“Leaving masculinity at the car door”: Dogging, Men and Couples

Introduction

It seems like that every week we are confronted by stories about dogging; ‘Doggers hitting double trouble; fave sex spot's off limits during darts’, ‘Crackdown on kinky couples getting frisky and leaving “sex litter” in picturesque nature reserve’, ‘Paedophile rapist sold his victim at dogging sites’. In fact, on average, between 2014 and 2016, the UK press covered a dogging related incident at least once every three days. It is not clear how many people participate in dogging but the popular www.dogging.co.uk states that it has over 550,000 (and growing) worldwide members and identifies over 3,000 dogging locations in the UK. Furthermore, dogging has appeared in a number of films including Dogging a Love Affair and documentaries, notably Channel Four’s Dogging Tales and has emerged as a definitive genre in pornography and erotic literature (Ashford, 2012a). Alongside this, over the past decade, a number of celebrities and well known sportsman have been caught participating in dogging that have garnered widespread media attention (Hennelly, 2010). Whilst dogging appears to have caught the English cultural imagination, multiple discourses of excitement, danger, humour and disgust appear to be instrumental in producing cultural ambivalence and uncertainty. At one moment, dogging points to an exotic world of sexual hedonism that is at the edge (but in reach of) everyday ‘ordinary’ life, whilst at another moment, such practices trouble the hegemony of familial heterosexual culture and the normativity of emotional and sexual coupledom (Jamieson, 2004).

People who practice ‘Dogging’ often describe it as a cross between a kind of cruising for straight people and an online form of traditional sex contact magazines. Bell succinctly explains that (2006: 388) ‘Typically, a dogging scene involves heterosexual singles and
couples driving to secluded locations, and engaging in sexual acts in their cars or in a nearby open space. Other participants at the scene may watch the action, or may ask or be invited to participate. ‘Walking the dog’ in this sense operates as an excuse or a form of ‘social camouflage’ for men watching or engaging in sexual activity with men and women (Maines, 2001). Couples who are parked up engaging in sex are often called ‘parkers’ and those who are watching from the outside are often termed ‘doggers’, ‘peekers’ or ‘pikers’. Despite the increasing attention that dogging receives, there continues to be a shortage of empirical research in the area. Furthermore, given the fact that the majority of participants appear to be men there, is even less research on the interplay between dogging and gender. In response this article addresses this lack of knowledge by providing an insight into the cultural world of dogging focusing on its sexual etiquette, rituals and practices. At the same time, by exploring the micro-negotiations of dogging, this article explores how men’s gendered identities are configured. More specifically, this article suggests that dogging provides a space where men’s sexual practices may operate outside of conventional cultural dynamics that underpin heterosexual masculinities; dogging presents the possibility of de-subjectification of gendered identifications (Foucault et al, 2012; Agamben, 1999). It achieves this by first by examining recent developments in the field of masculinity and in particular notions of hetero-flexibility.

The after a brief discussion of the methodological approach, the article examines the micro-negotiation of dogging encounters with a specific focus on the sexual etiquette of making contact and the gendered nature of sexual activity.

*Understanding Dogging: Men, Masculinity and Heterosexuality*

One of the earliest pieces of research on dogging was carried out by Byrne (2003, 2004, 2006) whose focus was on how park managers were dealing with the practice. In 2003 he argues, based on a survey with 33 park managers who were responsible for 251 parks, that ‘dogging’
activity was on an increasing trajectory with at least 60% of parks being used for public heterosexual sex. He also undertook interviews with 10 male doggers whose age ranged from 25-55, were white and were classed as skilled manual or white collar workers (Byrne, 2006). Although the interview material itself isn’t drawn upon, he suggests that dogging is about the ‘provisioning sexual needs’.

Byrne’s research was in carried out with the aim of addressing public nuisance and other research on dogging has taken up a similar theme (See for example, Johnson, K. 2007; Johnson, P. 2007; Ashford, 2012a, 2012b). It should be added that dogging isn’t technically breaking the law, it is only when alarm and distress is caused to those witnessing sexual activity, do statutory provisions around exposure, voyeurism, public order and anti-social behaviour come into play (Ashford, 2012b). Dogging has also been examined by cultural theorists and social geographers who have mapped out the interplays between sexual practices, space and technology. Bell (2006) for example suggests that it is the coming together of communication and transport technologies create dogging possibilities where technologies and their associated histories such as sex, contraceptives, cars, homes, mobile phones, the internet and the huddledog (human –plus – dog lead- plus – dog) exist as amalgams that produce complex configurations of public / private space. Similar work on the spatial nature of dogging is Bonnett (2016) who devotes a short chapter on dogging in his collection of essays on spaces (see also Little, 2007). However, such cultural analysis do not explore the actual practice of dogging, or the gendered and sexual subjectivities through which dogging activities are understood.

Through interviews with men who practice dogging, this article offers an alternative understanding of masculinity within sexual contexts. Historically, those working in the field of masculinity studies have suggested that a key resource for the formation of masculinity has been the performance of heterosexuality and the rejection of homosexuality (Mac an Ghaill
and Haywood, 2007; Pascoe, 2007; Messerschmitt, 2010; Duncanson, 2015). For example, Michael Kimmel (2005:39) suggests that masculinity operates through coding of identities and practices as feminine, as a result, masculine identities are structured through a heterosexuality that creates its stability through the rejection of that which is feminine (read as homosexual). “…that the reigning definition of masculinity is a defensive effort to prevent being emasculated”. As a result, men adopt sexual performances that reinforce their heterosexual masculinities and reject sex that is associated with homosexuality. However, more recently Ward (2015) suggests that hetero-masculinity can also reinforce itself through men’s participation in homosexual acts and explores the idea of straight men having same sex relations. She introduces a concept of the ‘heteroflexible’ in a way where those behaviours that are traditionally associated with homosexuality such as anal sex, are used to re-inforce heterosexual identities. Her main claim is that “…homosexual encounters are not in fact discordant with heterosexual masculinity when they are approached through the most recognizable circuits of hetero-masculinity” ibid. 189. Sexual hazing by men of other men in military institutions is one example of this.

A similar position can be found around work on inclusive masculinity. This work describes the ways in which young men’s heterosexual masculinities are not problematized by their engagement in same-sex intimacy (Anderson, 2008; McCormack, 2012). Anderson and Robertson (2016: 251-252) make a useful distinction between that of sexual fluidity and that of flexibility: ‘We articulate the difference between fluid (being able to change in sexual orientation) and flexible heterosexual men who engage in same-sex behaviors without being sexually attracted to males’. In a discussion of ‘threesomes’, Anderson and Robertson suggest that when men have sex with men and women during a Threesome, they are operating within a heterosexual framework and as such could be seen as part of a ‘liminal state where sexual
diversity occurs’ (ibid. 257). In effect their heterosexual status remains untroubled and as a result their masculinity remains intact. The suggestion here is that the parameters of heterosexual masculinity become widened to include sexual practices that would conventionally trouble claims to heterosexuality and in effect, fact masculinity. Cover’s (2015) research on the website Chaturbate, an online forum that involves straight identified men garnering the attention of gay men. His work highlights heterosexually identified men engaging in acts that are associated with gay men such as self-penetration. Cover suggests that although we are unable to disconnect heterosexuality from practices, there is scope he argues for heterosexual masculinity to be unhinged from the normative discourses that surround the identity. The practice of self-penetration for example removes the association from self-penetration as a gay identity activity and re-situates it within a variation of heterosexual masculinity. Cover argues that rather than reinforce hetero-masculinities and the notions of dominance and power through patriarchy, rather the site deconstructs ‘innate heterosexualities and homosexualities as distinct sexual orientations, allowing identity to remain but in non-monolithic, heterodoxical forms’. (2005: 14-15). Thus rather than reinforce hetero-masculinities, Cover argues that new forms of sexual practice enable hetero-homo binaries to be ‘challengeable’. There is not Cover argues the emergence of newer forms of heterosexual masculinity, rather the practices on Chaturbate are illustrative of the loosening of the normative parameters that underpin heterosexual masculinity. Therefore, online acts of self-penetration has the potential to produce different structures of masculinity that are not dependent on strict hetero-homo binaries.

The studies outlined above around flexibility tend to view non-heterosexual practices as cohered through masculinity. This article uses such work as a point of departure and build upon Ashford’s (2012b) idea that casual sex may provide a counterpoint to dominant heterosexual
masculinities. More specifically, when looking at men’s sexual activities, there is the potential to draw upon Judith Butler’s suggestion that ‘To keep the term gender apart from both masculinity and femininity is to safeguard a theoretical perspective by which one might offer an account of how the binary of masculine and feminine comes to exhaust the semantic field of gender’ (p.42). According to Butler (2004), this entails thinking about the ways that gender has become proliferated, where gender operates beyond the binaries of the feminine and the masculine. It is argued that work on masculinity studies tends to reinforce the centrality of masculinity as an organizing frame of men’s subjectivities as sexual activities become incorporated within men’s identifications. In other words, regardless of whether men’s identities are fluid or flexible, sexual activity remains cohered through a masculinity, albeit in an expanded form. In other words, there doesn’t appear to be the theoretical or conceptual possibility of understanding men’s behaviour outside of the identity category of masculinity. In response, this article takes up Butler’s notion of keeping ‘gender apart from masculinity’ as a mechanism to capture the gendered nature of dogging. In short, it is suggested that there is a need to think about men’s gendered identifications and practices that are not reducible or cohered by the identity category of masculinity.

**Methodology**

The research for this article is part of a broader project exploring the how men are negotiating new forms of dating, including speed dating, online dating, holiday romances and mobile dating (Author, 2018). It is responds to Monaghan and Robertson’s (2012: 147) call for more research on heterosexual men “on issues ranging from transformations of intimacy, gendered identity constructions, the social aspects of the body, the emotions, rationalisation and the impact of abstract knowledge systems in an age of new (postfeminist) media’. In doing so, the article draws upon experiences of twelve men aged from 24 to 55 who have experienced at
least one dogging episode over the last six months. Data was collected over a period of three months of November 2015 to January 2016 from a range of internet forums that were specifically aimed at the dogging community. The participants within these forums were chosen because they contained an: ‘explicitly biased sample with particular characteristics (often at the extremes of a continuum) that are salient to the focus of the study (Hultsch et al, 2002: 346). A critical filter in the sampling process was the focus on men who identified as heterosexual. An initial sweep of the site indicated that there were many hundreds of potential participants so a further filter narrowed the sample pool down to those who had been online in the last week and were in 50 mile proximity to the researcher. These participants were then emailed and invited to take part in an online, telephone or face-to-face interview. Participants were also sent details of the project, areas of discussion, an informed consent sheet. Out of 42 potential participants, 18 agreed to be involved, however due to the non-completion of interviews, the final sample used here was 12. It is important to emphasise that this is an exploratory study which does not seek inductive validity by suggesting that the participants represent the experiences of a broader male population (Crouch and McKenzie, 2006).

Out of twelve participants nine agreed to undertake telephone interviews, two preferred face-to-face and one opted for an online interview. The research echoed the work of Drabble et al (2016) whose the telephone interview focussed on ensuring that there was an effective rapport and ongoing connection with the participants, the demonstration of care and concern for the participant’s point of view and ensuring that the participant was aware of how their contribution could be understood in terms of the emerging analysis. At the same time, Barlow et al (2005) suggest that the lack of non-verbal cues can make it difficult to gauge the strength and depth of feeling in answers. However, this was somewhat offset by how the telephone and online interview appeared to give the participants a sense of anonymity and many of the men spoke
freely about a range of sensitive topics. Telephone interviews appeared to give the researcher the capacity to challenge participant’s responses and question their claims by expressing doubt and disbelief towards their answers. The face-to-face interviews were carried out at a dogging location and one of the participants’ homes. It appeared that the face-to-face interviews appeared to be more than a simple retelling of sexual stories. In previous research on speed dating, it was highlighted that the interview itself can recreate a ‘dating scenario’ where masculinities become entwined in the research process (Author et al, 2013). It could be argued interviews have the potential to reproduce gendered inequalities as men forge trust through misogynistic and homophobia (Schwalbe and Wolkomir, 2001). There is little space here to explore how the interviews became sexualized space but it needs to be recognised that interviews as the negotiation of masculine subjectivities that are (dis) located across traditional and contemporary gendered identity formations. The data emerging from the interviews were subject to thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) that enabled the exploration of ‘…the underlying ideas, constructions, and discourses that shape or inform the semantic content of the data’ (Ussher et al, 2013:3). All interviews throughout the study were anonymized and the research participants were given pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality. The research was subject to ethical protocols of outlined in the ethical approval by Newcastle University.

**Sexual Etiquette and Managing Risk**

One of the key questions that underpinned the research was to understand how the men came to know about dogging. The participants explained that their introduction to the practice tended to come from watching online pornography or participating in online forums, reading through newspaper reports, listening to friends or accidentally witnessing dogging behaviours. A further question concerned why they participated in dogging. Interestingly, those men in relationships (7 married and two non-married out of 12) explained that they had really good sex lives and
that their partners were very attractive. However, they pointed out that in contrast to the mundanity of the coupledom, going out dogging was far more sexually exciting. All of the participants pointed out that a key part of the excitement involved the process of making connections with others. According to Rutter and Schwartz (2012: 134) there is little guidance on how to initiate a relationship that goes beyond narratives of heteronormativity, domesticity and heteronormative coupledom (Ashford, 2012b). Thus men who engaged in dogging had to deploy strategies to manage and negotiate the potential risk and unknowability of the situation. Dogging usually occurs in semi-rural spaces such as the car parks at nature reserves, recreational parks or picnic areas, country lanes and lay-bys. Dogging usually takes place in the evening or at night and this enabled a series of sexual signs or what Ashford refers to as ‘undercover sex signals’ to be deployed. As Dave explained:

Dave: Oh yes there are signs, more like rules…there are all sorts of messages that you can do when you are in the car like, use your indicators or flash your lights, I’m not clear on the rules but it is something like flash your lights if you are interested, turn your inside light on to invite people to watch, undo your window to invite people in.

As with gay cruising it appears to be unacceptable to be directly and immediately involved in sexual activity, rather participation in the practice has to be negotiated (Flowers et al. 2000). As a result, the sexual encounter involves a series of micro-negotiations and subtle gestures that require some skill in reading and establishing the willingness of a couple to participate. It became apparent that the unknowability, the potential risk and danger associated with establishing a sexual liaison was also a source of excitement. For Jay, his committed monogamous relationship restricted the ways that he is allowed to be sexual and the process of
dogging has become part of an ongoing exploration of his sexual self. Asked why he went dogging Jay replies:

Jay: Well it is kind of dark and mysterious is in it, you don’t know what you are going to get most of the time, you don’t know much about the location, you know the location, you know where they are but you don’t know what’s gonna be there in the evening. Part of it probably is a risk of being caught. I don’t really want to get caught, and I don’t think anybody really wants to get caught, especially if it is by the police or something, I am not sure still not sure what the legal ramifications are. I’m pretty sure that it is not going to be good for my career. It is just the unknown element.

For Brian, the unknowability also becomes a key part of the experience of dogging. His approach to dogging is more opportunist and the risk of being caught by his wife means that he tends not to rely on organizing meets online. He worries that his wife will discover his search histories and highlights the anxiety of leading what he calls a double life. At the same time, the unknown, not knowing what to expect becomes an important aspect of the excitement of the practice. Brian explains:

Brian: You go there, you are shaking, you are feeling sick from the excitement, you are looking and you are just, it is just intense, like the woman is doing what she wants to do, like the way she wants it. And like if she wants it rough she gets it rough, it’s just intense, it’s like, I can’t describe it, it is like an addiction and like you have got to have it but after you’ve done it you think I am fucking well not doing that again, but the next day you’re out on it again, like a month ago I went to a place, I just wanted it so I went into the bushes and there was a guy there I got my pants down and I got what I wanted.
And then that was it. And afterwards I was thinking, why did I do that? It is just addictive, I just had to do it.

However, rather than see the pleasure of the scenario, afterwards Brian refers to the self-loathing and shame of the acts and his inability to control his desire. This sense of immediate shame, is described as being replaced by a ‘rising’ need for more sexual activity. Brian’s experience of shame of shame has resonance with contemporary models of sexual addiction (Kraus et al., 2016). Thus Brian’s introjected shame and his inability to stop this happening connects with a sense of failure that elided masculinity with happiness suggesting that ‘men aren’t supposed to do this if they are happy’.

At the dogging location, men tend to be guided by the couple to determine the nature of the sexual engagement. According to the participants this is a fragile moment in the negotiation of contact, as moving too quickly might alienate the couple, whereas not being active enough could prompt the couple to move on. I asked Barry if he witnessed men being too forward:

Barry: Oh aye, some of them just come up and bang on the window!

CH: No, surely not…

Barry: Aye, aye, I have seen it happen before I have been in here with a couple and they have been getting on with it, and I’ve been sitting and they will come up [the men], the belt will come off and his pants down and the couple will be like ‘fuck off’. But but as
a couple I always give them space, just respect the people who they are, diven’t get moving like a bull in a china shop, that just doesn’t work.

Ashford (2012b) draws our attention to Couture (2008: 32) who argues that: ‘…compared to gay public sex spaces, the heterosexual space can be slower and a more difficult space to navigate, with a hierarchy that places the single man as inferior to the couple, who are in turn inferior to the (rare) single woman. This hierarchy reflects the supply and demand of the swinging environment and is inevitably also replicated in the dogging space’. This provides the context for the dogging scenario as according to the participants, women’s sexual demands become central to the dogging experience. Furthermore, a number of the participants refused to engage in their own penile-centred satisfaction. This problematizes earlier work in the field that suggests that men identify with a ‘masculine model’ of sexuality that is underpinned by a notion of ‘naturalization’ (Tiefer, 1995), where sexual performance and competence is intrinsically connected to men’s self-concept. As a result, ‘…sex is linked to masculine accomplishment, self-esteem and identity, possibilities of sexual inadequacy become linked to masculine inadequacy’ (Farvid and Braun, 2006:.297-298). However, the cultural notion of sexual competence was at the same time, questioned by a number of the men.

Chris: What about cumming and performance, had you feel about that?

Jay: I don’t have a problem when I come, if I come quickly it is no big deal. I mean I do not do it as a bravado thing, look I can go this long, I can keep going, I can keep going and if it feels good and I wanna come, then I will come. You know there are some people consider the competition, a bit of a performance, to show everyone how big the man is, but for me it’s about enjoying yourself. I mean they may enjoy themselves when
they’re doing this performance but it’s the performance is the pleasure rather than the sex.

Jay highlights that some men are narcissistic and take pleasure in their own performance rather than the sex, however all of the participants challenged the importance of performance. Rather they reflexively draw out and emphasize their own sexual fallibility and question the assumptions that performance is necessary to cohere a masculine subjectivity. In other words, the participants did not appear to make draw upon a competent sexual performance to sustain a masculinity. Instead, the participants were reluctant to draw upon gender in order to explain their experiences, suggesting that their gendered subjectivities were not on the dependant on the performance of a masculinity identity. It is this emerging sense of gendered subjectivity that was not dependent upon the coherency of a masculinity that is explored further.

**From sexual identities to moments of pleasure: Negotiating the Gender - Desire Imperative**

When arriving at the dogging scene the men more often than not found mostly men present. Even when a meet was arranged online with a couple, the men reported that invariably the couple would very rarely turn up. Furthermore, the participants also pointed out that when women were present they were usually accompanied by another man. Therefore, dogging cannot simply be framed as simply a heterosexual practice but rather seems to suggest a more complex scenario. All the men in this research publicly identified as heterosexual, but highlighted the limitation of this descriptive category when participating in dogging. In the interviews the men identified a range of sexual activities that fall outside of conventional forms of heterosexuality that included same sex behaviours such as kissing, mutual masturbation, BDSM, oral sex, rimming, DV, DB and anal sex. The often under-reported aspect of dogging
is that for these participants, sexual activity with men was far more common than sex between men and women. Therefore, it became evident that whilst their public identity was a projection of a consistency between gender and sexuality (Bertone and Camoleto, 2009), when they participated dogging, such consistency became fractured.

This returns us to the underlying focus of the article which is how do heterosexually identified men engage in sexual activities with men and women. What is intriguing is that given the heterosexual context of the couple, rather than incorporate their behaviour flexibly into a masculinity or develop an expanded sense of masculinity, the participants dispensed with recounting their experiences as a gendered performance. Instead, the erotic experience was not explained through the (dis)identification with a particular masculinity identities and through an appeal to ‘moments of pleasure’. More specifically, the participants suggested a context where both the conventional dynamics of masculinity and sexuality identity models, not only become destabilized but it could be argued, discarded. Instead, there is an appeal to ‘sex’ to explain the practice:

John: It is a question of what sex am I going to get. It is purely that, it is purely that.

And the mystique and the mystery of somebody that you have never seen before, that you might end up with, that is it.

Thus, this sexual activity, the pleasure of the activity became the dominant narratives that the men drew upon to explain their sexual activity with men and women. This experience resonates with Foucault’s (1979) notion of bodies and pleasures and it is argued there that men engage who engaged in dogging had erotic experiences in ways that were not cohered through either
masculinity or sexuality models of identity. For example, Jay talked about dogging as part of the unknown:

Jay : What is it I like? Well I don’t know, I just like being intimate with someone, the situation the… the situation, of... Having some fun with someone that you don’t really know. You know, it is excitement isn’t it? Something new, gets you going, gives you the buzz, I suppose.

The participants’ accounts have parallels with Rebak and Larkins (2010) who carried out interviews with 21 heterosexual identified men who have sex with men. In order to cohere same sex behaviour within their heterosexuality, the men in their study characterised their sexual relations through its infrequency, as being recreation or sport, as accidental or through economic necessity. Thus Rebak and Larkins identify a series of distancing strategies are used to maintain their heterosexual identities. This process of compartmentalizing sexual practices took a number of forms, in particular there was a depersonalizing of the partners. This involved not discussing the partner in intimate terms and refraining from activities for example avoiding kissing or hugging. This reluctance to engage intimacy and emotional expressiveness, it is argued resulted in the men being able to maintain their masculine identities.

With the men who went dogging, the refusal to code their behaviours through a masculinity was not to protect or defend their own identificatory frameworks in order avoid emotional intimacy, but was used rather to intensify it. These men’s experiences of dogging were similar to the men discussed in Holmes et al (2010) study of the glory hole. Using Deleuze and Guatarri they argue that in the ‘glory hole’ experience visual cues and social conventions are absent. As a result, they suggest that “Users may feel liberated not only form the social roles and
expectations dictated by a predominantly heterosexual world, but also from the codes of the gay world, many of which assign a high priority on youth, physical fitness, and the conventional markers of masculinity’. They suggest that sexual identities at the glory hole can be suspended or emerge in hybrid forms. In the case of dogging the de-gendered nature of the experience appeared to operate as a space for a different kind of sexual pleasure, as Moorsey points out:

I love the idea of alfresco sex and the heart thumping thrill of being seen. But I’m a total voyeur and love watching sex full stop.

And does it matter whether you are having sex with a man or a woman?

The gender doesn’t come into it, cock, cunt I enjoy it all! You lose yourself in the moment. You don’t know who the fuck you are or who you are fucking! Who cares?

In an interview with Michel Foucault, Le Bitoux discussed the anonymity of the body in gay bathhouses and how this could facilitate experiences beyond identity and as a result operate in subversive ways. Foucault took the point up and suggested that:

It is simply regrettable that there are not places like this for heterosexuality. After all, why wouldn’t it be something rather marvellous for heterosexuals who wanted to be able to do something like that, in the middle of the day or night, to go to a place equipped with every comfort and every possibility (laughs), all the well-being you could imagine? To encounter bodies that are both present and fleeting? Places where you desubjectivize yourself, that is, you desubjugate yourself in a way that is, I’m not
saying the most radical, but in any case in a way that is intense enough so that this moment is, in the end, important.

The claim here is that in the space of dogging there is a process of desubjectivization as the mechanisms that interiorise the sexual as demonstrative of masculinity appear to be suspended. The anonymity of the encounter corresponds with Foucault’s claim that: ‘The intensities of pleasure are indeed linked to the fact that you desubjugate yourself, that you cease being a subject, an identity’. Instead, there is pleasure, disconnected from desire, that is facilitated through the absence of a normative subjectivity (Allen and Brown, 2016). However, the process is not a straightforward replacement of the construction of the subject, with destruction. Drawing upon Agamben, Jones (2008) points out that desubjetification is always a subjectification as the process of cancellation facilitates a residual presence. Agamben himself suggests that in the process of desubjectuification, something always remains. In the context of dogging, this residual of the subject can be seen in the language that participants used to describe their encounters. In order to negotiate this sexual space, men had to draw upon existing sexuality language in order to explain how they felt. For example, when I asked James about negotiating his sexual identity with family and friends and then when dogging, “My friends do not have a clue, I would say that I’m hetero but I have a very strong bi- side when I start getting horny”. The dislocation of the sexual practice from sexual identity suggests that the dogging space may be the location for the opening up of alternative erotic possibilities that are constrained through sexuality and masculinity identity models, but importantly can only be articulated in relation to those models. More specifically, these practices do not stand outside of the social and cultural milieu as pre-meaningful (Lacquer, 1990; Williams, 2002). Fundamentally the erotic does not (fully / if not yet) stand outside unrelated to the regulatory regime of a conventional genders and sexualities. They are imbricated within them and such
regulatory regimes facilitate identificatory departures in the form of de-subjectified erotic experiences. In short, if there is no language for the practice, do you create new language, or reconfigure the existing one? (see, Ritchie and Barker, 2006 in relation to polyamory). In the dogging scenario, it is argued that existing language provides the possibilities through which an alternative forms of male subjectivity can be lived out.

**Conclusion**

The article has aimed to provide some tentative empirically-led insights into dogging and the relationship between dogging and men’s subjectivities. This article has briefly touched on how men come to be involved in dogging and why they participate and focusses mainly the micro-negotiations that take place during the dogging encounter and how such tentativeness carries an erotic charge. However, it is not surprising given the lack of research, that there have up until now, been empirically informed discussions of men’s experiences of dogging. This article suggests that men may not be making sense of their experience of dogging through their everyday notions of manhood; a separation of men’s gendered subjectivities from masculinity. Instead, there may be a suspension of the gendered identity templates through a process of de-subjectification. Given that the usual gender rules do not apply in this space, it is argued that dogging raises major questions about sexual health interventions that have embedded within them notions of masculinity especially in relation to targeting ‘men who have sex with men’. Furthermore, dogging raises questions about legitimate sexual citizenship and the acceptability of alternative erotic experiences.

A number of limitations surround this research such as the sample size, the lack of direct observations and the lack of follow-up interviews. Perhaps one of the main limitations of the work is the absence of women’s voices. This is especially significant given the political
implications of suggesting a masculine subjectivity that may not be configured through a ‘masculinity’. Judith Butler points to the political ramifications in that a refusal of gender and sexuality results in the inadequacy of the tools that are used to make sense of social justice such as heteronormativity. Thus, in a response to Foucault’s suggestion to challenge the interiority of desire and instead think about the erotic through bodies and pleasures, Butler argues that such an approach ‘…works in the service of maintaining a compulsory ignorance, and where the break between the past and the present keeps us from being able to see the trace of the past as it re-emerges in the very contours of an imagined future’. The importance of women’s experiences and understandings of dogging are critical for the development of our understanding of the practice and crucial for developing our understanding of masculinity. It is an area where future research may begin to develop.

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