten years into *Coro*- well I watched *Coronation Street* when er thingy was in it, Violet Carson

GM1. Yeh

GM3. Oh, 'Ena Sharples'

I. Yes

GM2. 'Ena Sharples', and the, um.. **I** knew Violet Carson's **son**.

I. Really?

GM2. Mmm, Major Carson

I. Ooh

GM3. Oh

I. So... have you watched them ever since, then?

GM2. Yeh m....yes more or less

I. And .. what about you?

GM1. **I** started when I was a kid at home... at the beginning of *Coronation Street*, 'cos mum and dad would watch it... then I've watched, then I stopped I got married and that and stopped, and then I started to watch *EastEnders* when it first started in 70 something, watched *EastEnders* ever since, not *Coronation Street*, *Coronation Street* I dip into **occasionally**, especially when there's a gay storyline, I dip into it.

I. Yeh when there's something on

GM1. Yeh

I. And you **don't** watch them, or **occasionally** catch them

GM3. Well I'll I'm just kind of **aware** of them because you can't walk past a paper stand without seeing , revealing the erm headlines telling you what's gonna happen in the

GM1. That's right

GM3. The soap tomorrow [laughs] something like that.

I. Yeh

GM3. Going **back**, erm, this is probably pre *Coronation Street*, there used to be other, short lived soaps on the BBC

GM1. Yeh

I. There did, do you remember?

GM3. But erm it was all, well, *The Newcomers*?

GM1. *Newcomers*, yes

I. *Compact*?

GM1. Yes

GM3. Oh *Compact* I used to love *Compact* because of the music. I **recorded** the music once

I. I loved it. *Emergency Ward 10*?

GM3. No no. Hospital ones never appealed to me, but er they were **completely innocuous**, they, nothing, nothing **really** ever happened.

GM1. No

GM2. No

I. No

GM3. You could sort of **listen** to them for weeks and then go back and you hadn't missed a thing

I. So which, so the ones you watch now, you you, you sometimes listen to *The Archers*?

GM3. **Yes**, yeh

I. Right. And **you** watch

GM1. *EastEnders*

I. You watch *EastEnders*?

GM1. And I don't know if you count *The Bill* but I really like *The Bill* it's

GM1. Oh yeh

GM1. Is that a soap opera or not

I. It's not really

GM1. No

I. Because soaps are.... theoretically infinite.

GM1. Yeh

I. And they're kind of almost like real time

GM3. Mmm

I. And they used to be aimed at women

GM2. *The Bill* is ...episodes

I. *The Bill* is

I. It is really yeh

GM3. Yeh *The Bill* is a series of stories that er

I. It is different

[All talking at one]

GM1. Same characters but not

I. But whatever, it is interesting what you think

GM3. It's either one episode or three episodes..

GM2. *Coronation Street*, I've tried

I. So you watch *Coronation Street*?

GM2. I watch that Australian one

I. So did you never watch

GM1. What, *Neighbours*?

I. *Brookside*?

GM2. In a way, it became too, too ..adolescents all the time

GM3. They are aren't they?

I. Did you never watch *Brookside*?

GM1. I did, when ( ) my kids were two, and I used to ( ) about ten, thirteen years ago we used to watch *Brookside*

I. Right. Did you ever watch *Brookside*?

GM2. No. I watch *Emmerdale* a bit. There's a very a very good looking bloke in it

I. And there's gay there's a gay, there is a gay character in *Emmerdale*

GM2. He's very promiscuous

I. There is a gay character in *Emmerdale*

GM2. Yes. **Oh** I well I haven't noticed who 'e is.

I. Right. He's 'Rodney's' son.

GM2. Oh I know who 'Rodney' is [laughs, as does GM3.]

GM1. [sounds like 'could fuck him myself'] Good good

[All laugh]

I. Now, when you watch them, now

GM1. [laughs]

I. Do you watch them on your own, or with other people?

GM1. All sorts. I watch *EastEnders* with my daughter in law/

I. In the past? Did you ever watch them with a group of people or?

GM1. I used to watch as a family when I was married with kids

I. What about you?

GM2. I live by myself so... with myself. I have, I have watched them with neighbours before erm they're (equally?), watch them all the time

I. So if there was a gay bit coming on you wouldn't sort of have a group of people round, say let's watch this, if you knew something was gonna happen

GM2. No they wouldn't, they'd just watch it

GM2. Each one would watch their own television I should imagine

I. Right so very much family or .....

GM1. Yeh it was always the family thing with us

GM2. We did tend to sort of discuss it the next day.. oh I wonder what's going to happen to so and so

I. Right

GM2. And sometimes we would talk about the gay myths and

I. And who would you talk about that with?

GM2. With just the **neighbours** who'd been watching it

I. Right. And ...that's interesting, then 'cos you might get some idea of their attitude,

GM2. **I think** they just took everything as they saw; I don't think they have an attitude

I. Right. They weren't anti?

GM2. I don't think – I think they were a bit **mindless** actually

[All laugh]

I. Right, ok I'm gonna get back

GM3. I think people in **offices**, at least when I worked in them, obviously years and years ago, erm the first topic of conversation was **always** *Coronation Street* last night

GM1. All soaps

I. Really?

GM3. I've 'ad, I think, pretty sure that was the only one that was, *Coronation Street*, in those days

I. People do talk about

GM3. Oh yeh, endless discussions

I. They do yeh

GM1. Mm *Coronation Street*

I. And I am gonna get – now – I want you to tell me what you **think about** relationships generally in soaps. How do you think that **relationships**.....**any** kind of relationships, are presented. Well, start with just.. heterosexuals. How do you think that they do represent them?

GM2. Well

I. And **Archers** is relevant here too, whatever soap you watch.

GM3. Well, I think they sort of

GM2. No you go on let me think

GM3. They they **seem** at least as far as *The Archers* is concerned, to reflect what's going **on**, if erm..... well that's a bit extreme, reflect what's going on but they have **very straightforward** ones, and then they have another.... married couple where the wife.. has had a **fling** before she married the husband, and the husband didn't know, and it all came out, there's another one where a young couple have just got **married**,... er the the girl was expecting a **baby**, who was assumed to be his, but now they've thrown a spanner in the works and they think it's 'is brother's,

GM1. Yeh

GM3. They er they're not afraid of **touching** on kind of sensitive areas

I. Right

GM1. I think the **basis**, well I think the **basis ...is family life but**, family goes a bit **askew** sometimes because, you know

GM3. Yeh, yeh

GM1. People's values they're go on this that and the other that's why

I. Right

GM2. Yeh, er apart from the **older** ones, er there's very little of the old fashioned **moral** values, I mean they're in and out of bed

GM3. Mmm

GM2. And because they're (twenty?) characters in *Coronation Street* you can guarantee that there's been a lot of **mixing** in all that lot

GM3. Mmm [suggestively]

I. Yeh

GM2. And particularly the young ones, I mean whether it's characteristic of teenagers in early 20s which he probably is I **don't know**, in and out of bed and just one night stands, even, **even though** they've got a **permanent relationship**, it's not just happened recently

GM3. Mmm

GM2. And they're likely just to **destroy** that relationship by doing it but

GM3. [Coughs]

GM2. Something happened and they couldn't take it so they go to bed with somebody **else**, when they're trying to make up, ....which is quite, .. I find it quite **disturbing** to see that.

GM3. But do you think that they will probably **excuse** that on the grounds that we are only reflecting what goes on in **society?**

GM1. That's right I think

[All talk at once]

GM2. Yeh but I don't like to see it so

GM3. No no

GM2. I don't like to see it in front of me on the screen

GM3. Yeh

I. Yeh

GM2. I'm sure it's going on goin' on all the **time**

I. Yeh. You mentioned tho' apart from the **older** characters, so do you think that they, their relationships are presented differently and how?

GM2. Differently to?

I. To the young ones that are always in and out of bed

GM2. Well yes, erm.. in many ways they're a lot more **boring**

GM3. They're just **stable** aren't they?

GM2. They're more **stable**, and they have (less of?) of life

I. Do you think they have sex lives in the soaps, older people?

GM2. Well I thought we'd

GM2 Oh I think so, I think so

I. Which ones?

GM1 .... In *EastEnders*, the **black** couple talk about 'aving sex and that

GM2. A lot of ....a lot of...sorry

I. Can't remember but they are lively characters

GM1. Yeh they are, and

I. Different to the older white ones?

GM1. 'E talks about, she's the one I fancy blah blah blah and things like that

I. Yeh different to 'Dot' and 'Jim'

GM1. **Exactly, exactly** [laughs]

I. Oh sorry what did you?

GM2. In Corra, all the older ones are actually widows or widowers

GM1. Yeh

GM2. Erm or, .. or there is just no man, man or woman in their lives

I. Or there's 'Jack' and 'Vera'

GM3. Yes

GM1. [Laughs] Yeh

I. So ... do you think they're represented as [laughs] having a sex life?

GM2. They're always dreaming; I mean 'Janice Battersby'.. my **god**

GM1. To think of her ( )

GM2. ( ) her daughter, you've blown it with '**Jamie**', never mind what you, what about **me**. I must say I wouldn't give 'Janice Battersby'



GM1. [Laughs]

GM2. A **chance...**

GM3. [Laughs]

GM1. But erm.... the older are pretty **frustrated**

I. So do you think they're con..constructed as attractive figures, the older ones, or not?

GM2. Well they're

GM1. Erm

GM2. Attractive in as much as there's a **maturity** about them, that's all. I mean they could be quite amusing, I think, '**Norris**' is wonderfully amusing, ...and er '**Rita**' she's always the same, a little bit too placid in many ways. '**Audrey**' I love; perhaps you don't want to go through all the characters

I. No I think that's interesting, '**Audrey**' is

GM2. '**Audrey**'s' somebody who would **love a man**, she's an **attractive** woman

I. She is

GM2. Personality. Very **demanding** of a man but er yes she **deserves** a man

I. So there are actually, there are..are some strong attractive characters.

GM2. Yes I think so

I. The older black couple particularly

GM1. Yeh

I. Are seen as sexual

GM. Yes they are, certainly they are yeh

I. That's in *EastEnders*

GM1. Yeh you're right you're right

GM2. These black people ...( ) seen as ?

GM1. No, I don't know, ..stereotypes, do you think they get into stereotypes with that? I don't know

I. I think it's interesting how they use

[All talk at once]

GM1. Might be might be

I. Erm, right, so... now I'm going to get on to what you think about .. now I was going to say lesbians gay men transgender characters, anything you'd like to say. I mean I

don't know in *The Archers* if they've had any of those at all. What do you...so have you ...seen any of the **lesbian** representations... for example, on the soaps?

GM2. No

I. You mentioned *EastEnders*

GM1. What do you mean lesbian representations?

I. Characters

GM1. Oh characters; I see what you mean

I. Storylines

GM1. Oh **yes** I see

I. Now, I'm getting' beyond the heterosexual ones

GM1. Yes yes

I. I wanna look at the actual ones that

GM1. Well, 15 years ago I saw, 10 years ago, there was a lesbian couple in *EastEnders*, ( ) and they made no **secret** of it, and, you know, and you see them later mornings and they say to each other, ah that was different, things like **that**

I. Right

GM1. This is erm prime time **soap**, and you think **oh** [laughs]

I. So do you think that was done quite well,

GM1. The way they did it was quite well, yeh, I thought so, I thought so

I. Do you remember any

GM1. Some people wouldn't like it I'm sure but er

I. Do you remember any particular episodes do you? Can you remember anything? You said about them getting up in the morning

GM1. Yeh that one yeh erm...oh when they sort of have an argument and they say come on come on, make it up now and they put their arms round each other and then they're fine you know

GM2. How do they deal with the other characters?

GM1. You know, that's what I was saying earlier

I. Mmm

GM1. What I like about *EastEnders* is its sort of accepted as part of family life, which it **should be**, and some go to a gay club and it's so and so, do you want to come, things like that, oh it's 'Colin' and 'Barry', you know, so and so

I. 'Colin' and 'Barry'. Yeh I'm gonna get on to that in a minute. Have you seen any lesbians? Representations?

GM2. I haven't seen **anything**

I. Is there been any in *The Archers*?

GM3. No, never, not even a

I. Fine

GM2. *Coronation Street*, not the slightest ( )

GM1. Never been any lesbians in *Coronation Street*, no. There is in *Emmerdale* isn't there?

I. Yeh. Do you watch it?

GM1. No, no

I. That's gonna click in a minute and I'll have to turn it over. Oh right, so you wouldn't be aware of that one, although you might have seen something in the newspaper

GM1. I've **heard** about it, I've **heard** yeh

I. You would've then, and read about it or heard people talkin'

GM1. Heard about it

I. It was yeh, in *Emmerdale*, a long running lesbian storyline

GM2. Was that the vet?

I. Yes, 'Zoë' the vet

GM3. I will say this, in *The Bill* they're certainly not afraid of showing lesbianism there

GM1. They go for lesbianism and gay sex and everything

GM3. Yeh

I. They do, so do you think it's done well or very ... what do you think of it?

GM3. Er I think it is yes

GM1. I think so

GM3. It... I must admit it's – I used to find the **lesbianism.....embarrassing**, I don't know why, it must be something deep in my er subconscious, but er I don't any longer

I. Ok

GM3. You feel as if you're being **exposed** to it, and oh well there's.... nothing in it

GM1. It's all part of the acceptance of it these programmes erm sort of accept it as sort of oh well so what, you know, whereas I don't, I'm not sure society's like that,.. is it?

GM3. We're not quite there yet

I. What, accepting?

GM1. Society's better than it used to be...but ....

GM3. Yeh

GM1. I still think it's, 'oh 'e's queer'

GM3. Oh yeh

I. Right, so do you think soaps are trying to **make** people, do you think there's an element of them trying to raise awareness, some motive

[All talking at once]

GM1. I think there might be

GM3. You're being kind of led by the **nose**

GM1. In *EastEnders*, there's a **racial** thing definitely going on where they're trying to show that black couples, or Asian couples, or whatever er you know are just like us, and soaps are also showing that gay and lesbian couples are just like us... they're next door.

GM2. I think the first er soap that does it tried to do something to society, the others just copied for the ratings

GM3. Yes

GM1. Yeh

GM3. Oh yeh

I. Right

GM3. Do you think that *Coronation Street* was **afraid** of... touching on the gay aspect in case they lost a lot of viewers, or something like that.

GM2. [Sighs] Well

GM3. It took them an awful long **time**.

GM1. Well they've got two homosexual ( )

I. It did take them a long time

GM1. That was fairly recent tho' J, wannit? Very recent they've done that, whereas I'm saying, *EasEenders* did that twelve years ago didn't they

GM2. Different type of show, different type of show

I. It is a different, how do you think it is different

GM2. I don't know *EastEnders*; it just gives me the impression it's like living with the **Kray** brothers next door

GM1. It is [laughs]

I. It is; it is based on that

[Laughter]

GM1 ... ( ) 'Mitchells'

I. I think it's very much based on that Kray storyline

GM2. I've noticed they've brought the '**Mitchells**' back, to **ginger up** things

GM3. That's right, yes, to boost the ratings

GM2. And they've actually been having fights in **real life with** their wives

GM1. Laughter ( )

I. I mean it seemed a bit coincidental didn't it, that both things happened

GM1. I think that's fishy to me, fishy to me

GM2. When someone comes back, **then** you think they must be desperate

I. I'm gonna stop this and turn it over 'cos I don't want to do it right in the middle of an interesting bit,

GM1. No

I. Because the next thing I'm gonna ask you is what you think of the gay men in soaps

GM1. Right

I. And trans. So I don't want it clicking and then so if I turn it over now I can see it's nearly gonna go

GM1. Right

[I turns tape over]

I. Now I wanted to ask you what you think about the **gay men** representations in the soaps, and if there's been anything in *The Archers* I'd be interested to hear it. You start this time 'cos

GM3. Erm, well, it took a long **time**, for *The Archers*, but the erm writers use a device whereby a lot of people are **mentioned**, and referred to, but you never hear from them, a bit like 'Rebecca' only she was dead when it started

I. Oh right

GM1. That's right

GM3. But er we heard a lot about the erm, the chap that ran the wine bar in the local town, erm how outrageous it was at Christmas, and his best friend is the window dresser in the er departmental store in the town, and you were left in no doubt that they were talkin' about a couple of **gays**

I. Right

GM3. Then erm, they got... er the rival pub in the town, in the village was taken over by a couple of **men**, and ... you only heard from one of them, who was a local handyman and he was a whiz, and they started presenting him in a very positive light

I. Right

GM3. There was no doubt that 'e was gay, 'e was in it a couple of times

GM1. Yeh

GM3. But this also brought out the, the homophobe, turned out 'e was the captain of the cricket team

GM1. Oh I see

GM3. But then unfortunately this erm [laughs] the new, the gay character also turned out to be a brilliant **batsman** who sort of [laughs]

GM1. Ah

GM3. Lifted the team from the bottom of the league to the top, you know

GM2. Ah

GM3. He was presented in a very very positive light

I. Right

GM3. And er there was a **confrontation**, it reached a sort of a climax, between **him**, and '**Sid**', the homophobic one, which ended in saying why, what is it you're afraid of in me, 'Sid'?

GM1. Yeh

GM3. Things like that, and then the music played. For some reason 'e was written out, the characters were written out; they moved on to another pub in Devon or somewhere

I. Oh

GM3. And erm, but they've dragged in a new one now, whose er one of the farmer's wives' sons, whose come back from South Africa, and er he turns out to be gay, and in no time at all he's living with the **chef** in a big hotel [laughs]

GM2. Mmm

GM3. They're shacked up together, and again they are presented in a positive light

I. Oh, and they're both **in**, they're **in** it, they're not abs.... referred to, they're actually **in** it

GM3. Oh yes they're in it, partaking

GM2. I wonder with that first one, why the series **discontinued**, rather than just **drop** it at that interesting point

GM3. I don't know; it was very strange

GM2. They got complaints?

GM3. Possibly, I, I wasn't **aware** of any

GM2. **Marvellous** dramatic thing obviously 'cos

I. Mmm

GM3. It was a good storyline, while it lasted but then, ... I don't know, there may have been complaints, I've never thought of that, to tell you the truth

GM2. I can't see **why**, it just showed some very **biased**, and yet oh what a wonderful character there

GM3. Yes

GM2. I think he should have been accepted by the cricket captain

GM3. You would have **thought** so, you would have thought the rest of the team would have kicked the, the homophobe **out**, because the bloke was doing no end of good, but er

I. Mmm

GM3. But 'e's, the homophobe was running the **Bull**, which is the **pub**, in *The Archers*

GM1. Yeh

GM3. And er I suppose if they started to sort of push '**im** out, that would 'ave been the worst .... scene than pushing the **gay** one out

I. Mmm

GM3. I don't know, it's, difficult

GM2. It's interesting

I. It is yeh that was a funny way of **resolving** it

GM3. That would probably make a make a thesis all on its own [laughs]

GM1. That's the kind of thing that you watch and excites a part say, what made you do you do this?

I. So... the gay men that you're aware of in the soaps, what do you think about them?

GM2. Well at present we've got 'Sean', he's a modern one; I just think he's a very lovely character, in every way

I. Yeh, yeh, yeh

GM2. I ...oh actually he **is** shacked up with the local **vet, yes**

GM3. Mmm [laughs]

GM2. It took a long time because he saw this local vet getting in a car with someone and giving him a **kiss**, and I think actually it was his brother he was giving a kiss to, and so... I think 'Sean's' ok but we **never never never** hear anything going on, he never talks about boyfriends

GM3. [Laughs]

I. No, in fact I wasn't aware that he **had** got off with him, it's so, he's still, on his own it seems.

GM2. Well 'e's always saying I should be so lucky, to find somebody, maybe, maybe it broke up, now I think it broke up, it's a kind of (volatile?) lifestyle

I. But do you think he's a **positive** character, and had a good effect on the soap itself

GM2. Yes it's so yeh I mean as a **character**, but nothing else has been done about his gayness, except he's been accepted, and nobody really makes jokes about him, or they're nice jokes, accepted

I. Mmm, he's liked isn't he

GM2. Now when '**Todd**' he was only about 18, what I was annoyed about with 'Todd', is he'd be **oh yes** I can have this one in mind, oh I've had him in mind for 8, 8 **months**, oh its' so **terrible**, and so **agonising**, so **terrible**, and then he actually met his man working at the hospital, I thought well it only took 8 minutes, or 8 years or 18 years, erm but he finally got off with this guy

I. Mmm, mm



GM2. And **that** broke off, and then ‘Todd’ actually went away, left the series, you never know why, whether did they want to **go**

I. Indeed

GM2. He got a lot of **hostility**, more or less got things thrown in his face

I. In the soap or as a real per

GM2. No in the soap

GM3. Yeh?

I. He did

GM2. He’s a very ( ) Good looking, He was a nice **personality**, and in the soap you didn’t want him to get hurt

I. Mmm

GM2. But he was really really suffering and his mother poor soul

GM1. She’s very good

GM2. She is a **lovely character**

GM3. What’s she called?

I. ‘Eileen’

GM2. ‘Eileen’, and she puts the other one in his place

I. Yeh

GM2. But again she’s a lovely, lovely

I. Yes indeed

GM2. But I just remember that other one, saying ‘I’ve been undressing in front of you **all my life**’

I. The brother

GM2. And I thought that was that’s you know it’s **terrible that**, as if

GM1. Good about attitudes

GM2. As if you can’t see another undressing, you wanted to leave

I. So do you think, what do you think about them... you mentioned

GM2. Sorry go on

I. Which gay men you mentioned you mentioned

GM1. In *EastEnders* didn’t you, Michael Cashman.. And ‘Colin’

GM2. That’s a long time ago isn’t it?

I. It is but I'm going back

GM2. Yes I know

I. To the big ones that

GM1. 10, 20 years ago I think, 'Colin' and er 'Barry', wasn't it?

I. Yeh yeh

GM1. A couple, I don't think...gay politics never came into it at all

I. No

GM1. Even the question of **gay society** didn't come into it... just a couple of you know and er

GM2. There's no politics at all

GM1. No not at all, same as

GM2. Campaigning

GM1. No, same as... 'Pauline Fowler' had a lodger

I. 'Derek'

GM1. 'Derek', he's gay, and that wasn't...mentioned...and do you remember when 'Derek' had the affair, he ( ) an old flame

I. So was that a one night stand or something?

GM1. Yes that's right yeh

I. How was that done, was that done?

GM1. Do you know what, that was done, just as tho' it was a normal **straight** relationship, in that one picked up the other and went off together and that was it, a straight, **straight** one night stand, you know, just like **that**

I. Yeh, so, you think that was done quite well then, the 'Derek' one?

GM1. Well I think so, I think so yeh

I. But the Michael Cashman one and the 'Barry' one?

GM1. That was done well I think yeh

I. Any more that you can remember?

GM1. The **lesbian** couple in it, I can't remember their **names**

I. Oh 'Binnie' and 'Della'

GM1. One black and one white wannit

I. Yeh, 'Binnie' and 'Della'

GM1. That's right, that's right that's right yeh

GM3. I do remember reading erm an **article** by Michael Cashman

GM1. Yeh. The actor, **after** 'ed left it, 'e was talking about

I. Yes

GM3. The, the **difficulties** that the script writers

GM1. Yeh

GM3. Were having and the way they wanted to put it across and er, he found it a bit sort of ...hard work that

GM1. Mmm

GM3. He and his friend 'Barry'

GM1. 'Barry' yeh

GM3. They were never allowed to **kiss** or anything like **that**; all he...

GM1. No

GM3. I... seem to remember he said we were, or rather **he**, Michael Cashman, was told just to give this 'Barry', a kind of er **lingering longing look**

GM2. Yeh

GM1. That's right yeh

GM3. Or something like that [laughs]

GM2. Which used to do in old films, suggesting, quite good enough in many ways; I don't really want to **see** people

GM1. Thinkin' about it, in *Brookside*

GM3. [Laughs]

GM1. There was the lesbian couple

I. That is 'cos it's the kiss, thing as well it's important

GM1. That was quite influential, headlines

I. The 'Jordache' one

GM1. 'Jordache' that's right it was headlines wannit

I. Can anyone remember that 'Jordache' thing, *Brookside*?

GM1. Is that the one?

I. The big, the big

GM3. He has to kiss the fellow who was still asleep

[All talk at once]

GM1. No these two women were actually kissing,

GM3. Oh

I. There was a picture

GM1. She's a star now in't she that actress I can't remember what she was called

I. Friel, Anna Friel

GM1. That's right that's right

I. Yeh

GM2. In *Big Brother* two men had to kiss

GM1. Yeh

GM2. I can't remember what circumstances

GM1. Did they?

GM2. Yeh they **had** to

GM1. They **had** to

I. Mmm

GM1. Had to

GM2. Well it

[Laughter]

I. One of the tasks or something you mean?

GM1. Oh I see

GM2. Something like that

GM3. Without knowing whether either of them or both of them were gay or

GM2. Nothing to do with that

GM3. No

GM2. They weren't

GM3. Oh, it's

GM2. Well they just had to kiss

GM3. Oh

GM1. That's right I remember, that's right yeh

I. So

GM2. Can I just clarify something?

I. Yeh, do

GM2. **Michael Cashman**, was 'e **gay** in real **life**?

GM1. Yes, yes

GM2. And he was also gay in, in *EastEnders*?

GM1. Yes, yes

GM2. So he knew how to play it then?

GM1. Mmm

I. Although he didn't... we didn't know he was gay **right** at the beginning..When it first **came out**

GM1. No

I. And *The Sun* did a big thing called '**Eastbenders**'

GM3. 'Eastbenders'

GM1. Oh yeh I remember that

I. *Sun* front page, erm he didn't say **then**

GM2. *The Sun* said '**Eastbenders**'?

GM1. 'Eastbenders'

GM2. Horrible

I. That's *The Sun* for you [laughs]

[All talk at once]

I. So what do you think about... if anything comes back to you just say it you know

GM3. I want to say, we haven't discussed, '**Hayley**'

I. That's just what I was gonna say. How do you think transgender are-

GM1. Oh transsexual

I. I'd like to know what you think about 'Hayley'

GM2. I think that they treat her **terribly**

I. Who do, in the soap, the other characters?

GM2. In the **soap**

I. Yeh

GM2. Really badly, and they treated '**Roy**' badly, 'Roy' is a figure of fun but I think he's one of the most affectionate erm **lovely people**, and people should **appreciate** him, they should, they **don't**. 'cos he's just a figure of fun for **everybody**, and the two of

them together it's very touching 'cos they're both... well they're both strange except 'Hayley' isn't. They're both **intelligent**, she's got a lot of stuff lot of stuff about 'er, they're **very very very cruel**.... And particularly the women,... it's a long time ago  
I. The ones in the factory where she worked?

GM2. **Yeh**

I. What about the men, did some of the men

GM2. And **occasionally** a comment will still come up

I. Yes.. So do you..

GM3. Can you just tell me what 'Hayley' .. is it a man?

GM2. Yes she used to be

GM3. Transferring to a woman

I. Yeh

GM1. Transsexual

I. Transgender character, M to F

GM1. M to F yeh

I. Played by a woman

GM2. Very very

GM3. Is it oh

I. Yeh, do you think

GM2. She's not in **every day life** I mean she, I don't

I. No she's a woman

GM1. Actress, no she's not

I. She's a biological woman, not post operative, plays a post operative

GM2. She's a nice character, a nice fussy little thing, and... very **human**

I. Do you think they've done ... have you ever seen her?

GM1. I've seen her, as I say I dip in dip out, I've seen her certainly, I've seen her when she's in the factory and things like that. In that respect *EastEnders* is **ahead**, tho' of course *EastEnders* hasn't has a transsexual have they?

I. Interesting isn't it? *Coronation* is a bit late on,

GM1. Yeh

I. But has now got a gay man **and** a transsexual

GM1. Yeh

I. No lesbian though.

GM3. How did they get the erm transsexual in, er, did we know the transsexual as a man

GM2. No, no we didn't

I. No

GM2. We saw **photographs** of 'er... as a man

I. No we knew her as a woman, didn't we?

GM2. I can't remember **how** she came in

I. Do you remember that?

GM1. I also remember, when 'Roy' ..... 'e fell for 'er, 'e sort of

I. That's it

GM1. But when 'e found out, 'e thought I can't **accept** this

I. That's it,

GM1. I find it very difficult to accept this

I. That's right, that's exactly right

GM1. Is that right?

I. She came in, 'Roy' was attracted to her

GM1. Yeh

I And in the **soap narrative** we didn't know she was trans, but we did if we read the reviews [laughs]

GM1. Yeh

I. And the previews

GM2. What was her first kind of entrance in to

I. She just moved into the area I think, and , I dunno what, she was workin'

GM1. I dunno

I. In the café or something

GM3. But why did she have to tell them she was a

I. Because he fancied her. It made it be like she **had** to tell 'im, because she would be....taking her clothes off

GM2. Yeh, yeh, yeh of course

GM3. But she was **postoperative**

I. No actually she wasn't

GM3. **Oh** I see

I. When she first came in she was pre-operative

GM2. Oh

I. There would have been an issue there,

GM3. Yeh, oh yeh

GM1. What... changing tack completely,

I. Don't matter

GM1. We haven't mentioned **American soaps**, have we

I. No

GM1. I used to watch, I used to watch *Dallas* avidly. But *Dallas* didn't 'ave a

I. *Dallas* didn't have a gay storyline did it?

GM1. Did it? The other one did, the 'Colbys', they had a gay storyline but er

I. Yeh, it was the other one, *Dynasty*

GM2. Ahh

GM1. Pardon?

GM2. *Dynasty* had

GM1. I'm thinkin' of *Dynasty*, aint I yeh

I. With Joan Collins

GM1. With Joan Collins

GM3. There should have been a whole coterie [laughs] of gay characters

I. Yeh. Erm no. I only haven't mentioned it 'cos I had to stop somewhere

GM2. I used to watch it a bit

GM3. Yeh

I. I'm interested in what you think of them

GM2. You can't really be very....they all sort of ... sat there, dressed as if they were on **parade**

GM1. Yeh

GM2. Everything in place. **And then they tried** to make it more interesting by bringing that one back from the **dead**

I. Yeh



GM3. Oh from the dead

[All talk at once]

GM2. Pretended that one had been dreaming, which

GM1. That was nonsense

GM2. You wouldn't do that in a story

GM3. [Laughs]

I. Mind you they brought 'Den' back from the dead

GM1. Yeh. That'll

GM2. And **killed him off again**

GM3 They tried

I. What about well, he got the sack I think because of his behaviour was a bit naughty.

What about **bisexuality**; we haven't mentioned that.

GM1. Bisexuality

I. Do you think that's ever represented? ... I mean, is some of the gay male storyline, is that really about bisexuality do you think?

GM1. Todd was married

I. That's exactly

GM1. That was bisexual surely, if he was married and 'e'd got, was the girl his, the baby, was the child **his**?

I. No,

GM1. I'm not sure.

I. No it wasn't...Anyway. But he was constructed as heterosexual first

GM1. Mmm

GM2. Yes, the one that **died** was his 'cos he kept saying 'my **baby**, my **baby**'

I. [Laughs]

GM1. Oh yes she died in the

GM2. My **baby**

GM3. [Laughs] Are you auditioning?

[All, more laughter]

GM1. For the part, yeh

I. Do you think, do you think they ever **do** represent bisexuality?

GM2. I think it's so **ambiguous**, that it's, from the point of view of an audience, neither here nor there. Do you know what I mean?

GM1. No I don't think they, they don't represent, don't try it because

I. They might, some of the audience is bisexual?

GM2. You wouldn't say to the audience I am a practicing **bisexual**

GM1. No, no

I. But they might have to **show** someone, having relationships with both men and woman

GM1. Yeh

GM2. Yeh...With '**Todd**', don't forget he's eighteen year old

GM1. Yeh

GM2. A phase, we don't know, but

I. Which would have been the phase, the gay bit or the straight bit?

GM1. Yeh yeh, what's the phase?

GM2. We don't **know**, they sent him out you see, sent him to **Coventry**

I. Exactly

GM3. It was never **explored**, presumably

I. No

GM3. Just

I. No

GM3. Just happened and you make of it what you will

GM2. [Cuts into previous remark] What excuse did he get for leaving, what excuse did he have?

GM1. Don't know

GM3. Don't know

I. No

GM2. Can't remember that

I. Erm do you think, then, that any of these lgb, lesbians gay bisexual if we think they might be, t, transgender, do you think they're **realistic portrayals**

GM2. [Coughs]

I. Do you think they're like real life?

GM2. Yeh the ones that I've seen are

GM1. I think so yeh, 'cos it reflects the **changes in society** that... that sort of thing is more accepted now, I think, than it was, so soaps have changed their relationship to it

GM2. And I think what you were saying earlier about something; there was an initial **reaction** against these people

GM1. Yeh

GM2. Which cooled down and accepted

I. Right 'cos that was one of the things that I was gonna ask you and I'm gonna ask it now 'cos you've said it, do you think they do change audience's views? ..Having them on

GM2. It's like having a **debate**

GM1. I think so

GM2. You won't the change people if they're **completely stuck**

GM1. Mmm

GM2. Others might oh ooh, yes maybe

GM1. I think that's

GM3. I think it would probably happen that way yeh

GM1. Yeh

I. Right

GM3. Not **consciously**, they don't think ....

I. They're open to it

GM3..... I'll change my opinion

GM2. If you say to somebody, oh there's a **gay** in *Coronation Street*, they'd never ( ) and then they're led up to it

GM1. Yeh

GM2. They'd hardly notice

GM3. Mmm

I. Right. So it can change, people, bound to?

GM1. Yeh, I think

GM2. You wouldn't throw it in somebody's face

GM1. Something like *EastEnders* or somethink is just ...as I said before...they're just, acceptance, of a gay couple or a lesbian couple

GM2. In *EastEnders* it's a change from a **murder** isn't it

GM1. [Laughs] That's right yeh exactly, exactly

I. Yeh...yeh

GM1. Yeh exactly, when you stop to think about it

I. So just, do you, could you identify with any of those characters, at all do you think?

GM2. Oh, with the young lad, yeh

GM3. I think so

GM1. Mmm

I. And the issues that they're going through, could you, you

GM1. Yeh, yes certainly yeh

GM2. I couldn't **identify** with the people who are **hostile**

GM1. No

GM2. I don't think there's anything, I can never identify with **anybody** whose hostile about **anything**. I'm hostile about... people who... drum money from the government for doing nothing, I'm hostile about people who are **angry** for no reason

GM1. Yeh

GM2. But I'm not **hostile**

I. No

GM2. About most things in my life,

GM1. No

GM3. Do you recognise, the, the type of character, from people you've **come across** in your own **life**...the **hostile** ones

I. Oh yeh that's true

GM3. Have you ever run up against anyone that reminds you of anyone you're watching in *Coronation Street*

I. Yeh, when they say things

GM2. Oh, ( )

I. Do you think?

GM3. From what I've heard yeh

GM2. I've only met the **hostile** ones, on the **periphery** really; I've heard they're in there and I'm just not going to get **near** them

GM3. Mmm

I. Right

GM3. Oh yeh, I don't mean **confronting** them, but er just being **aware** of

I. But they can they remind you of

GM3. Yeh

[Talking over each other]

GM3. They're hostile so you avoid

GM2. Completely unthinking you know

I. Yeh, yeh. But that's the kind of things people might say

GM2. Yeh, yeh. I've heard people say oh bloody **gays**, or something

GM2. More than that, don't they, mm

I. So

GM2. Or he's a bloody **queer**

GM1. Mmm

GM2. Or 'Eastbender' or...

GM1. Mmm true

I. So.... Do.. is there anything, I mean I think I've already asked you, but, just anything particular that **sticks in your mind** about any of the episodes that we've talked about that you think, oh yeh, I remember **that** bit, I really remember that bit...or, not any one particular?

GM2. Well, I remember .... 'Todd's' ....actual **acceptance** initially, the bloke at the hospital, I remember he was going out the door, and he said well why have you come back to see me? To say **goodbye**. ( ) So 'Todd's' going out and he just put his arms, not.. so he couldn't get out, said look me in the **eye** and tell me you **don't love me**

I. Mmm

GM2. Very dramatic

GM1. Mmm

I. Yeh, yeh

GM2. 'Todd' couldn't, they came towards each other, and it faded out...and I thought that was **very very moving**

I. Yeh, yeh, memorable. Do you remember any particular, about

GM1. Erm

I. You know the one with Michael Cashman, do you remember any particular scene?

You mentioned the lesbian bit actually, that was quite useful, do you remember any particular scene of... you don't have to

GM1. No no

I. If they just kind of go into one

GM1. No. I don't know what, I don't think... Michael Cashman and erm what's name

I. 'Barry'

GM1. 'Barry', I don't think, I don't think it was that **dramatic**, was it really, he was just sort of **there** and so on?

I. There was no kind of one thing no like

GM1. No, there wasn't

I. Some of, like with the '**Jordache**' thing, you, I can remember the **kiss** thing

GM1. Yeh

I. And it was also built up to quite a bit

GM2. And I remember, a ( ) 'Todd' with his brother, and I think 'is brother said **something like**, 'you're no brother of mine now'

GM1. That's right 'e did

I. Yeh

GM1. Yeh

I. And obviously you remember him saying as well, the brother, about...you know, slept in the same bed, or you've seen me, you know

GM2. Yeh

I. **That**, it kind of, sticks

GM2. And 'Jason' was a really **angry**, no, I don't mean that, **macho** young man

GM1. Yeh, yeh

I. He is still, and he's still in it

GM2. And I thought, oh this is over the top even for a – well no, he was – intimate contact with his brother, you get this kind of

I. And people might say that?

GM2. Yeh

GM3. Brothers are very often are like that

GM1. Mmm

GM2. But to say no brother of **mine**, it's, it was horrible really

GM1. Yeh

I. Yeh

GM2. You think a **dad** might say it, no son of mine

I. Yeh

GM3. Mmm

I. Yeh

GM2. 'Todd' had to put up with, and then of course there was this '**Sarah**', I don't like that woman; she's a terrible mistress

GM3. [Laughs]

GM2. All over the place

GM3. Mmm

GM2. And er

GM3. [Laughs] You mustn't take it so **personally**

I. [Laughs] No but it's

GM2. *Coronation Street*

[All talk at once and laughing]

I. We're talking about the **characters** aren't we?

GM2. Erm, there was that **terrible** conflict with her and him, and him and ...and 'Gail', and this **poor bloke** was **right in it**. There was only '**Eileen**'

I. Mmm

GM2. That was standing with 'im

I. It's true. Now... finally, and we've done a whole hour now, very good stuff here

GM1. Yeh

I. Now, do you talk about, you did mention that actually, the characters, the LGBT storylines, with friends. You said you do sometimes talk about them generally, the soaps, with neighbours

GM2. We...yeh, yeh, I talk about what's happening, what's going to happen

I. Generally, or

GM2. Erm, yeh, I **never** talk about the characters, well not in. from this gay point of view

I. Right. Have you ever talked about them with?

GM3. **No**, to be honest, no, I don't know anyone else that listens to *The Archers* [laughs] actually, but er no. I many 'ave mentioned it to... friends of mine but erm

I. But it wouldn't be a particular thing

GM3. Nothing, no no, nothing special

I. Right

GM1. I'm just, want to have a laugh with the family really about it ( ) mother and so on

I. Do you ever hear anybody else talkin' about them, like, oh did you see that gay thing, in, ever overhear people particularly?

GM1. Well

GM2. I don't know I can imagine people saying oh that bloke, he's **gay** you know

GM1. Yeh, may have been

GM2. Saying it in that kind of

GM1. My 'one carer, my carer in the morning, Ken, nice sort of chap but he's **definitely homophobic**

I. Who's this?

GM1. My Ken, my carer, in the morning

I. Is he?

GM1. Yeh

GM3. Is he really?

I. Really?

GM1. Homophobic, and 'e's racist

GM2. Well, he's **everything**

I. Oh dear

GM1. 'E's got all sorts of ( ) ways

I. What training is he having then?

GM1. Huh?

I. They shouldn't be allowed to be homophobic



GM3. [Laughs]

GM1. Yeh 'cos they don't.. I'm not being funny, but they don't ( ) they don't vet those sort of things do they

I. They should

GM1. But they **don't**, a lot of the ( ) **don't**

I. Dreadful. So where does this carer come from, which borough

GM1. Er Bexley, Bexley borough

I. Does he **say** homophobic things?

GM1. Yeh

GM2. What does he say?

GM1. Erm, what does 'e say...

GM2. That black queer

GM1. Yeh, something like that, **yeh , seriously**, I think 'e said something like that, black queer.

I. Really? Is he young?

GM1. No, e's turned 60

GM2. Are, are

GM1. 'E, 'e's a nice enough chap, but I've, I've pulled 'is leg abart it, I say well, 'ave you taken your Alzheimers medicine today? I satirise 'im

[Laughter]

I. Does 'e know you ...are?

GM1. No, 'e doesn't know about me, no no no no, 'e doesn't know about me; no I can't talk to him

I. No you wouldn't want to

GM1. No

[All talk at once]

I. I think he should be you know as he's providing a service for everybody, and being

GM1. Especially when he's doing intimate things for me, you don't really want

I. No, no I understand that

GM1. ( )

I. No but, but that's really not acceptable, but obviously you know, yourself

GM1. I mean if, if it **affected things**, ok

I. Yeh

GM1. It wouldn't be right, but if it doesn't affect anything so

I. Ok

GM1. So 'e, 'e's ok, we just 'ave a **laugh**, you know

I. But ...why I asked about do you ever hear other people talkin' about it, 'cos I just wondered if... well obviously the answer's no, but, 'cos I know that I've sometimes gauged people's attitudes, by what they're saying

GM1. Yeh

I. You know, almost **hearing**, overhearing them saying oh you know

GM1. Yeh

I. 'Did you see 'Zoë', that's a lesbian thing', and then how they were talkin' about it, would make me think, whether I would be open or not with them, 'cos it's a way of, thing, but I just thought that might happen, but [laughs] obviously it doesn't, so

GM3. Well I would imagine, it **does** if you get into an office situation, you know [laughs] er, you need people obviously of erm working age... in specifically offices

I. Mmm

GM3. I bet it goes on a lot

GM2. Yeh

I. I've gone through the whole lot; is there anything else you wanna say, before the tape finishes, there'll be about another 5 minutes on there

GM1. Well I don't think so

I. I've found that fantastically useful

GM3. There was, getting back to the, the **political** bit

I. Yeh

GM3. Erm in *The Archers*, yes, it did happen a few **years** ago, when this wonderful cricketer, erm 'e disappeared for a few days and they were saying, where's 'e gone, and 'e'd gone to London to the **Pride** march, they didn't say **gay** pride

GM1. Ah

GM3. Just Pride

GM1. Pride yeh

GM3. And when 'e came back.. er one of the **older women** characters.. started **talking** to 'im about it, what was it, you know **where** was it, and 'e just started telling her, but they never used the word gay

I. But that was interesting tho'

GM3. Just **Pride**

I. 'Cos they referred to a society **outside**

GM3. Yeh

GM1. Yeh that was interesting, was interesting

I. A somebody else, that there were other people. Also a campaigning

GM3. Well, very slightly

GM1. And they never mention anything like that, they never mention Pride marches in *EastEnders*?

GM3. No

GM1. Gay Pride in Manchester been isn't it?

I. Have they ever mentioned the Manchester gay scene in *Coronation Street*, to your recollection?

GM2. I don't think so, I'm not sure now

I. Mmm, I think they might've

GM2. What I **was** going to say, this is perhaps **nothing to do with it** but I've noticed in a soap, in all of them, **nobody is the slightest bit intellectual**. Apart from 'Ken Barlow'

GM1. Mm

GM2. You **never** see a book anywhere, not even a recipe book

GM3 and GM1. [Laugh]

GM2. Not even a hymn book, and what do they **do** with themselves?

GM1. Yeh ( )

GM2. They must be bored **stiff**. And yes ... the people in the factory, they've got no money, but they're always **drinking**

GM3. [Laughs]

GM1. I know, the same in *EastEnders*

GM2. We're off now

GM1. [Laughing] They're stony broke, but

[Laughter]

GM1. They're doin' this, doin' that, doin' this, it always reminds me, I got no **money**, with all the **drinkin'**, and they always seem

GM2. No wonder 'Todd' got away

GM1. Yeh, that's right. I ( ) do you?

I. It's true yeh

GM3. We got mobile phones, and cars

GM1. Was 'e there, in that, 'Todd'?

I. I want to formally thank you before it clicks; I'm leaving it on

GM1. All right

I. I want to formally thank you, because it's very good this, and it's just what I wanted

GM1. Mmm, you're very welcome

I. I can't thank you enough

GM2. It's been enjoyable, coming here

I. Well it's still on; I'll let it run until it clicks

GM1. Yeh

I. 'Cos it's interesting, what you're saying about the other

GM2. Should we give her a vote of thanks, and hope she gets her erm phd?

GM1. Oh yeh,

GM2. In spite of us

GM1. Oh yeh definitely, in spite of us [laughter]. I was just going to **say**.. 'Todd', was he? In *Coronation Street*, he's talking with... the **nurse**, he was called 'Carl', wan't 'e? 'Carl'?

GM2. Yeh

I. Yeh

GM1. About, down the Canal Street, which was such a

GM3. Oh yeh

GM1. Such a gay place for 'im to mention, to mention

GM2. Yeh

GM1. I'm sure, I'm sure 'e was talkin' about that

GM2. I think so

GM1. Down the pub in Canal Street

I. I think you might be right

GM2. And he took all his friends down there

I. Do you think that meant anything?

GM1. Yeh

I. Do you think they were, do you think that meant anything to the general audiences, would they be aware?

GM1. (It don't matter?) Yes, 'cos I think

GM2. In Manchester,

GM1. I think they made some they made some comment about it, someone on the programme said you don't wanna go there, you know sort of

GM3. Do, do events erm in real life, like the er, Admiral Duncan pub, bombing, get er mentioned at all in soaps?

GM1. No

GM3. It's the sort of a parallel **universe** running there

GM1. And don't, don't forget it's filmed many many weeks in advance

GM3. Oh well yeh [talking at same time]

I. It is a parallel universe

GM3. Yeh

GM1. It's filmed about ..10...12 weeks in advance innit so

GM3. That's true

I. Yeh but you're right, they very rarely refer to anything that's happened

GM1. They don't, they don't refer to elections, general elections **that's** never got mentioned and

I. No

GM3. No

GM1. Things like that. Anything like that

GM3. No, that's true

GM2. They're very closed worlds really

GM1. Even sort of.. ..events.. like Christmas and things... it gets mentioned of **course** but

GM2. They have Christmas ( )

[All talk at once]

GM3. They're doing their Christmas ( )

GM1. The soap actress from so and so ( )

I. Did you see the wedding, with 'Cilla'? [laughs]

GM2. I, I'm starting to **hate** those two, 'cos they're over the top I think

GM3. They are but

GM1. They are

GM2. I like **him** a bit more

I. The boy's a good actor

GM2. Oh he's lovely

I. Isn't he a good actor?

GM1. Well ( )

GM2. And I quite like that gangly one, that lives with them

I. Yeh, he's good, he used to be in

GM2. And 'Fiz'

I. The gangly one was in, erm.. the Caroline Aherne thing

GM2. Was 'e?

I. What it's called, you know, where they just sat on the settee and did nothing

GM3. Oh yeh

GM1. Yeh *The Royle Family*

I. It was very funny, *The Royle Family*

GM2. He's good, as thick as

GM3. [Laughs]

I. He's good at playing thick

GM3. Mmm

GM2. Get a bit fed up of 'Steve Macdonald', he always looks so **worried**

GM3. Mmm

GM2. I don't like this new woman, all very attractive but

I. Who is she? 'Ronnie'?

GM2. She's very attractive,

I. Something's gonna happen

GM2. But she's just somehow in the **way**

I. Something dreadful's gonna happen I think, see, more gangsters, isn't it? More gangster storylines

GM2. Yeh, that is a gangster story, isn't it? Mmm. Doesn't really suit it.

I. Do you think not?

GM1. Yeh, you associate gangsters in *EastEnders*, you don't in *Coronation Street* I don't think....*Coronation Street* has also given the impression that it's too, erm, pantomime orientated, too 'Ena Sharples' based, and things like that or

GM2. Mmm

GM3. It - it's more a **comedy**, isn't it?

GM1. Yeh

I. It is

GM3. Light hearted

GM1. It's got more, funny side than

I. Yeh, 'tis more..comedy

GM1. In *EastEnders*, it's serious but you've got sort of, ten minutes of ordinary comedy, with 'Dot' and er

I. What about *Emmerdale*, do you think that's funny, or

GM1. I've never seen it, I've never seen that

GM2. I haven't seen it, I've just seen a few episodes

I. *Emmerdale*, sort of, it's almost in between, kind of sometimes funny

GM1. Yeh

I. Erm, but it's also got er heavy **brothers** come in, gangsters

GM1. Yeh

GM2. The **acting** part of it is superb

GM3. Mmm

GM2. I don't think that '**Ronnie**' can act

I. And you like 'Norris' as a..do you think 'Norris' is **coded** as gay, really?

GM2. Maybe

I. The way he [Tape runs out].

## Appendix 3.8.

### Interview with male to female Transgender Group Sunday 9th October 2005

I...This is the .....Trust

T1. **Society**

I. Sorry X. Society

T1. [Laughs] and we're all women

I. And we've got J, and T2. and T3....Can you just tell me how old you are, then I'll be able to recognise the voices

T3. Well I'm 61, I'm M. I'm 61, I'm post operative, since 99

T2. Er, I'm **K**. er I'm **49** and I regard myself as a transgenderist.

I. Right

T2. I like to live **female** but I don't want the operation. I enjoy the fruits and benefits of er hormone therapy

I. Right

T2. Mm

I. And J.

T1. I'm 71, er I live as a woman, I've not had major surgery, I've 'ad **minor** surgery, er I've got a nice pair of tits [laughs]

I. Right, I'm going to test this now. Erm so right

T3. Shall we wait for erm for J.?

I. Yeh. Ok, the first question I'm gonna ask is.. what do you remember about social movements, or political movements. Just...anything, that's important to you. People have said all different things so ... anything.

T2. Erm the first social one I remember in erm in 1972 was actually gay **liberation**, and **women's** liberation, er in them early years, erm, and er neither of er , women's lib was **very** negative towards transgendered people, and **gay** people were at that time forming their **identity**, and sort of erm **disowning** transgendered people so they could form their own **identity**, er rather than a **gender**, a **transgender** identity, **with** gay. That's the first erm erm er thing I **found**



I. Yeh

T2. Erm I was **horrified** at Tom Robinson saying once, er that he he wasn't a **pervert**, he didn't want to wear women's clothes, he was just a gay **man**. That horrified me 'cos I thought, you're standing on someone to better **yourself and** that's not really the **way**

I. Yeh

T1. That's common tho isn't it?

T2. Well that **is** common yeh

T1. It's the same in **our** community,

T3. Yeh

T1. Even **today**.

I. What political movement tho; I'm gonna stick [laughs]

T3. I can't really think – really I, I used to try and get **information** on TV..things, when I was a **teenager**, and I couldn't find **anything**. I used to go to **Foyles**, look for **books**, psychology, there was **nothing**, absolutely nothing. And I remember first of all seeing something like in the Sunday **papers**, you'd always see things in the News of the **World**, wouldn't you?

T1. The '**screws** of the world',

T2. and T3. Yeh yeh [laughs]

T3. I really can't remember anything that happened

I. 80s...right

T3. Yeh. I remember reading about yeh reading about ( ) Benjamin erm surgery in **California**, Casablanca

T1. From a **transgendered** point of view,

I. From any point of view I'm interested in..what you said about

T1. Yeh from a **transgendered** point of view

T3. Yeh

T1. The first **major** step was in **1952**

T3. Oh yes Christine Jorgensen (?)

T1. Christine Jorgensen, and Roberta K(?) Cow(?).. That's right

T1. That's when the public became **aware**

T3. Mmm

T1. About people like, **transgendered** people.

T3. Mmm mm

T1. And

T3. And there was that case... Jameson case wasn't there 70, in 1970? April, April **Ashley**, that was it

I. Yeh that was the well known

T3. Yeh I remember that

I. Yeh

T3. And there were two, Caroline Cossey (?) was in a Bond film, wasn't she?

T1. Caroline Cossey, the golden girl, Bond girl

T3. Yeh

I. What about her? She was

T3. Well she was in the **Bond** film, and she was **transgendered** you see

I. Right

T2. Very very beautiful

T1. Yeh yeh

[Someone comes in and J. talks to her]

T1. Did I speak to you earlier on the phone? Come and join us

I. So...I mean, talking about 60s and 70s, and say about them, that is interesting what you said

T1. Yeh

T2. I found that the movements in the early time, the gay one was good 'cos it was er **important** for the gay liberation, to i, to **identify** themselves to the public, and get rid of the **myths** that are with them, so it was a good thing... I have to keep referring to transgender ... it was a good thing that they **did that**, er, they dissaco, erm they put into perspective with the **public** what they were about, the gay people, so **we** could move forward, and then put **our** case

T3. Yeh

T2. 'Cos we were continually **buffeting** off each other, what we **were** and what we **weren't**. It was

T1. It was

T2. Yeh it was a social **evolvement**, that 'ad to **'appen**, so **we**, as transgendered people, could move forward. It was good what they did, it was good

T3. They they, formed a path for us I would say

T4. Bit **rude**, at the same time

T2. It was **rude**, and a bit upsetting but- obviously there were people striving for

[All talking at once]

T1. I would say there are parallels between

T4. We're where the **gay** world was 15 years ago

T1. Transgender, and the gay movement, and the transgender has always been ten or fifteen years **behind**

T3. Yeh

T1. Socially acceptance, that the

T3. Yeh

T1. And the gay movement. **Until** the Gender Recognition Act, when we **leap frogged** in front

I. When was that?

T1. Last year

I. Is that in force now?

T1. Oh yeh, gender recognition act came into parliament

[I explains the phd research to the new member of the Group and the reason for the tape recorder.]

I. I've got some background questions I'm asking about people's social ... you know ... and it gives me a bit of background ... things like ... what about socialist things or anything like that, does that mean anything to you, like any kind of socialist movements or campaigns or

New member of Group. Not particularly affiliated no

T1. I don't

All talk at once

T2. I think that the socialist movements like transgender movements, were er 'ad the same sort of approach to transgender things, they knew **nothing of it**, the same as

**transgendered people** who knew nothing of **transgenderism**, until the **information** started coming forward

I. Yeh

T2. And obviously it accelerated with pcs

T1. Don't you realise that in **1987**, ...the **law** that said it was **illegal** for me to go out dressed as a **woman**, I could be arrested, put in the cells, it was only in 1987 that **that law** was actually laid **aside**. It's still on the statute books, and it can still be **used**, but 1987 was the last time

T3. Mmm

T1. There's always been this legal aspect hanging over **our** heads and being out in public

I. Yes

T3. I mean fifty years ago we'd have got **done** for this

I. Yeh

T3. No question.

All. Mmm

T1. Well that's why the B. Society came into being in **1966**, and that's why it was such a secret **society** in those days

T3. Yeh

T1. It **had** to be. 'Cos if if people... if it became **known**, they they were **targeted** by the press

T3. Mmm

T1. As some kind of deviant and

I. Mmm

T3. And probably the police **too**, I dare say.

T1. Yes, the police would have raided, easy target

T3. Easy target, yeh

T1. Now, we've got transgendered **police** officers.

T3. Yeh

I. Fantastic. What's your name?

T5. T5.

I. B., 70 plus. Right

T3. B.'s old

I. So... I am gonna get on to the soaps, I just...the next question is, do you think there's anything in the soaps that reminds you of any of those campaigns, that

T1. Not really

I. Anything at all

T3. No

T2. No, the soaps have more of a **lighter** approach to it, they

T3. They're for a mass **audience**, aren't they?

T2. They wouldn't entertain people

T3. They're for **entertainment**

T1. In, in what's happened, because of the way soaps have, have **shown** certain aspects, of LGB and T, it's not so much bi, but more lesbian, gay and **transgender**, society has become more er patient, perhaps, more tolerant, perhaps, but they haven't **led** anything, they've followed the trends that were already taking **place**

T3. Well I think ... social attitudes have changed **enormously** over the last thirty years in this country. A a lot of it is the result of **immigration**. It's not necessarily us, or the gay **community**, because so many people come to England, culture as it was has got ..... slightly **altered**.

T1. Yes, strangely enough

T3. Walk down

T1. Religion in western culture, like America, and Australia, New Zealand

T3. Mmm

T1 And in this country, religion 'as 'as a big input in stamping **down** the acceptance of these issues, and yet in countries where you have a very strong **catholic** leadership, like some of the Mediterranean countries, they're far more tolerant towards lesbian gay and transgender

T3. Mm mmm mmmm

T1. That has been **my** experience

I. Where are they more tolerant do you think?

T1. In the Mediterranean countries where there's a very strong **catholic**

T3. I always get the feeling that an **older** culture's more tolerant, and younger cultures

I. Do you think they're tolerant of ...certain groups more than others, like...gay men more than lesbians or all the same

T3. The same ?

[Young woman trans has joined the Group]

I think transgender people are sort of medicalised, as a medical **problem**, categorised as (whereas?) homosexuality, like some people see that as a **life style** choice

T1. No no. Homosexuality was seen as medical condition only 20, 30 **years** ago. I mean back in 1960, I would have been receiving aversion **therapy** for being a cross **dresser**. Gay men and lesbian women were **also** receiving aversion therapy

T2. Bottom line is we're all hard **wired**, so whether we're gay, straight, transgendered

T1. It's only in the last fifteen, twenty **years**

[All talking over each other]

T3. We don't change

T2. This is our hardwiring

T1. There's a lot of people in our community, go to the psychiatrist.

T3. This is it, you don't change

T1. ( ) Surgery

T2. ( ) We still go back to our nature

T1. That's why that's happened. You go back

T2. Nature's stronger than nurture

T1. You go back forty years, and and lesbian gay and transgender people and transvestite, it was seen as a **medical** problem

I. [Laughs] I'm going back to soaps now. When do you think you first starting watching soaps?

T1. [Laughs]

I. Sorry I don't mean to ... [to new members] I'm doing research on lesbians, LGBTs in British prime time soap operas. I'm particularly interested in 60 plus people, but obviously it's such an interesting thing you know, we are all talkin' about this, I'm taping it but it's confidential, it's for my research, it's a phd I'm doing at Middlesex.

When did you first start watchin' soaps?

T3. I don't watch soaps

[All talking at once]

[Laughter]

T1. I started watchin' *EastEnders*.

I. When was that?

T1. When it **started**. I started

I. Right from the beginning

T1. Mmm I watched *EastEnders* every **week**, twice a week, 'til my **wife died**, and then when my wife died, I totally lost interest in all kinds of soaps.

I. When did you first start watching soaps?

T2. I dunno when it was, when *Crossroads* first come out

[Laughter]

T2. So it's quite a long time ago, and that's the first soap, and I can categorically say, it never did me any 'arm

T1. [Laughs]

I. What about ... oh you don't watch

T3. I don't watch soaps, no, I watch the news ( )

I. Do you watch them? Sorry what's your name?

T4. T4

I. Sorry?

T4. and T1. T4.

I. And how old are you if you don't mind me?

T4. 66

I. Oh perfect...So do you watch them?

T1. She's lookin', she's lookin' for the **mature** ones

I. I am yeh

T4. She's looking in the right place

I. So, which soaps do you watch?

T1. This young lady, it's her first visit here [about a young woman who has sat down in the Group]

I. Sorry I'm not including, being rude, it's because I'm doing 60 plus, don't worry about it. I mean I don't mind you chippin' in as your views are interesting, but I've just concentrating on the older [laughs]

T4. The more elderly of us

[Laughter]

T1. ( ) If you feel uncomfortable with the elderly dear, 'cos T.'s a lot younger

[Laughter]

T1. I'm not, I'm not puttin' us down

I. So which soaps?

T4. I watch *EastEnders*, I watch *Coronation Street*, and *Neighbours*

(Laughter)

I. Nothing to be ashamed of...Not *Emmerdale*?...Nobody here watches *Emmerdale*?

T2. Don't get time. I tend to glance at

I. Did anyone used to watch *Brookside*?

T3. No

T2. Yeh I watched bits of ..I'm not a dedicated soap fan but I tend to glance at 'em see if I can pick out some interesting

I. Who is a dedicated soap fan here? Do you watch 'em a lot then?

T2. No

T3. No

I. Do you watch them quite a lot?

T4. Well, I never miss *EastEnders*

[Laughter]

T1. We're very intellectual we don't really watch the soaps

[Laughter]

T1. See what I mean? You go outside and 'ave a fag now. [Laughter] I **disown** you

( ) Go up and down the street with the cars and lights going up and down... I'm not bloody surprised

T4. I might miss *EastEnders* or *Coronation Street*, but I never miss *Neighbours*; I record it if I'm not in... sad

[Laughter]



I. I don't think so

T1. See why they want the mature ones

[Laughter]

( ) [Unhearable as they were all talking over each other]

I. Do you watch them on your own or with other people?

T4. My sis my daughter in law

T2. Doesn't go down that well in Stamford Hill then yeh?

T1. He comes from er home – that part of London, but they won't have him back

[laughter]

I So who do you watch them with?

T2. I'm on my own, again I say , I say I glance at them, I used... I use I take **information** out of them really, I watch how the characters are, what people are wearin', what's fashion, 'ow people **be'ave** to each other, reflection of society compared to what's real and what's **not**

I You don't watch them at all? You might catch them

T3. If it's on, I switch it off. I don't watch soaps, I think they're stupid.

I. Ok.

[Laughter]

T3. I watch *Horizon*, and things like that you know

T1. Generally speakin' I don't. J I watch **documentaries**, I probably catch the last 5 minutes or so, while I'm waiting for the next programme. That's **good**. I don't sit specifically to watch it

I. Right... How do you think that relationships generally are represented, in soaps. Any relationships at all, just generally

LG2. They don't tend to have a longevity

I. Right

LG2. Er because the storyline 'as to move on. Er that's a tendency I've picked up from soaps.

I. Bit confrontational aren't they?

T2. Yeh they 'ave to be to be entertaining

T3. It's sensationalism, everything's got to be interesting to be on there. If it was dull no one would **watch** it

T2. That's right, that's true

T4. They can be light, and have to be. You get the 'Jack Duckworths', can be

T3. Or everyone would switch it **off** [laughs]

Laughter and talking, inaudible

I. So...I'm interested in the older characters, do you think they're

T4. He's very lifelike, 'Jack Duckworth'

( ) chatting outside of the interview

T1. We 'ave to remember that a a soap storyline isn't going to be able to run for more than a few weeks, anyway, erm so the characters just keep moving in and out

I. Yeh so there are characters that are solid couples that have been in there

T4. They keep coming **back** don't they. *EastEnders* all the ( ) 'Grants', they get, ( ) 'cos they break up the relationships. 'Peggy Mitchell's' still there

T1. The only reason they brought her back was really because the **ratings** were falling

T4. They **needed** her

All. Yes

T1. And they brought 'Den' back and they had to kill 'im **off** again

[Chatting to each other: inaudible]

I. Right, so now I'm going to get to the crux of it now. What ...I'm interested in... how do you think that...ok I'm gonna start with lesbian relationships, have you seen any lesbian relationships on the soaps at all?

T1. Only in hindsight

T2. *Brookside* and I think *Emmerdale*...*Emmerdale*, *Emmerdale*

T4. Generally they just have a **kiss** or something like that. It's not really intimate

[Laughter]

T1. It's not really adult

T2. I didn't believe the *Emmerdale* one, it wasn't realistic, with er 'Zoë,' I just couldn't believe it. It just

I. Which one?

T2. I couldn't

I. Which one do you remember?

T2. Believe 'Zoë' and er probably the first or second partner.

I. Right

T2. I can't.... I could believe the **partner** but I couldn't believe '**Zoë**'

T1. When you stop to think about it, how.. can ..any.. kind of relationship whether it is lesbian, gay heterosexual, be shown on soaps **other** than a kiss and a cuddle?

T3. Mmm

T1. They **can't**

I. No

T1. 'Cause they can't. So there's no way any, any of those relationships can be shown in their **full strength** on a soap

T3. Like real people?

T4. How you going to see that?

I. So how would describe the lesbian relationships? Do you think they're shown by a **kiss** then you'd say?

T2. All relationships are on soaps aren't they. I mean you don't get anything. You don't get **anything** on soaps

[All talking at once]

T1. They daren't, they daren't.

T2. It's 7 o'clock in the evening, isn't it, so

T1. Well, any **gay** relationship.. in the soap.. has to be **short term**. Because they're afraid of it turning off the audience long term. But a **heterosexual** relationship, because that's seen as **normal, can** go on, for several years. But.. from the **soap's** point of view

T2. Yeh

T1. When it **suits** 'em, they bump off one of their partners

T3. Mmm

T1. **But** any kind of trans, or, mind you, you see, the trans relationship in *Coronation Street*, has gone on, because

I. It has

T1. Apart from an **occasional** mention, people 'ave **forgotten** that 'Hayley's' trans

T3. Yeh that's true

T2. That's true

T1. What she's going through **now**, is a **heterosexual relationship**, where '**Roy**' has had, 'e's had problems, not because 'Hayley' is transsexual, but because Roy is a bit of a **dopehead**, that is what I think

[laughter]

I. What do you think then, about the way that was done, 'Hayley'?

T2. Well she went in with great stealth, and in that she was a transsexual, the, the what she looked like was just

T1. There were three episodes before it came out she was... transsexual

T3. Yeh, and you do soon forget that she is transsexual now, you just, and everyone thinks that she's a **woman**, even though that information's been passed by.

T1. That is true of a small minority of post op. transsexuals

T3. Yeh

T1. They fitted **in** to society and they're now accepted as **women**

T3. Well that's that's

T1. Nobody knows that they're **not**

[All talking at once]

T2. I think it's a good positive introduction, but er

T5. Hinge and Bracket were also considered as ladies, but they were not transsexuals, the old ladies

T1. Yeh, I thought they **were** women

T5. But they were not transsexuals.

I. So do you think they did that quite well then, in some ways, or

T2. I think the general public's initiation into trans, transgender people, it was a nice soft and gentle for people to take on board. It wasn't radical, and it was a nice introduction, and it got people more, very empathetic towards transsexuals, erm even though a lot of transsexuals would er indicate that 'Hayley' was not very realistic as a relative to the numbers that are out there. '**Hayley**' is reflective of what a primary transsexual is, and er, which is a minority, and secondly transsexuals, she is not really reflective of, but that's probably where the agitation is, with 'Hayley'

I. Do you think her relationship with 'Roy' is realistic, interesting, how do you think her relationship with **Roy** is done?

T2. It's

T1. In a way, it was sad, because 'Roy' is seen as a bit of a **dumbhead** anyway, and it's sad to think that for 'Hayley' to be a post op. transsexual, the only kind of partner she can get is a **dickhead**

T2. So it can be demeanin', yeh

[laughter]

T3. Most men probably **are** dickheads

[All laugh]

T1. (Depends what they've got?) between the legs dear

[Laughter]

T2. But not all transsexuals have dickheads as boyfriends. Some of 'em do. He's sweet, he's, he's a nice

[All talk at once saying he is nice but]

T1. Not to put him down as a **person**, but the **character**, er of '**Roy**', is a little bit slow

T4. A bit of a loser, sweet

T2. 'E's drippy but 'e's not nasty, 'is 'e?

T4. Straightforward

I. Do you think that 'Hayley's' done

T4. No I don't think so, I think it's very shallow, she's clearly a .. I think it's very shallow, it didn't put over anything, it brought up the **subject**

I. It did

T4. But I don't think it did a lot more than **that**

T2. Yeh, but I don't think the public could take a lot more,

T4. Probably not no,

T2. They could take, you... 'ave the next decade where it's a bit more serious

T3. Apart from the soap, you'd never see a... this subject being seriously, **ever**, all you see is things like er Danny Le **Rue** used to, whatever, you know, the top man, you...

T1. 'Ang on, there were two.. American television series, one was a law firm, *LA Law* I think it was, er there was another television series in America that **was** shown over here.

Well one of the characters was a transsexual. ..and it was it opened up with the, the **transsexual**, who 'ad been a **partner**, of one of the senior partners in the **law** firm, who 'ad died

T3. Yeh

T1. *LA Law*, and they were yeh, they were doin' the **eulogy** at the **funeral**, when she exposed that she was once a man, and that this guy had been so sympathetic and understanding, that the **outcry**, of her, and she was a transsexual person, playin' the role

T3. Mmm

T1. There you are, the outcry of the public was such that her **character** was cut out, out of the programme

T2. It's interesting, that was in *LA Law*, but then what, 5 years later? In *Ally McBeal*?

They had, again, another transsexual

T2. Yeh....And probably one of the most popular characters

I. So did you ...could you identify with 'Hayley', at all?

T3. Me personally?

I. Anybody

T3. No

T4. No

T2. She was designed for *Coronation*,

T3. Not real

T2. That's what 'appened, 'ayley was designed for *Coronation Street*, and the er and the audiences of *Coronation Street*. ( ) (T1?) said that she 'ad to be a true female to get in, to be accepted, and she was a designer soap character

T3. Mmm

T1. The **positive**, the **positive** side of that thing, and I can speak for personal experiences, the off shoot of bein' invited on to chat shows, to **talk** about the subject, because of the 'Hayley' character, I've been on at least **12** programmes, just talkin' about transsexuals in television.

I. Right, yeh, it did open up something

T1. Oh yes yes

T3. It opened the door, good yeh

T1. *Mrs Doubtfire*, that was another one, that was a film, although people think I look like *Mrs Doubtfire*

[Laughter]

I. Does any **moment**, in 'Hayley's' storylines.. do you remember anything significant about any, about any of this?

T2. I think, a bit of a struggle

T1. I saw one part where ....the, where they refuse to go into the **toilet**, because 'Hayley' 'ad been into the toilet, now **I** thought the way they played that part was **very very good**, 'cos it emphasised the fact that ..somebody said, what do you expect, that is going to happen in there, is she gonna stand on the seat to go to the toilet or something? And and those prejudices that **she** was finding, from the girls on the shop floor, are very similar to what the **real** girls were findin'

T4. Mmm

T1. In the **real** world. And I think that emphasised the difficulties a lot of **real** transgender girls are having, and put in the context of *Coronation Street*, people believe it to be a real story

I. Yeh. Did you think it was weak?

T4. I thought it was a weak character I agree, I agree, it opened the subject, it got people talking about it, and it was a... taboo subject, that didn't get an airing at 7.30 on a Wednesday and a Monday and a **Friday**

I. Mass audiences?

T3. Yeh

T2. Yeh I agree

T1. *Coronation Street* was very **courageous** to take the subject

[all talking at once]

T2. Yeh

All. Yeh

T1. I think with 'Hayley' I think with '**Hayley**' another thing is, it introduced people who 'ad prejudice, a against transgender people, she was **brilliant** for that, she knocked prejudice **down**, she became quite a likeable **person**, and er she was very **mellow** person, a lot of people found 'er **acceptable**, and that 'as done, I honestly believe, and I can say

from my point of view, from me **mother's** acceptance of me, I think that even tho 'ayley' went in with a sort of **stealth**, int er into she into into *Coronation Street* from my **mother's** point of view, I think she found it easier to accept me when she you know when I presented myself to 'er for the first time as **female**. 'Cos she'd 'ad a lot of passive information loaded into 'er, as 'ayley's' **character**, and not aggressively in your face. This is a programme about transsexuals in your face, coming very gentle, and this information was offloaded very gently and it's easier taken that way

I. So that's exactly what the next question I was gonna ask you, do you think they change audience views?

All. **Yes** [firmly said]

T1. Clearly they **do**

T2. It's very informative in a certain

T3. E – Everyone is **ignorant** of this basically, the general public, people never **meet** a transsexual or transvestite normally, in the usual course of event do they?

T3. No, no not knowingly.

T1. Only in **my** local supermarket

[All laugh]

T1. There's four of us who live in the village [laughs]

All. Laugh very loud

I. About the gay – I just wanna go back a bit. The gay men, say, how do you think they're represented in soaps?

T3. Stereotypes

I. I'm just thinkin' of, does any of you remember any?

T1. **It's watered down**. It's watered down. It has to be, 'cos it's a **soap...**you know if it's a serious documentary, or a serious **docu** soap, type of thing, then they can take it further

I. Right

T1. But the soaps are **not**

T2. I think that the gay guy in erm in Corrie is, '**Sean**' I think 'is name, 'e's quite a likeable character

I. He's still in it isn't he?



T2. Yeh 'e's

I. A regular character

T2. Yeh 'es a camp kind of gay guy isn't 'e?

T4. He's a caricature

T2. 'E's not **hated** tho', e's not hated

T1. *Big Brother's* done more than *Coronation Street*

T2. Yes

T3. Mmm

T1. These what you call real life shows

I. They haven't got lesbians in there yet

T1. They will 'ave soon, yeh

I. Do you think he's a caricature?

T4. He's an absolute caricature of a gay man, **but, again**, he's a very **likeable** character

I. He is yeh

T4. Nobody can really dislike him, and I think he probably does a lot on, on that, except everybody probably expects gay men to ( )

[Other visiting male researcher now talks over her; he is younger than them and it is not known if he is trans:]

The thing is you always, if, if you are gay, you are always looking, aren't you, in a soap, for, a character that you can relate to, and of course, everyone is so different, that, you know, gay character comes along, no it's not like me, so you dismiss them, you know, comes on, no not like, dismiss them

T1. The thing, the thing really, is that, that the viewing audience who doesn't have very much .er, information about lesbians, about gay, about transgender people, if they see this version which we say may be watered down, or **sugared** a bit, it, it, it **is** making them have a better understanding, rather than them being faced with the **full** truth as it were, the different communities are, I don't think they could **take** it

T3. No I don't think they could

[All talk at once]

I. What about the lesbians, how do you think lesbians are represented?

T1. Stereotype

T4. There's a very good one on *Neighbours*

I. What kind of stereotype?

T4. I don't agree, one of the school girls, one of the school girls on *Neighbours* turned out to be **gay**, and she fancied another girl who wasn't gay, and this lasted about two months or something like this?

I. Right

T4. But it was **very carefully** done, very gently done, and I thought, for *Neighbours*, which is generally very safe, you don't get anything controversial, generally, on *Neighbours*, that it was **really well done**

I. Right

T4. And it presented, the issue it presented their problems, and you could really start to empathising at the time. She was then bullied, and you know

I. Yeh

T4. All these sorts of things, and but the girl who she's approached who **wasn't** gay, er, who found it **threatening** at first, then started to support her, and it was a very good storyline, and I think it exposed **that** particular audience, which is a very young audience isn't it?

I. Yes, it's a different audience, it's interesting

T4. *Neighbours*, and I think that exposed them to a lesbian .. relationship

I. Yeh

T4. I don't think **anybody** could object to it

I. Right, so do you think, have you, can you remember any of the ones in the **prime** time ones, can you remember the lesbian kiss, for example

T1. I've only seen it on television highlights

I. That was *Brookside*

T1. I do know one storyline, that they've done on erm *Emmerdale*, I think it was. One of the regular soaps

I. Yeh

T1. On male rape. And that, that was a gang bang on a a **heterosexual** boy who was male raped.. er consequently with the emotional trauma he **went** through being raped,

the way the **police** got involved, the way that the **case** was brought to court, and how it was dealt with in court, it ran over a six week period, and **that** that whole **thing** has been used in **training** for counsellors, er for lawyers, and for **judges**

I. Yeh

T1. On dealing with male rape **cases**, 'cos it was so well done

I. Yeh ...Right

T1. A lot of people assume that male rape is for gay men

I. Yeh

T1. But very few gay men are actually **raped**. A lot of **heterosexual** men are **raped** by other men

I ...Right so

T1. Laughs

I. These storylines, any of these things, erm like LGBT characters, do you ever **discuss** them with other people, these **soap** characters, or storylines, narratives?

T2. Only within our different communities, like as the story with gay men get, and probably lesbians, if we ever get the opportunity, like to, very rarely tho', we wouldn't discuss they wouldn't be discussed at work

I. You wouldn't say

T2. They wouldn't be done **intelligently** a lot of the time

T1. [Laughs]

T3. No no you just couldn't talk to [laughs]

I. So you wouldn't say 'oh did you see what happened last night erm 'Hayley', what did you think about that?'

T2. No, the difficulty is you're speakin' to a group of people that that **don't** really watch the soaps, and a bit inhibited to talk about the subject 'because it would reflect on them

T1. [laughs] You're out you're out of character dear [laughs]

I. So you wouldn't use it as a way of introducing an issue, like for people that you... straight people, I'll use the term, just yeh **mainstream**

T2. Mainstream

I. Mainstream situation, may be just to bring it up, mention it

SL1. Actually in **your** case, T2

T2. Yeh?

SL1. When when you're subject came up with your erm girlfriend's **family**

T2. Oh yeh

T1. Reference was **made** to - the girl from *Big Brother*

T2. Oh yeh Nadia

I. Really?

T1. Because that had more of an **influence** over **accepting**

T2. That was very good as well

All. Yeh

T1. Transsexual people, than 'Hayley has'. Nadia had a very

T3. She was a **real person**

T1. Yeh, but she had a bigger **influence** over people's acceptance of transsexual **people**

T4. Was she the one who won the *Eurovision Song contest*?

T3. Well she was

T2. Nadia had a - sorry [tries to talk as everyone talking] had a few hurdles to **cross**. The year that she won England lost the World Cup to Portugal, she was Portuguese an' plus she was **transsexual**, which she could have had a lot of prejudice initiated by **that**. But she actually **won** it, and it was brilliant, and it was great, it sent a great **signal** out for transgendered people, 'cos non transgendered people who voted a transgendered people, person, as a number one **over gay** people, not that, and **straight** people

T3. Mmm

T2. It was the first time that a transgendered person... it was a **great tick** for a lot of transgendered people, yeh

I. So you think that changed a lot of people's views?

T2. Very positive

I. That **must** have influenced audiences

T1. Yeh

T2. Yeh I think so

[All talking at once]

T3. Because she was a real person, and she was honest about what she **was**

T2. Yeh

T1. Whose being badmouthed by the press?

T2. Nadia

T1. Is she?

T2. Yeh. She had a hard time, having badmouthed by the press

T1. Actually, from what I've read tho' it's what Nadia **'erself** 'as been doing in the press

T2. Well

T2. She's been badmouthed

T1. She's now saying that she conned people and she was a different

I. Really?

T1. Well **that's** what she's **claiming**

T2. Mmm

T1. Whether it's true or not

I. Do you ever hear ....other people talking about these characters at all?

T2. Mmm?

I. Do you ever hear other people discussing it or

T2. Transgendered people at **my** workplace, it's t ... it's spoken quite er **neutral** down to derogatory way. It's never in a super positive way, a **neutral** way, or

T4. No I don't think so

T2. It can be quite derogatory

T1. The only thing I find is that that sometimes, when you walk around the supermarket, people say 'ooh look.. there's people like **'Hayley'** over there'

T2. Yeh

T1. Or there's another one like **Nadia**

T2. Mmm

T1. But it's not an **offensive** thing, it's just a **recognition**

I. A remark?

T1. So ..these **characters**, or these **people**, have been seen in a more **positive** way than the way they've been depicted on say Jerry **Springer**...so yes it has a positive effect, but we can't speak from the gay and the **lesbian** point of view

I. No

T1. 'Cos it's not the community which we

I. No, no, but I'm interested in what you think about them tho', you know, 'cos they can be unusual characters and interesting to have your

T1. On balance they're not negative... They've not been **depicted** as negative, er, in **any** of the communities involved

I. Right

T1. They may not 'ave been depicted in quite an **aggressive** enough way, for **some** people

I. Mmm

T1. But then there will **always** be people that want to see an **aggressive** approach to the ( ) The older **we** get, the more changes we've seen, by

T2. Mmm

T1. As you say, slowly slowly catchee monkey, it's it's a more a more erm **natural** progression in a way

I. Yeh

T1. **Soaps** have played a good **role** in that

T2. The only point in **controversy**, I think you'll find controversy done in **plays**. Gay, transgendered people and any other people 'oo are not in the mainstream of society, er plays that 'ave been written by individuals. I don't think it's the place for erm, soaps will bring an issue up, throw a few issues, gay issues, whatever issues and then they'll glide it away with lovely storylines

T1. How do you see *Casualty*, is *Casualty* a soap?

I. No. Soaps are very specifically defined, aren't they? They go on for ever, tech.. theoretically

T1. Mmm

I. Well that's the way the genre is constructed, like

T2. Yeh

I. They're not you know, they're not a series and they could theoretically go on for ever

T2. Uh huh

I. And they're often in real time, sort of thing

T2. Yeh

I. They often, they used to be focused on women audiences, they are no longer really, erm and they're all multi perspective, thing

T1. What I was gonna say

I. Infinite

T1. *Casualty*, over a period of fourteen **years**, has made so many **positive** images, for minority groups

I. Mmm

T2. Where they started off in a **negative** way, and 'ave become more (positive?)

T1. And certainly *Casualty*, dealing it with **transvestism** and **homosexuality**,

I. Yeh

T2. Yeh

T1. Went from a **negative**, to a complete **positive**, and that and that has a big influence

I. Yeh

T1. 'Cos it has a large viewing audience, and it's been going for what, twelve, fourteen years?

T2. I think that transgender people've got '**Hayley**' a lot to thank for, even tho' it's, repeatin' myself, it's not the mage that we want, but that she certainly introduced the general public to a fairly good image of it, in a very erm soft image of it

I. You said earlier though that the BBC, the company, not the BBC obviously, the company, had just talked to one person and got a lot of views from one person

T1. Yes

I. And when they constructed that character

T1. Yes. The original script writers, the original script writer for the erm the erm *Coronation Street*, erm bringin' in a transsexual **character**, for six episodes

I. Mmm

T1. And it wasn't until the second or the third episode that the character would be exposed as trans**sexual**.

I. Mmm

T1. But the person that they spoke to, for their background **information**, is somebody that the transgender community **itself** views with suspicion, because of 'er motives

I. Right

T1. But she herself was **not** a transgendered person, but had set 'erself **up** as a counsellor for transsexual people

I. Right

T1. She seemed to be ..er pushing **men** to become **women** because she had a bad experience with 'er **husband**

I. Oh

T1. And so she was trying to turn men into **women**

I. Right

T1. ( ) to succeed [laughs]

I. Right. So was she – the person that *Press for Change*

T1. No

I. Nothing to do with that? And then they later communicated with them, did they?

T1. *Press for Change*... **activists**, complained to the makers of *Coronation Street*, and then when later **they** were brought in as consultants for the transsexual storyline. There are still some storylines that were not **accurate**, so however much information the writers were given, they still went their own way.

I. Right. Well look, I mean I've come to the end and I want to thank you ever so much for giving me this time; it's fantastic

T1. You're **welcome** dear

I. You've been very helpful to me; I really appreciate it , and making me welcome. I really enjoyed meeting you. Thanks

T2. Good

I. Did you want to add anything or

T4. Not really no. It's surprising the soaps **lead** public opinion. They don't just sit back and follow. On one occasion there was a gay male gay er relationship on twenty odd years ago, er

T2. 'Colin' and 'Barry'

T4. That's **right** yeh. yeh

T2. That was the first

T2. That was **very very early**

I. That was wasn't it



T1. A very brave move to take

T2. Very controversial. Very ( ) times

Other Researcher: Back then, you know, the issue was that gay men always got HIV and died, that was the kind of thing that always happened

I. And he didn't

T2. No

I. It seemed like something was going to happen like that and it didn't

T2. It didn't, and thank **god** it didn't, because, you know, it was really boring going

T1. Again

K Going through that storyline again

T1. If – the characters were were in *EastEnders* for a number of months, **before** they were exposed as gay

T2. Yeh

T1. So the characters had had a chance to build up with the **audience**, first

Other Researcher: You know things have definitely sped up, now erm relationships in soaps last an average about four months? And you know er, like *EastEnders* is on three times a week, so by Friday night, you could have started a relationship and ended a relationship by Friday night can't you, I mean it's **terrible**

I. Yeh. One thing I didn't actually specify was bisexuality; I mean do we ever see any representations of bisexuality do you think on soaps

T1. People aren't **comfortable** with bisexuality

T2. Yeh

T1. It's a taboo subject still. There are some people **changing** their sexuality which might be reflected in bisexuality, like there's a guy in erm *Family Affairs* I think er called 'Max, an' 'e's **married**, an e's found a black er er black **boyfriend**, and 'e's, 'e's fathered **children**, and er and that's causing good rel... er good soap, because it's stress between er lookin' after the family and movin' in with 'is **boyfriend**, and so it's pulling from the - from both ways so that's obviously good entertainment

I. So do you think they're making him be bisexual, or are they making him appear to be gay, or

T2. No They're tryin' to make 'im **straight**, actually.

T4. [Laughs]

T2. Er but 'e's moving towards 'is boyfriend, 'e's gonna move out

T4. In *Coronation Street* as well

Other Researcher: Bisexuality, it really **is the last frontier** isn't it?

I. Yeh

Other Researcher: 'Cos no-one understands it still,

T2. No

Other Researcher: It scares

[From here all talk at once and it is only possible to get some of the words and not always who said them]

( ) It's alright.... an awful lot,

I. Somebody else kissed 'Nick', [about 'Nick' in *Coronation Street* being desired by 'Todd'. 'Todd' kissed 'Nick' when he was asleep]

T2. We're all bisexual creatures whether we open the door to it's another thing... It's complicated. It gets complicated

T3. Maybe the scandal...It's never discussed is it? Never ever discussed

N Talking loudly Why do you think it is then, that they don't – I mean we have all these controversial things, and they're either, well we've had trans, we've had gay and lesbian, they've never actually **named** a bisexual, dealt with bisexuality. Do you think, why do you think that is?

Other Researcher: 'Cos I don't think we can get a hook on it, can we, I mean we've got a hook on everything else

T2. I suppose it could be, the

T3. Pleasure ( ) the notion of pleasure

T2. Pleasure [talking at the same time as K]

T3. The audience can't take that,

T2. It's the ultimate in promiscuous.

T3. The audience can't take that

T2. You've, not only do you want gay side of the cake, or the straight side of the cake, you want it all [laughs]. When you walk in a room you've got two chances of pullin', like Woody Allen says

[Laughter]

T3. Woody Allen yeh

T1. Sure of a date on Saturday night

[Laughter]

T2. Choice of everyone in the room, no problem

( ) Greedy

[More laughter and talking all at once]

I. Well look, that's fantastic, thank you, and it hasn't run out. Hope not

Code

( ) indecipherable

[ ] my addition

/ upward tone ie tag questions

..... Pause

**Bold Type:** Emphasis in tone

**Bold Type:** Emphasis in tone

## Appendix 3.9

### Interview Questions

What do you remember about the social movements/ political movements?

Probe: 60s and 70s.

What did you think of them? Is there anything in soaps that reminds you of them?

When did you first watch soaps?

Which ones do you watch now?

Do you watch them on your own or with others? In the past?

Probe: Which soaps?

How do you think that relationships are represented?

What do you think about how:

lesbians

gay men,

transgendered people are represented?

Probe: bisexuals if not mentioned.

Are they realistic?

Can you identify with any of them?

Probe: What do you remember about these episodes?

Having seen these episodes do you think they change audience views?

Probe: how?

Do you talk about the characters and storylines with friends, etc?

Probe: What do they think about them?

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