

narratives (Hayes-Conroy 2010). While there were enticing potentials in using online spaces for festival fieldwork (specifically potentials in rendering strong research relations, while faced with tyrannies of time and distance), pilot methodologies highlighted the limitations of online social platforms like Facebook in exploring the embodied dimensions of return journeys to events, and the indispensability of face-to-face fieldwork for both feminist and mobility scholars. While there are drawbacks in using social media spaces for fieldwork, such spaces hold potential to heighten intimate research relations when used in combination with more orthodox face to face methodologies – discussed in greater depth below, as part of *Online storytelling*.

As the following sections share, I continued to face challenges with the Mardi Gras fieldwork despite having undertaken pilot research. I want to suggest, however, that preliminary research was invaluable. Little is known in regards to potential implications of festival research. It was thus imperative to explore potential difficulties that may occur. Through Big Day Out and Groovin' the Moo I learnt what could and could not be achieved during festival time/space; particularly highlighting the importance of conducting the majority of research before and after events rather than during, and the limitations and possibilities of online spaces for methodologies positioned at the intersection of mobilities, tourist and sexualities studies, and feminist geography.

5.3 Participant recruitment & profiles

In consideration of lessons learnt through the pilot fieldwork, three recruitment processes were incorporated for Mardi Gras research. First, a survey monkey was uploaded in August 2012, eight months before Mardi Gras Parade 2013. The survey, however, met limited success. There was a lack of interest online at this time. Not even the official Mardi Gras website had been updated from the previous year. For this reason, secondly, prioritising the importance of establishing early contact (as was found to be imperative through Groovin' the Moo), I decided to undertake a targeted sampling strategy, contacting queer collectives across Australia (Mardi Gras 2013) and New Zealand (Mardi Gras 2014) directly through Facebook and email. Initial contact involved introducing myself, providing background to the research, and asking if there

were plans to attend Mardi Gras. A participant information sheet³⁶, which detailed the research aims and practices, was included in each initial contact. A snowballing methodology was used to recruit through the social networks of the targeted sample. Key contacts were asked if they knew additional individuals planning to attend Mardi Gras that might be interested in participating. If they did, contact details were exchanged through the key contact. Initial contact was again through Facebook or email, with the participant information sheet included in initial contact. In the case of Shepparton, recruitment differed slightly in its delivery. Here, in addition to snowball sampling through the key contact, a market stall was utilised for recruitment at the annual Out in the Open Festival, a Pride awareness festival organised by the queer collective, GV Pride.

Despite immense planning through piloted methodologies, Mardi Gras recruitment met its own challenges. The week leading up to Mardi Gras Parade, for example, corresponded with Orientation Week³⁷ at many Australian universities. Due to the limited ability to conduct fieldwork at an alternative time, the clash led some choosing to decline fieldwork participation. Orientation Week also decreased the availability of those still wishing to participate. For instance, the president of SAFE (Sexuality, Acceptance, Freedom and Equality, a queer collective associated with LaTrobe Universities Bendigo campus), Ben, was incredibly busy with a number of Orientation Week responsibilities. Upon meeting in Bendigo during Orientation Week, two days before Mardi Gras Parade, it was evident he was exhausted. While Ben happily assisted with recruiting three participants, and speaking informally about his own experiences, I was not comfortable to ask for further participation.

Snowball sampling is often utilised in research when the population under investigation is 'hidden', due either to low numbers of potential participants or the sensitivity of the topic (Browne 2005). Snowball sampling was thus productive in this research, in its potential to overcome difficulties in contacting individuals planning to

³⁶ See Appendix 3 for a copy of participant information sheet and Appendix 4 for copy of consent form.

³⁷ Orientation Week is the week before university classes begin in semester one and semester two. The aim of orientation week is to enable students to learn about the university and connect with other students.

attend Mardi Gras Parade living in a broad range of locations and social contexts. While snowball sampling is used extensively across the social sciences, it is not without limitations. Many of which I encountered; here I discuss two main interconnecting implications. First, snowball sampling enabled contact with participants who meet narrow recruitment criteria. While 'successful', this process potentially excluded those not belonging to formalised queer collectives. While snowballing did go beyond the boundaries of the support groups, the majority of participants did associate with a queer collective at the time of research (19 out of 24 participants identified as belonging to a collective contacted through targeted recruitment). Snowball recruitment therefore largely excluded individuals who chose to not, or could not, associate with such groups.

The second consideration stems through the dependence I placed on key contacts within groups. Where snowballing begins is significant to the formation of the sample (Browne 2005). Key contacts acted as 'gatekeepers', screening who I could access and ultimately assessing who was considered an 'appropriate' participant. Individuals were potentially excluded from the research, without my knowledge, due to the key contacts' perception of the research, potential participant, and myself.

Seeking to recruit individuals from a diversity of backgrounds, for instance, I reached out to Aids Council of New South Wales' (ACON) Aboriginal Project Team Leader, Meggan. Through online research I understood they were planning a large float for the 2013 Mardi Gras. Meggan responded to initial contact excitedly, stating she aimed to 'make this happen' and invited me along to the 'First Australians' Mardi Gras' working group' to facilitate recruitment. Between the initial email contact and the working group, however, Meggan resigned from the position, passing the role to another colleague, Matt. I only became aware of her resignation when arriving at the working group. With no context Matt, likewise, was not sure who I was. Upon meeting, Matt of course was primarily focused with negotiating his new role, and managing this initial workshop. The combination of all this created confusion and anxiety as to what I was attending for – being very much out of place as the only non-Indigenous person in the room. While Matt made every effort to introduce me, without much background to the

research his support could only be limited – members, in consequence were not too interested. Neither Matt nor those participating in the ‘First Australians’ Mardi Gras’ contacted me after my attending this meeting. Not wishing to generate additional stress for Matt in his new position, I did not communicate further with the group.

In contrast Damien of GV Pride illustrates how a first contact can assist not only recruitment, but also rigour. The power, trust and respect the key contact, Damien, held within this social network was evident in the numbers of individuals who agreed to take part in the research and also through the forthcoming stories participants shared from both formally in interviews, and informally through conversations (GV Pride forms the focus of Chapter 7, *Rethinking activism*). The trust Damien possessed was in part extended to me due to his overt enthusiasm for the research.

Such reliance on key contacts introduced partiality into the recruitment process, ultimately impacting the representational diversity of participants³⁸, and thus the narratives shared through this thesis. There is a strong representation of female voices (15 of 24 participants), for example. No participants identify as Indigenous. Only one participant identifies as Asian. The majority, rather, identify with either an Anglo Celtic, or Anglo European heritage. Participants range in age from early 20s to 40s, however the majority are in their twenties (18 of 24 participants). Participants live in a variety of situations and configurations. They have varying degrees of education and are employed in a range of occupations. They live in a myriad of places, where some have dwelled for their entire life, while others have moved temporarily. The overwhelming majority work full time, although occupations were a mix of service, white collar, blue collar and service occupations. Nine of twenty four participants were studying full time. While participants identified with a range of sexualities, the majority self-identified as queer, lesbian or gay, while one participant identified as bisexual and two participants identified as heterosexual. Previous Mardi Gras attendance varied; for some this was their first time, while others could no longer recall the many number of times they had travelled to Mardi Gras.

³⁸ See Appendix 5 for table of participant attributes.

Tourism can be a space of classed privilege, where neoliberal processes serve to exclude particular individuals (Puar 2002). Attending the Mardi Gras Parade is free, however, many of the events surrounding the parade are priced highly and travelling to and staying in Sydney during Mardi Gras can be a costly endeavour. Further to this, as detailed in Chapter 3, Mardi Gras itself is often accused of favouring promotional images of fun, young and middle class bodies (Best 2005); representations which may render some uncomfortable. Speaking with colleagues while undertaking this research I was consistently asked the extent to which a classed dimension influenced those who travelled. While a classed dimension may have existed, participants themselves did not describe their experiences in terms of class. I, therefore, have not sought to reify class discourses through the analysis and writing process. It is conceivable, however, that members who did not attend may have been excluded through economic dimensions.

Interestingly, both the Dykes on Bikes and GV Pride introduced measures to assist members. The Dykes on Bikes created payment plans beginning in the October before travel in March, where members were able to pay small weekly instalments for their travel costs. GV Pride advertised two sponsored packages to members between the ages of 18-30, which sought to cover nearly 50% of travel costs. To enter, members were required to answer in 300 words 'What would it mean for you to receive a \$250 sponsorship towards your \$550pp Mardi Gras weekend away payment?' This opportunity was advertised at meetings, on the group's Facebook page and in their newsletter. While some members between the ages of 18-30 attended the trip, no eligible members applied for the sponsorships. It thus remained unclaimed.

5.4 Recruitment limitations

Through the recruitment process certain voices are prioritised, while others overlooked. As outlined in Chapter 3, representations of Mardi Gras favour images of bodies as male, young, white, middle class and toned³⁹. Over time the dominance of

³⁹ Participants' attributes both reflect and trouble Mardi Gras' dominant representations. The majority of participants were young, Anglo, occupied occupational and educational positions that could be read as middle class, and identified as either lesbian, gay or queer. There was, however, a strong representation of female voices which worked against Mardi Gras' dominant representations of male bodies. The dominance of female voices may be in consequence to my own positionality as female.

these representations construct assumptions around the sorts of bodies thought to belong within the spaces of Mardi Gras. The dominance of these representations may allow some to feel more comfortable within the spaces of Mardi Gras, while others may come to feel excluded through their inhabitation with other(ed) subjectivities. This process may inform who finds meaning in undertaking return journeys to Mardi Gras. Focus on Mardi Gras, therefore, potentially privileges the experiences of individuals occupying the subjectivities of certain sexualities, genders, classes, ethnicities and sizes. David⁴⁰ (whose narrative forms the focus of Chapter 8), for example, spoke of the anxieties in preparing the body to belong in the lead up to Mardi Gras; where dominant representations of toned bodies forced David to negotiate his food and exercise practices. While David undertook preparations to change his body to ensure a sense of comfort once arriving, others may have felt alienated through this process, and in consequence 'chose' not to attend.

Enacting snowball recruitment through highly visible queer collectives may also privilege the voices of individuals who felt comfortable in 'publicly' inhabiting non-normative sexualities. Such comfort may shape how participants tell return journey narratives. This privilege potentially assists in explaining why participants framed journeys through narratives other than queer quests for identity affirmation – as discussed in Chapter 2, a crucial and prevailing narrative for same-sex attracted individuals (Gorman-Murray 2007b). If the role and meanings of Mardi Gras are always more than the event itself (as this thesis argues), then a doubling of exclusion is potentially produced for these bodies – subjects not only experience exclusion from not travelling to Mardi Gras, but are also inhibited from the potential longer term meanings and roles that may be derived from travel to Pride events, such as Mardi Gras.

What all this means is that certain other(ed) bodies may not be represented in this study. In attempting to curtail this limitation, researchers working at the intersection of

⁴⁰ See Appendix 5 for overview of member attributes. See Chapter 8 for detailed discussion of David's experiences of Mardi Gras.

sexualities, mobilities and festivals might benefit from examining the meanings of events for individuals inhabiting subjectivities often excluded through dominant representations of Pride events – such as non-Western bodies, working-class bodies and aged bodies. In rectifying this limitation future research may likewise seek to recruit participants who do not travel to Mardi Gras, or extend the empirical focus beyond this singular event. While addressing the above concerns is beyond the scope of this thesis, detailing these limitations generates impetus for continued investigation into the ways certain embodied subjectivities are privileged through dominant representations of Mardi Gras, enabling the movement of some, while producing the immobilities of others.

Having considered what was learnt from a ‘failed’ pilot methodology, as well as the recruitment process and limitations, I turn now to consider the implemented methodology. *Travel ethnographies* are comprised of mixed qualitative methods. Herein I grant specific attention, in turn, to the information rendered through each methodological approach – seeking to present a case as to justify this specific set of methodological tools is suitable for enlivening festivals research.

5.5 Travel ethnographies

5.5.1 Interviews

Over the last few years new qualitative methodologies have emerged in geography, including online storytelling and video and audio diaries. Such methods aim to overcome criticisms of more traditional methods by providing insight into different embodied and emotional dimensions in the field (Crang 2005). Importantly, while conventional methods are being passed over for contemporary approaches, many geographers are changing the ways conventional methods are being conceptualised and executed (Longhurst *et al.* 2008). Aiming to move beyond what can be interpreted through interview transcripts, for example, scholars are exploring the body-space relations that occur during interviews. With this perspective there is still much to be gained from using conventional methods, such as interviews.

For this research semi-structured interviews were conducted in the weeks before and after Mardi Gras Parade, in both 2013 and 2014. Interviews were favoured because of their conversational, fluid form and ability to explore the complexity and differences of individuals' unique interests and experiences (Bennett 2004). For both interviews, storytelling was loosely structured through five themes: planning, the outward journey, the event, the return journey and afterwards. The interviews aimed to follow topics of conversation largely determined by participants. Follow-up interviews also incorporated themes from participants' solicited diaries, alongside my own observant participation.

Ideally interviews involved only a participant and myself. Such an approach, however, was not always possible. On occasion others were invited by participants, with varying outcomes. While in Brisbane, for example, Julz and her partner offered me a lift to an interview with another Dyke on Bike member, Cat. The plan was that they would visit a nearby friend during the interview. On the way, however, their plans fell through, so they decided to join Cat and I. Earlier that day Julz had shared personal information about Cat's negative experience of Mardi Gras. Knowing this, I was in an awkward position; our conversation remained light and humorous. I was aware Cat was not being completely open, yet I did not feel comfortable shifting the narrative because others were present and I did not want to threaten the thrust between everyone involved.

A further example played out through a 'group interview' with heterosexual couple Georgia and Pat in Bendigo following the 2013 Mardi Gras. I had previously organised to just interview Pat, however, an hour before the interview I received a message asking if his partner, Georgia, could join. First timers to Mardi Gras they had a lot of unexpected experiences and opinions, bouncing off each other excitedly as they remembered. While Georgia and Pat's interview came across as both honest and humorous, Valentine (1999, 68) warns that 'a process of negotiation and mediation takes place between couples in the production of a single collaborative account for the interviewer'. It is important to note that through a desire to construct a positive image

of their relationship and shared Mardi Gras experience, unknown negative or conflicting aspects may have been silenced.

A number of informal 'interviews' also informed fieldwork. It often felt inappropriate to formalise certain interactions by whipping out a recorder, participant information sheet and consent form. Such conversations were incredibly forthcoming and insightful, enabling me to develop a deeper understanding of individuals' Mardi Gras experiences and thus contributing (sometimes non-consciously) to my understanding of the project. Yet, I did not know if individuals were sharing experiences with me because I was a 'researcher' or 'friend'. I have found it difficult to conceive how to incorporate such narratives; not desiring to share these stories without a verbatim transcript and formal consent. I followed McKay's (2002, 189) advice, for such instances, perceiving 'that my entire field experience was my project, not just activities I undertook with lists of questions'. Informal conversations were recorded in a field diary, which became an important element of the observant participation.

5.5.2 Observant participation

Observant participation enables insight into the embodied dimensions of experience; examining what people actually do, rather than what people say they do (Walsh 2009). Despite motivations to put participants at ease during interviews, the structured format of this methodology necessarily requires interruption. In contrast, while there is always potential for the researcher to influence encounters, observant participation enables researchers to more easily take part (Dowler 2001). Observant participation, rather than participant observation, enables engagement with fieldwork materialities (Brown 2007). That is, I too attempted to become a participant – eating, staying, and spending time with others. Observant participation took part in a number of ways; including, for example, spending time with the Dykes on Bikes in the lead up to Mardi Gras, travelling to Mardi Gras with GV Pride, and marching in the parade with the University of Wollongong Queer Collective. Insights varied considerably depending

on the research contexts. Encounters and emotions were recorded as field notes, and analysed in parallel with transcribed interviews.

The importance of maintaining an in-depth field notebook from the beginning is considered imperative to observant participation. Without keeping record one is likely to forget what was once appreciated as difference (Laurier 2010). While I endeavoured to follow through with such advice, this was at times difficult. Arriving at Mardi Gras, for example, was overwhelming. So much was going on; my focus was on meeting people, navigating the crowds and finding the marshalling area. It was almost disorienting to remember the emotions and practices of the hordes that passed by our group making it logistically impractical to take field-notes. Through pilot research I was prepared for this, planning to video and photograph the majority of the event. Video is a retrievable data set; the potential to review video over and over enabled the discovery of what was not obvious to me during the parade because I was too engaged in the situation (Laurier 2010). In the Mardi Gras time-space I also had the benefit of video and photography not being out of place; almost everyone had some form of recording device strapped around their necks. When focusing the camera on participants, however, they undertook a certain performance, posing their bodies. I also felt uncomfortable capturing less hedonistic dimensions. By way of example, at one moment I non-reflexively held up my camera towards a seemingly intoxicated young man being arrested by police, yet I quickly hesitated – certain others would feel my actions inappropriate, I felt ashamed and became confused as to the ethics of capturing certain encounters. This process of embodied responses gets at the ethics, and possibilities, of festival fieldwork, and the ways field encounters are always subjectively constructed, and embodied.

It was not possible to engage as part of all participants' experiences pertaining to the research. I was particularly limited because of the temporal constraints placed on festival fieldwork – it was not possible to simultaneously spend time with multiple participants all journeying to Mardi Gras. In hoping to gain further insights into the moments of travel, from the perspectives of participants, I too utilised the methodology of solicited diaries, alongside observant participation.

5.5.3 Solicited diaries

In seeking to engage with the fleshy, emotional, visceral and affective body, researchers have contributed to an emergence of innovative qualitative methodologies. Solicited diaries (involving varying combinations of video, photographs and text), in particular, are increasingly favoured for their ability to provide space for participants to share embodied and emotional reflection (Harada & Waitt 2013; Laurier *et al.* 2008; Morrison 2012b). Contrasting with the momentary opportunities generated through interviews, solicited diaries offer space for considered, reflexive narrative, which more closely aligns with the realities of experience (Meth 2003). Solicited diaries hold potential in making the body audibly, visibly and viscerally present through the use of photos, video and drawings, alongside written emotional and embodied reflection (Bates 2013). Solicited diaries also possess the ability to move, physically and emotionally, with participants, generating an avenue in which to capture encounters typically beyond the researcher's reach (Morrison 2012b; Myers 2010). At the same time, however, no method generates a definitive account of participant's experience (Morrison 2012b). Any method will always be partial, situated and embodied. What solicited diaries do offer, however, are momentary insights of embodied and emotional encounters as they unfold – including snapshots into return journeys.

As part of understanding return journeys it is imperative to gain a sense of temporalities, and the ways atmosphere facilitated, and restricted, practices and belonging at particular moments. While initially conceiving video diaries might generate unique insight into such dimensions, in its facilitation, I encountered a number of dilemmas. First, difficulties arose in articulating to participants my interest in capturing the 'banal' and 'mundane' moments of journeys, in addition to the highly memorable experiences. Mel, for example, captured video of her journey from Brisbane to Sydney with the Dykes on Bikes. During interview one, before Mardi Gras, Mel was excited with her plans to video the trip and spoke enthusiastically about the sort of footage she planned to include, and share. Yet, speaking with Mel following Mardi Gras Parade she was apologetic for only capturing 'little snippets' and 'a lot of scenery' of the return journey. Despite assuring Mel that this was exactly the sort of information

of interest, she remained hesitant to share her film, offering to instead write up an interpretation of the film. While I understood video offered access to experience beyond observation, it is also for this very reason that film is incredibly personal. I found it difficult, and somewhat frustrating, to remain alert to the sensitivity and hesitancy participants felt towards the sharing of intimate footage – and found it challenging to convey the potentials such insights offer.

Further to this, video requires a high level of involvement by participants. This is particularly evident when video is but one aspect of a mixed methodology – as in this research. For this reason while video provides opportunity to generate different ways of knowing bodies, following fieldwork with the Dykes on Bikes I became apprehensive that this method was too much; cautious of burdening participants with tasks during what was thought to be a leisure activity. Following the limitations of video, I prioritised written and photographic solicited diaries for proceeding fieldwork. This is not to say, however, that written and photographic solicited diaries were undertaken without their own considerations.

Contrasting with the procedure undertaken with video diaries, written and photo diaries followed a more regulatory implementation. At the conclusion of the first interview participants were invited to complete a diary. I provided a small notebook, including brief instructions⁴¹. Participants were not required to use the notebook, and many preferred to use a Word software document. Instructions were clear and relaxed, serving to guide those less sure, yet not stifle creativity. Instructions detailed how the diary offered a space to write about their activities, emotions and experiences of travelling to Mardi Gras. They were asked to reflect on things that were important and meaningful to them. It was suggested ideally that diaries would be used on each day of travel, yet it was fine if this was not possible. For most participants travel was confined to one weekend. For this reason I felt asking participants to write daily (2-3 entries in total) was not too burdensome. As it unfolded, participants' responses varied from only one diary entry to a maximum of twelve entries.

⁴¹ See Appendix 6 for copy of diary instructions.

Each participant approached their diary differently. In some cases it was clear the diary is written for the intent of research participation – referring to me, or specific conversations that occurred during the interview. For others writing and travelling were not aligned, with entries written once the participant returned from Mardi Gras. In the latter cases, diaries tended to be less reflexive, providing more detail around activities and the structures of travel. Others again, it seemed, found the space of the diary empowering, cathartic and in alignment with their return journey. David (who forms the focus of Chapter 8), in particular, took to this methodology and interpreted the open diary instructions differently to other participants. The outcome was an on-the-move tale of David's encounters once arriving in Sydney – rather than his travel to Sydney from Wellington. David's encounters were narrated through the body, rendering particular insights into how Mardi Gras' commodification was encountered in the lead up to the event. David's account contrasted with more reflective diaries of other participants, which more structurally detailed travel before, during and after.

For some, the structured, disconnected use of the diary rendered it work – a concept contrasting with their construction of return journeys. In such cases the online social media site, Facebook, often already entangled with constructions of Mardi Gras, was incorporated as a method. In the next section I turn to discuss the ways Facebook was used as a space for fieldwork – specifically as a space for storytelling.

5.5.4 Online storytelling

Recognising Facebook's potentials during piloting (in terms of enabling relations over longer temporalities and shifting spatialities) this social media space became an invaluable space during fieldwork. Geographers are only beginning to recognise Facebook's possibilities, acknowledging that the site's inherently social design, high numbers of everyday users and particular modes of belonging create a unique space to engage with participants (de Jong 2015b; Kitchin *et al.* 2013). Communication involved everything from participants simply adding me as a 'friend', to more in-depth, ongoing communications through private messages over a number of months, including sharing photos, and commenting on unrelated status updates and posts.

Brown and Gregg (2012) propose social networking sites, such as Facebook, extend the pleasures of going out. This claim, I suggest, should be extended to travel experiences. The practice of sharing stories, following up with friends and uploading photos becomes part of the temporalities and spatialities of travelling to festivals. In this sense, Facebook is more than a space to engage with participants, it is part of the cultural context of festival travel. Facebook is part of who many people are, and is consequently crucial to the expression of identity (Adam & Ghose 2003).

Much work examining the use of online space for fieldwork addresses the possibilities and limitations in identity performance when communication is not dependent on a material body (Hardey 2002; Robinson & Schulz 2011). Facebook enables the body to be both present and absent. Through Facebook it is not possible to observe the flesh, movement, expression, or hear the voice; nor is it possible to take note of clothing and the surrounding space in which the subject is situated (Longhurst 2013). In this sense the body is rendered absent, limiting insights into the embodied dimensions of storytelling. Interestingly however, bodies were able to be brought into the space through the uploading of photos and videos by participants. While photos and video did not provide in the moment embodied insights, they promoted further understandings around the ways Facebook and Mardi Gras intersect, and are together made and remade. Uploaded photos and videos, for example, tended to be highly governed in an effort to present bodies in particular ways. Participants favoured hedonistic, celebratory images that largely aligned with dominant touristic representations of Mardi Gras as a respectable, yet sexualised, celebration. The presence of the body within Facebook is thus closely negotiated by individuals – a process that is both dependent on, and determining of, constructions of Mardi Gras.

A separate Facebook profile was not created for fieldwork, choosing rather to follow Driscoll and Gregg (2010, 19) in using my previously established account to ‘volunteer the same sorts of information...as participants offer about themselves’. While creating a number of ethical negotiations, sharing my profile remained consistent with the ways diverse networks come together through this site (Robards 2012) and enabled intimate communication in a way that may not have been possible through a more socially

distant, professional profile. Sharing small pieces of information, as participants shared theirs, involved a degree of 'ambient intimacy' (Reichelt 2007) I had not experienced during fieldwork. Intimate exchanges problematised definitions of 'participant', 'non-participant' and 'researcher'. Logging onto Facebook, for instance, became a daunting experience, as over time I learnt more and more about the weight loss journeys, breakups, drunken nights out and 'food porn' choices of my participants, and their friends.

Surveillance went both ways. Participants too were privy to my own information; to unknown degrees and with unknown consequences. As discussed in the previous chapter, for example, Facebook participants were often aware of my identified sexuality before meeting. While introducing new concerns around privacy for researchers, I suggest that this vulnerability goes some way to breaking down participant/researcher binaries and hierarchies, offering productive possibilities through the transfer of power to those being researched. Access to ambient intimacy also increases awareness of the ways festivals are processual, entangled with everyday life. This coalition contrasted with the ways fieldwork often emerges during face-to-face interviews, which can be constrained in space and time, minimising the emergence of engagement and collaboration between researcher and participant.

Posting, uploading and commenting also occurred *in situ*, while on-the-move – as part of the return journey and during events. Facebook was thus crucial to understanding how festivals become enveloped within spaces beyond that of their duration. Use of the smartphone on-the-move shifted the rhythms and temporalities of 'traditional' participant engagement, through the granting of simultaneous and in the moment access to participant experiences. The entanglement of Facebook, smartphone and return journeys enabled participant contact to take on a more subtle, yet present, form as fieldwork became woven through everyday life. Access to participants in the moment experiences provided insight into the ways emotions shifted across spatialities and temporalities, creating knowledge of the processual aspects of travel.

Using Facebook on-the-move illustrates an avenue for geographers to expand knowledge of how bodies move through space and capture the flow of experience.

Attempting to use internet connection in large crowds, however, became problematic as a result of the increased interference from too many phone signals within the one area. Similarly, the use of Facebook on the road was at times precarious because of limited internet connection across rural and regional Australia. Despite some logistical difficulties with online access, the folding of Facebook, smartphone and mobility generates exciting opportunities for moving beyond spatial and temporal confines to explore the ways travel is part of much larger processes.

Through maintaining engagement and exchange with participants over longer temporalities, experiences and ideas were kept alive, moved, and formed alongside both theory and current geographic debates. This enabled these participants to take on more active roles in shaping and informing the research as it shifted over time. Crucially, however, generalisation should not be drawn from how participants used this online social media space. While these practices hint at Facebook's potential for storytelling and engagement, each participant used this site in complex and shifting ways, none of which independently represent the fabric of this space. Remaining mindful to varying forms of participation, and also to those choosing not to undertake storytelling through Facebook, is crucial. Engaging in this space requires immense time to frame one's everyday life as meaningful, a certain literacy, and self-presentation – all of which may be uncomfortable or daunting to some, serving to exclude individuals from engaging in either Facebook research, or the space more generally.

Slippery conceptualisations of consent and privacy did render tensions between personal ethical stipulations and those of the university's ethics guidelines. Like Hodge and Lester (2006) I found conventional institutional ethics protocols had not kept pace with the messiness of online methodologies. Driven by a feminist research ethics I did not generate a prescriptive methodology before fieldwork, rather I aimed to create an atmosphere of co-production with participants, once in the field (England 2002). It was, however, necessary to lay out a formulaic methodology that received approval from the University of Wollongong Human Ethics Research Committee. Unsure of how fieldwork would unfold, I was not aware Facebook would be used so extensively. For this reason formal ethics approval only outlined the possibility of

using social media for storytelling to reduce participant's burden of time, and a reduction in my own travel costs. It was made clear that no solicited responses would be sought, with online communication taking place only if initiated by participants.

Following university ethics protocols it is a requirement of the researcher to immediately report proposed changes. In practice, however, this was an impractical task because the methodology was quickly evolving individually with each participant, while the university ethics committee only met on a monthly basis, with an agenda deadline two weeks prior. Plainly, it was inconceivable to repeatedly freeze participant contact to report constantly shifting adjustments. It was clear, that the interception of an online methodology and feminist research ethic threatened, and raised doubts, around the practicalities of formalised ethics procedures. At the same time, the interception of an online methodology and feminist research ethic reinforced the importance of ongoing reflexive thinking, alert to uneven power relations as they unfold in the field (Dowling 2005).

5.6 Analysis & presentation of findings

Narrative analysis offers a way to interpret individualised experience, while likewise granting attention to the embedded meaning and evaluations of the participant and their context (Fraser 2004; Wiles *et al.* 2005). Rather than seeking to determine a finite 'state of play' characterising a depersonalised account of what it is like to travel to Mardi Gras, in drawing on a narrative analysis I appreciate and seek to give justice to the complex, subtle, shifting and emotional nature of bodies on-the-move (Bissell 2007). Each method utilised as part of *travel ethnographies* detailed the experiences of participants differently.

In recognising the complex ways narrative and discursive analysis are understood in the research literature, it is useful to clarify their use within this thesis. I follow Wiles *et al.* (2005) in conceiving narrative analysis broadly, in a fluid and contextualised sense. Narratives are connected to the ways individuals learn, make sense of personal experience and attach meaning within specific cultural contexts. Attending to narrative

through the process of analysis thus enables productive insight to individuals' positionality within broader structures. On this view, rather than adhering to any formularised structured approach, narrative analysis sought to understand the ways participants' narratives were intimate, yet were made and remade through broader social and spatial relations.

Discourse analysis, discussed in more contextualised detail below, in the context of this thesis is understood as a critical interpretative approach seeking to understand the ways social practices are made possible by language (Gregory *et al.* 2009). Rather than adhering to a prescriptive approach, discourse analysis was employed to interpret the social and political context of participants' language, and narrative structures more broadly.

Analysis was not temporally or spatially confined but rather a continual process derived through ongoing transcription, reflection and dialogue with participants and other geographers. This approach follows Pink (2009) who questions rigid distinctions between fieldwork and analysis, suggesting it is misguided to not recognise that analysis is co-produced with participants – beginning in the qualitative researcher's mind as soon as one hears of the experiences of others. Transcriptions were completed in spare moments while still 'in the field'. Narrative analysis of interviews began through the process of transcription – initial reflections were noted as I transcribed audio recordings verbatim. Complete copies of transcripts, alongside photocopies of diaries, Facebook communication and field notes⁴² were photocopied for proceeding analysis and interpretation. Hard copies of all textual data enabled immersion in material.

With the intention of maintaining the messiness and nuanced details of participants' narratives, analysis aimed to remain fluid and contextualised – rather than highly structuralised and formal (Wiles *et al.* 2005). Foucauldian discourse analysis was used to analyse textual data, revealing the ways particular ideas assisted in forging social realities (Waite 2005). For familiarisation, texts were carefully read and reread, with

⁴² Auto-ethnographic observant participation generated two notebooks.

attention granted to sets of ideas, experiences, moods and sensations. Emotions, encounters, explanations and paradoxes present within the text were highlighted⁴³. Emergent themes were noted in the margins, as were links to field excerpts detailing associated atmospheres, emotions and affects as they unfolded during the interview. Following Morrison (2010), themes were then collated in a series of compiled mind maps. Mind maps were added to and redrafted, until structured narratives began to emerge – which were then recreated as drafts of empirical chapters.

Undertaking initial analysis while still in the field may have influenced the interpretation. This is because the interviews of each group of participants' were transcribed together, enabling themes within each group to be interpreted in relation to one another, rather than across the entirety of the participant dataset. Some of the initial themes remained, and were eventually used to frame the narratives of each empirical chapter. First transcribing the Dyke on Bike interviews while in Brisbane, for instance, I identified the themes of identity and belonging, and preparing and attuning the body to ride.

Alert to the methodological challenges interviews pose in offering insight into bodily capacities, emotions and embodiment, I drew upon Hayes-Conroy's (2010) concept of 'imagined bodily empathies' and used my body as a tool that senses 'data'. This concept of bodily empathies attempts to focus on the power and motion of participants' emotions, affective intensities and non-conscious bodily judgements. Hayes-Conroy contends that researchers cannot expect to fully know participants' bodily realities; yet the researcher can recognise or 'imagine' what an encounter feels like through the unfolding of empathetic communication by being there with participants: reflecting where things were shared and listening to how things were shared. Bodily empathies were recorded as field notes and analysed in parallel with a narrative analysis of transcribed interviews. Doing research this way 'takes the body seriously' (Dewsbury 2010, 326); remaining alert to the emotions, feelings, sensuousness, viscosity and affectivity of the participants and myself – while also

⁴³ Computer programs (such as NVIVO) are often used to conduct qualitative analysis. An increasingly recognised outcome of such programs is that many layers of meaning may be lost, un-contextualising data, through a reliance of code and retrieve techniques (Wiles *et al.* 2005).

placing faith in my own 'gut feelings', intuition and instinct (Griffiths 2015). Wiles *et al.* (2005, 90) recognise talk as messy, 'in the sense that it can serve several purposes at the same time, not all of which are made explicit' through the text alone. Attempting to break down the messiness of interview dialogue through analysing field notes alongside transcripts was useful in revealing wider social and historical contexts, norms and values concerning both the topic and social life more broadly.

Participants chose to frame experiences of travel to Mardi Gras in a narrative structure. In seeking to value the ways experiences were shared, I here too draw on a narrative approach in this retelling. Geographers are increasingly using narrative as a way to present embodied dimensions of social life (Davies & Dwyer 2008). It is my intention in this thesis to render insights into the messy, emotional and complex realities of contextualised experience through narrating the journeys of two queer collectives and one individual – rather than seeking to draw out broader trends from across all participants. Narrative presents experience in depth, detail and context, rather than working across data sets in an attempt to represent broader trends (Jackson 2011). Considering the feminist priorities, aims and objectives of this thesis, (particularly in relation to examining the entanglements of intimate experience and broader social and spatial relations (Wiles *et al.* 2005)), in-depth focus on personal narrative was imperative. Each method – interviews, observant participation, solicited diaries and online storytelling – assists in piecing together participant narratives. Narratives are always partial and incomplete – while I present participants' experiences as concise – this is only one way to tell of their experience.

Attention to the embodied dimensions of experience has influenced researchers to explore more creative representations of data. Poetry and storytelling are just some of the methods being used to display more of participants' emotive responses and experiences (Jackson 2011). I found Griffiths' (2015, 7) attempt at 'performative writing' to be useful in reflecting the atmospheres of particular encounters and presenting through narrative, imagined bodily empathies which are otherwise intangible, unlocatable: worlds of memory, pleasure, sensation, imagination, affect and insight.

5.7 Summary

This chapter tells the story of the methodological challenges met in the design of fieldwork. The challenges are detailed to justify the development of the mixed qualitative approach utilised in this thesis, titled *travel ethnographies*. Travel ethnographies involved a combination of qualitative methods informed by feminism and mobilities studies, which attempt to render insights into the emotional, affective and visceral dimensions of return journeys and bodies-on-the-move.

Each method utilised as part of this methodology detailed the experiences of participants differently. Interviews provided a space for in-depth, face-to-face communication – enabling participants to identify important themes. Storytelling online afforded insights into different ways of knowing participants' everyday lives, which could not be ascertained through more orthodox research spaces. Observant participation, that is, travelling, eating and staying with participants, enabled awareness of the embodied dimensions of experience – generating knowledge of the fleshy, travelling body. Solicited diaries, travelled both physically and emotionally with participants when I could not, enabling a space for shared embodied reflection. Follow-up interviews elicited further in-depth discussion, rendering opportunity to explore nuances, paradoxes and complexities of experience, and contextualising information emergent through previously conducted methodologies. The combination of this set of methodologies is crucial to this thesis in producing the necessary data required for a feminist approach to return journeys to Mardi Gras.

I turn now to the empirics, having positioned this thesis within the conceptual, literary and empirical context of return journeys to Mardi Gras. Empirics are presented over three chapters – the first of which narrates the Dykes on Bikes' long return road trip to Mardi Gras. Through this narrative I illustrate the ways the politics of belonging for the Dykes on Bikes is visceral and is mediated by co-motion.

Chapter 6 Performing Dyke on Bike

6.1 Positioning

This chapter explores belonging during the Dykes on Bikes 1,800 kilometre return journey from Brisbane to Mardi Gras. I aim to mobilise the concept of belonging by examining the entanglements of mobility, belonging and the visceral through the lived experiences of six women riding their bikes to Mardi Gras, as part of a larger group of 20 riders. In so doing, I seek to grant insights to how the role of movement, and the experience of belonging-in-motion, enables Dykes on Bikes belonging. Here, I am particularly interested in exploring what holds individuals 'in place' so to speak, when attachment takes place through movement. In understanding belonging as possessing the capacity to emerge on-the-move I aim to question bounded assumptions of certain festival scholarship framing belonging and identity formation as solely taking place within the temporal and spatial boundaries of events.

In the discussion that follows I embrace a visceral approach to explore the entanglements of mobilities, bodies, spaces, motorcycles, belonging and the visceral. First, I provide background to the Dyke on Bike identity and explore the coiled histories of the Dykes on Bikes, Pride parades and Mardi Gras. In so doing, I point attention to the notable absence of the Dykes on Bikes, and women motorcycle riders more broadly, within geographical and mobilities scholarship. To assist in conceptualising mobility and belonging through the body, an examination of the visceral theoretical approach and methodology is next introduced. Before turning to a discussion of the empirical I briefly share my own motorcycling encounters. The Dykes on Bikes experiences of belonging and not belonging on-the-move are presented over three sections: 'preparing and attuning the riding body to belong', 'belonging in co-motion' and 'moments of friction - moments of not belonging'.

6.2 Mardi Gras & the Dykes on Bikes – an entangled history

The Dykes on Bikes is an international group for women who ride motorcycles⁴⁴. The Dykes on Bikes play with femininities and masculinities in different ways through motorcycle skills, dress and riding styles. The group's identity thus subverts normative understandings of a female subject heteronormatively aligned with domesticity and passivity. Moreover, the skills, endurance and strength needed for riding bodies helps constitute motorcycling as masculine. The Dykes on Bikes challenge these gendered understandings of motorcycling by enabling alternative subjectivities, bringing into focus understandings of femininity and challenging dominant sexual and cultural expectations of what a woman is and what a woman can do. The term 'dyke', for example, originated as a derogatory term for a masculine female. The use of the term by the group is a deliberate political act to reclaim the word (Ilyasova 2006).

The Dykes on Bikes celebrates and values notions of a collective identity and a sense of belonging, which is forged through the enforced rules and codes of the Chapter, including the ideas of riding together. As I hope to illustrate in this chapter, the subjectivity of the Dyke on Bike is not felt through conforming to the codes of membership alone; becoming, and remaining, a Dyke on Bike also takes place through the practices of preparing the body for group rides, spending time together and riding together in co-motion (which, importantly, includes the return ride to Mardi Gras).

⁴⁴ Of note, the Queensland Dykes on Bikes state that they have not been affected in anyway by the Queensland State Government's 'anti-bikie laws'. Introduced in 2013, changes to the 'Criminal Law Amendment Act' restrict three or more members of a 'criminal bikie gang' from being together in a public place, while any member of a 'criminal bikie gang' cannot enter a banned location (such as a 'bikie clubhouse') and cannot attempt to recruit another person to the gang (Queensland Government 2014). In a *Gay News Network* (Shaw 2013) article, Dykes on Bikes president Julz is quoted as stating: *'Criminal gangs who engage in illegal activities need to be put behind bars and kept there. If you're selling drugs to kids, laundering money through dodgy businesses and shooting people because they owe you something, then I don't care if you drive a forklift... we need laws to stop you doing it. Unfortunately, these groups like to ride motorbikes and get tattoos. I had been hoping they would drive 4x4s so the police could pull over all the soccer mums and ask them to take their shirts off and photograph their tattoos! But, alas, they ride bikes, so as a small inconvenience to all riders we are impacted. For the record, none of our club members has been pulled up unnecessarily by law enforcement and our club has not been impacted directly with any of the new tougher "bikie laws"'*.

The Dykes on Bikes and Pride parades are historically entangled. At the 1976 San Francisco Pride Parade a small group of women motorcycle riders informally came together to ride as part of the parade. One of these first riders is said to have coined the phrase 'Dykes on Bikes' (San Francisco Dykes on Bikes History 2013). Receiving traction in the media following the parade, the group rode with the name. It was not, however, until the mid-1980s that the group became formally structured as a result of growing numbers. Today there are 22 chapters internationally, three of which are located in Australia (Sydney, Melbourne and Queensland⁴⁵), and all of which are governed by the San Francisco Chapter. In 2003, the group changed its name to the Women's Motorcycle Contingent/Dykes on Bikes - aiming to overcome essentialised understandings of women who ride motorcycles as 'dykes'; a move which aimed to increase inclusivity to all women who ride motorcycles (Ilyasova 2006). While inclusive of all 'women', there are ongoing tensions regarding the inclusion of 'men' who choose to ride as allies with the group (Cortez 2013).

It is tradition for the Dykes on Bikes to lead Pride parades across the Global North – the revving of engines and blasting of horns signifying the parade's beginning. This is largely for pragmatic reasons; motorcycles have a tendency to overheat when kept stationary for too long (often a requirement when waiting for the beginning of parades). In addition, placing motorcycles first limits the possibility of accidents with other parade marches and for the riders themselves, who often do not wear helmets and protective clothing during parades. While pragmatic in origin, over time the Dykes on Bikes' leading role has rendered certain expectations and anticipations among members, something which continually emerged when speaking with participants:

⁴⁵ The Queensland Dykes on Bikes Chapter is state based to be inclusive of the urban areas of the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast, which are in close proximity to Brisbane city.

Trademark Office (PTO) in 2003 (Ilyasova 2006; Kiser 2011). Initially two Dykes on Bikes applications were rejected on the grounds that the term 'dyke' was claimed to be disparaging and objectionable to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities. Soni Wolf, the Secretary of the San Francisco Women's Motorcycle Contingent responded to the grounds of rejection at the time:

If I must be labelled other than as a 'person', 'human being', or 'woman', I choose 'Dyke'. 'Dyke' is a strong word and I say it with pride. 'Dyke' expresses my pride in myself, my existence and in what I have accomplished. I am gay. I am a lesbian. I am a Dyke!

Soni Wolf, 2004 (quoted in Kiser 2011)

Following a three year battle the name was finally trademarked in 2007. The case was significant within the United States because it pointed to the importance in recognising the perceptions of individuals who themselves refer to, or identify with, particular labels, rather than the perceptions of the general public (Kiser 2011).

Within Pride festival and parade literature the Dykes on Bikes are often alluded to, yet seldom is voice given to the qualitative experiences of members. While mobilities scholars haven't given motorcycling increasing attention (Pinch & Reimer 2012), this work tends to focus on motorcycling as a practice dominated by men (Jderu 2013; Sopranzetti 2013; Terry *et al.* 2014). This is despite recent calls, as noted in Chapter 2, to explore 'a clear exposition of how gender and mobilities intersect to create shifting subjectivity from the perspectives of spatial mobility' (Cresswell & Priya Uteng 2008, 5). Beyond geographical and mobilities scholarship, literature exploring the intersections of women and motorcycling is generating greater consideration. Focus includes, but is not confined by, the subservient and demeaning role of women within outlaw motorcycle clubs (Quinn & Kock 2003; Veno & Winterhalder 2009); the rise of middle- to upper-class female riders (Meyer 2009; Thompson 2012); and the empowerment and tensions that arise through the non-traditional gendered identity of women who ride for leisure (Auster 2001; Roster 2007). What remains missing from scholarship working at the intersection of women and motorcycling are the particular embodied experiences of riding.

Recognising the embodied experiences of women who ride motorcycles is of interest because their numbers are increasing across the Global North. As illustrated in Table 6.1⁴⁸, for example, the number of women motorcycle riders increased by 7.7 percent between 1999 and 2003 in New South Wales, while overall licenced motorcycle riders only increased by 4.3 percent over the same period (Australian Transport Safety Bureau 2004). While I could not access the raw statistics of more recent data, the *Sydney Morning Herald* (Munro 2009) reported continued increases for the five years from 2003 to 2008, claiming the number of women licences in New South Wales increased by 31 percent. Similarly, the percentage of women riders in the United States increased from 2 to 10 percent between 1990 and 2005 (Rogers 2008). While understanding the increasing popularity of women motorcycle riders is crucial, it is important to also recognise the numbers of licensed male motorcycle riders remains significantly higher and is also steadily increasing (Table 6.1⁴⁹). Indeed, motorcycles experienced the largest growth rate (22.3%) for any vehicle type in Australia over the five years between 2010 and 2015 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2015).

6.3 A visceral approach to mobilising belonging

This chapter is influenced by, and attempts to build on, Probyn's (2000a) approach to the visceral, as outlined in Chapter 2. To briefly reiterate, Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy (2008, 462) define the visceral as 'the realm of internally felt sensations, moods and states of being, which are born from a sensory engagement with the material world'. I suggest that riding is a deeply visceral experience because it is about the body's sensory engagement with the material world; for example, one has to remain aware of their own riding body, how it is positioned on the bike, how it is positioned on the road and through the road's materialities, its positionality towards other riding bodies, and other driving bodies – in this sense riding bodies necessarily open up and connect in different ways, at different times, for different reasons. Attending to the

⁴⁸ See Appendix 7 for Table 6.1, which details number of motorcycle licence holders by gender, in New South Wales.

⁴⁹ See Appendix 7 for Table 6.1, which details number of motorcycle licence holders by gender, in New South Wales.

realm of the visceral thus provides understanding of the ways members of the Dykes on Bikes are positioned materially, socially and psychologically in relation to each other, as well as other human and non-human materialities when on-the-move.

Further to this, Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy (2008, 469) propose the visceral as an entry point to explore 'political understanding of how people can be *moved* or *mobilised* either as individuals or as groups of social actors' (emphasis in original). The Dyke on Bike identity is unfixed – it is continually made and remade through riding. In part, as this chapter aims to illustrate, what drives bodies to ride as, and thus become, a Dyke on Bike is the desire to belong to the experience of collective flow and motion on-the-move. Attending to the visceral realm therefore not only creates a space to understand how belonging emerges through movement, but also the *politics* associated with belonging to and becoming a Dyke on Bike. Addressing the visceral is crucial in the instance of this chapter for three reasons. Firstly, as I illustrate, belonging is an embodied, emotional, sensuous, relational, affective and political experience. A visceral approach, therefore, enables an entry point to examine the moment all of these elements coming together, rather than focusing on any one specific dimension. For this reason something is missed if we ignore visceral responses to moments of belonging and not belonging. Secondly, attention to the visceral renders unique insights into the importance of belonging because it focuses on the process of identity formation as a political process. Thirdly, exploring the ways belonging is experienced viscerally through return journeys provides an entry point for understanding the role of movement in creating festivals beyond the time-frame of events

To explore belonging as a visceral experience I follow Probyn. For Probyn (1996) belonging is a mode that cannot be located in some authentic, static, pre-existing state. Belonging is rather an act of constantly becoming, a constant movement which is never fully achieved, never really obtained. Belonging, is a longing, a desire to fit in, to become other. It is the restless process between being and longing; be-longing. Belonging emerges through a desire to belong to something, which for the individual does not exist elsewhere. Yearning to belong is a felt, visceral experience – an emotional and affective affiliation that exists between individuals and collectives,

individuals and things, and individuals and places – an essence that emerges through movement which correspondingly generates association. To this end belonging may be conceptualised as an emotional and affective relation that provides meaning to individual subjectivities and collectives (Wright 2014). To understand belonging, Probyn (1996) foregrounds the body as a place of passage because, she explains, the surface is where social forces are produced, and become visible. Observing performance therefore reveals desires for belonging, and slippages between moments of belonging and not belonging amid bodies, and bodies and places. While geographers have often conceived belonging as a process of becoming (Wright 2014), it is generally examined as occurring through, or attached to, place (Tolia-Kelly 2006; Valentine & Skelton 2007; Yuval-Davies 2011). The ways belonging emerges through movement with other bodies, and the ways movement makes and remakes bodies and space, is less explored.

6.4 Methodology

Motorcycling is affective and emotional, generating unique experiences for individuals that can be difficult to articulate. For this reason, as outlined in Chapter 5, I had initially planned for participants to share video footage from their journey. Unfortunately, participants were hesitant to share the footage upon returning to Brisbane. Following the failure of video methods I became reliant upon semi-structured interviews and observant participation. Semi-structured interviews took place with six Dykes on Bikes members before and after Mardi Gras Parade. Observant participation took place when I was invited to stay with one of the participants and her partner, for one week following Mardi Gras, and through this, socialise with some of the Chapter's members. Members gave their consent to the use of their names and that of the Chapter's, rather than the use of pseudonyms.

The ways participants chose to share their experiences through interviews and participant observation, in contrast to video and photography, impacted the sorts of information recorded. Rather than gaining insight into specific moments of movement, or the emotion of motion (Sheller 2003), participants chose to speak about their journey

reflexively in relation to the themes of preparation, attunement and moments of belonging and not belonging.

6.5 Personal riding encounters

Edensor (2010, 5) contends that the researcher 'must take their own body, its respirations, pulses, circulations, assimilations, durations and phases of duration' into account when considering embodiment and mobility. My experience on a motorcycle is minimal, yet haunting. Passengering on the back of motorcycles on friends' farms growing up always left me wanting to one day take control of the bike. An experience as a late teenager riding on the back of a young male motocross⁵⁰ rider's Suzuki RM-Z450, however, left me with anxious memories. The unfamiliarity of the wind lashing my body as we screamed through the Australian bush forced me to wrap my arms tighter and hide my face behind the left shoulder of my riding friend. I felt my body as vulnerable, my feet so close to the sandy ground surging past below, a constant reminder to keep my body close to the bike, yet also remaining conscious of the proximity of my legs to the heat of the bike. To facilitate flow my body conformed to the body of the bike and the body of the rider. Every vibration, every bump pulsed through me, felt through the entirety of my body. There were no speed limits, something we were taking full advantage of, as we reached 120 kilometres per hour. Approaching a straight we increased speed again, my heart stopping as I feared the combination of speed and thick sandy trail would bring us hurtling into the surrounding bush at the next bend.

This experience as a teenager led to some hesitancy when I was invited to ride with the Dykes on Bikes during fieldwork. I was caught between flashbacks of what I recalled as a near death experience and the research benefits arising from the possibilities of riding with the Dykes on Bikes. I was simultaneously relieved and disappointed as the onset of Brisbane's seasonal heavy rain during February fieldwork made the decision for me, as the group was forced to call off the ride planned during my stay.

⁵⁰ Motocross is a form of motorcycle racing held on off-road circuits, designed to be physically demanding and competitive.

6.6 *Preparing & attuning the riding body to belong*

This section examines the requirements of belonging to the Dykes on Bikes. It explores the demands of preparing the riding body, knowing the rules, and the gendered characterisations of both the bike and embodied riding performances – all of which enable belonging to emerge on-the-move and work to clearly identify the Dyke on Bike identity. I discuss each in turn.

Dykes on Bikes' members are aware of the particular demands layered on riding bodies, and thus collective planning practices were administered to ensure their bodies held the capacity to complete the long distance journey. The collective experience of performing practices together, strengthened the social and emotional bonds among members and heightened anticipations of the impending journey. These collective experiences were performed and discussed as requirements that need to be respected and followed. Long distance rides were planned in the months leading up to the trip, providing practice opportunities for more recent members, while a rest period was initiated in the days before leaving. The detailed riding schedule leading up to Mardi Gras was outlined by Cat (mid 20s, retail, second Mardi Gras):

So we go the first Wednesday of the month and then the last Wednesday of the month. So pretty much two weeks in a row we have a ride, like on a Wednesday night. And then on the Sunday, the second weekend of each month we ride as well. But usually over Mardi Gras, because we have the massive Mardi Gras, we try to keep pretty much, we don't do any rides there and at the end of that month we might do something.

Limited luggage was carried on the bike. In consequence, parade and weekend outfits required careful planning before leaving. On the nights before riding adequate sleep was essential and limited alcohol could be consumed (with intake monitored by other members). For some, choosing which bike to ride resulted in apprehension, with tensions between the aesthetics of the parade (which conventionally calls for a loud and eye catching bike, such as a Harley) and the practicalities of long distance riding (where certain bikes force the body to bend, causing the neck to bend up; a position difficult and tiring to maintain for several hours). Following a difficult ride the

previous year Cat, by way of example, was excited for the possibilities her new bike afforded for the long journey:

So I've got a 650 and the bike that I took down last year was a little ninja, so it was like a sports bike, so this one's going to be a sports touring bike, so it's more sitting up straight, whereas the other one was leaning over so I got a bit of a sore back, shoulders, lower back and neck. Whereas this time I'm pretty much going to be sitting up. More than likely it's going to work.

Even the route taken was meticulously planned to ensure excitement and challenge, rather than a straight and mundane journey (see Figure 6.1 for route of outward journey and Figure 6.2 for route of return journey).

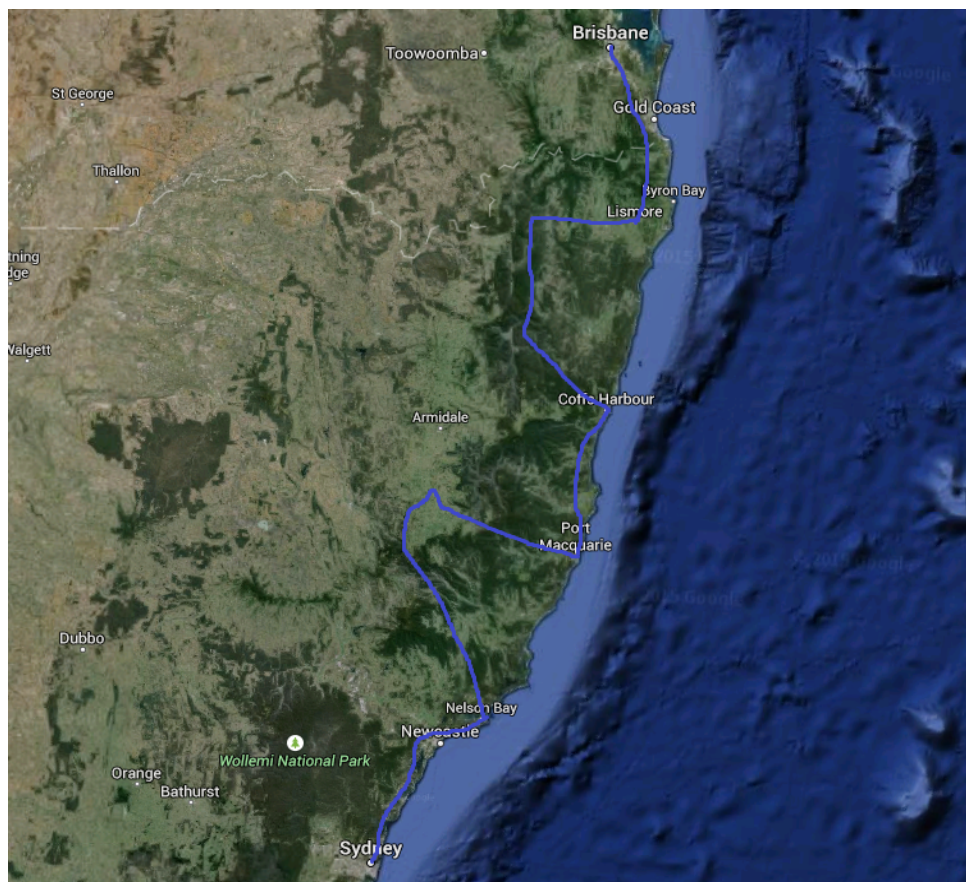


Figure 6.1: Dykes on Bikes outward journey. Source: Map modified using Google Maps by author.

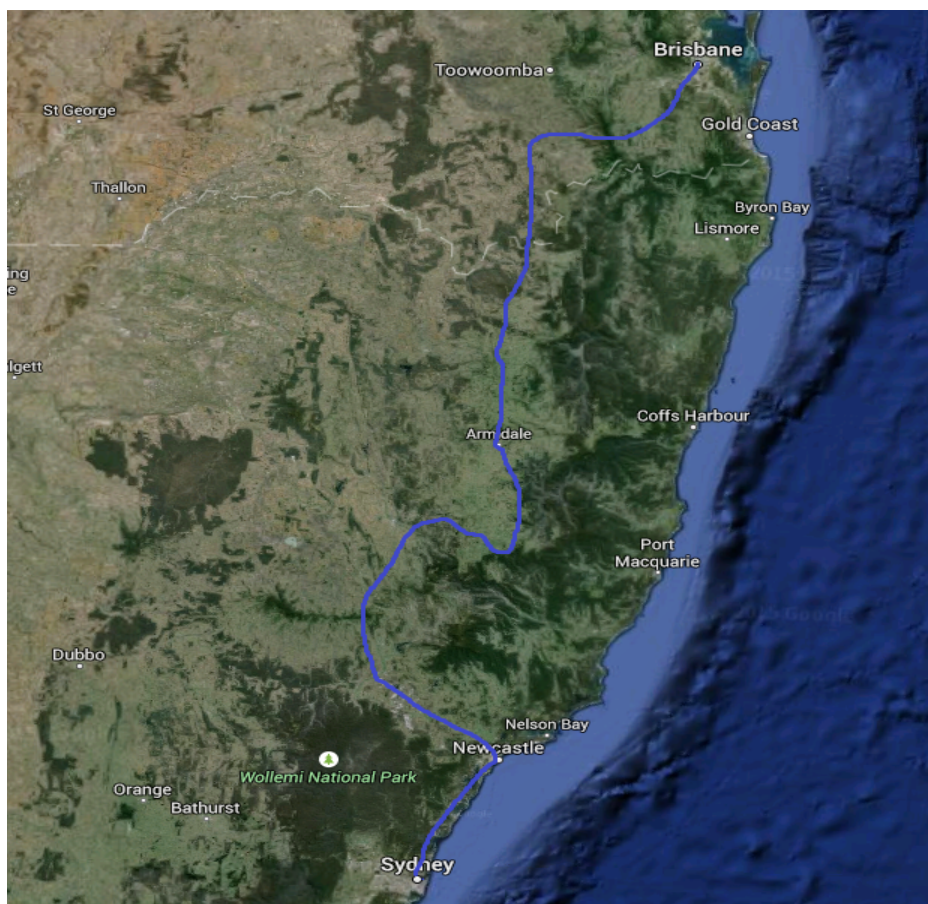


Figure 6.2: Dykes on Bikes return journey. Source: Map modified using Google Maps by author.

Julz (mid 30s, paramedic, too many Mardi Gras' to remember number of times attended) explained:

If Cat had never been before and she tried to go [ride] down to Mardi Gras, you know it's very difficult. If you don't know what's on, where to go, what to do, it's actually very difficult to arrange it yourself. So for us I try and organise it. It's a big undertaking for me to try and organise it but as far as I'm concerned, I don't find organising it too overwhelming, as long as the girls go and they can kind of have a bit of a stress free thing. Like even me just planning the ride is huge because I make sure we do some awesome roads, we don't just go straight down the highway, that would be really easy, if we went straight down the highway and straight back home that would be boring. I make sure we sort of get a motorbike trip as much as it is about Mardi Gras.

To ensure harmonious movement on the road it was also essential for members to become attuned to the Chapter's strict rules and practices before leaving Brisbane. These rules and practices had emerged over time, through both the broader Dyke on Bike culture and the longer term members of the Queensland Chapter (specifically the Queensland Dyke on Bike president, Julz). Julz and Cat shared how these requirements became embodied through practice rides:

Anna: Do you try to stay at your own pace or do you try to keep together as a group?

Julz: We try and stay together. I say to them [Dykes on Bikes members]: 'You know what, if you want to ride like a fuck wit, you go and ride on your own, don't do it on a club ride'. And all the girls respect that. We've got some girls who are pretty quick riders and they know that when they come on a ride they baton off [back down] and they do what everybody else does. We have an experienced rider up the back. And when we go out on big rides the ones of us who are really experienced riders we keep an eye on the newer ones; young being riders, not young as in age. I mean part of the club is to teach people and prepare them for Mardi Gras so every now and then I'll go and ride behind someone and then afterwards go and pull them aside and go: 'This is what you need to do, just keep a little eye on that. You know technically wise, you need to do this'. And you just go: 'Mate, follow me for a little bit and just see, just watch the lines. I'm going slow and I just want you to follow, just watch, technically when we are on the road'. Riding is so different to driving. You know you can drive ten hours and get out of the car but riding, some of the roads that we do, they've got to concentrate. That's why we do so much planning.

Cat: And any particular time we go out we always just give a bit of a brief on what the road's going to be like or what experience level it's going to be like.

Julz: And if I rode my normal pace I would be a lot faster than when I ride with the group. And that's just part of it. We've got some of our girls who are brand new and have different bike capabilities. I ride a massive sports bike, there's no speed limit that I can't reach in point three of a second. But someone on a brand new bike they can't, they just can't. We're all understanding throughout the whole group, everyone's pretty

much expecting that, the girls don't need to be any better than the next person, there's no competition happening, it's more about just riding together, keeping our formation. We want to keep people in the group and have a good experience, so they actually feel part of the experience.

There is a politics to the experience of belonging. While the spaces and temporalities of the ride from Brisbane to Sydney are open ended, fluid and generative, familiarity generated through specific repetitive practices and rules are crucial to the construction of flow and seamlessness once on the road. For the Dykes on Bikes it is essential to become attuned to the speed, formation and flow required to ride with, and belong to, the Chapter – as Julz says: ‘If you want to ride like a fuck wit, you go and ride on your own’. Butcher (2011, 246) suggests, in a discussion of metro use in Delhi, that ‘knowing the “rules” of appropriate space use on the metro is linked to knowing how to use, and thus belong, to the space of a modern cosmopolitan city’. Similarly, for the Dykes on Bikes, respecting and performing the rules was imperative to experiencing, and prioritising, belonging between riding bodies. There was, however, unevenness to belonging within the Dykes on Bikes. Julz’s role as president granted her the power to determine the requirements of what belongs and what does not (Yuval-Davis 2011). Unevenness among members introduced a distinct social hierarchy between Julz and other members – notable through the ways Julz identified as the planner, facilitator and arbitrator for the other members, through phrases such as ‘the girls’..

The political dimensions of belonging to, and becoming, a Dyke on Bike were also reliant on characterizing technologies of the bike and embodied riding performances as gendered; with Dyke on Bike riding performance as collective, non-competitive and non-aggressive considered feminine, in contrast to masculine, male dominated motorcycle collectives driven by competition and speed. The construction and reproduction of these regulatory discourses and spatialized performances introduced clear boundaries regarding what belongs to the Dykes on Bikes, and what does not. As Cat and Julz detailed at length:

Cat: It's not a competition.

Anna: And with other groups you've both been in, was it the same kind of thing, or was there more competition in those groups?

Julz: I mean I predominately grew up riding with guys. And with guys it's very competitive. Oh my God.

Cat: Like Tracy [Dyke on Bike member].

Julz: Yeah we've got a couple of, we've got a girl in our club now, Tracy, whose just sought of, she's been living here for about six, seven months or so, and as soon as soon as she turned up she was quite funny because she said to me 'I can tell who taught you how to ride'. And I said 'Oh? Who do you think taught me how to ride?' And she said 'You ride with guys'. And I said 'Yes, so did you'. And she said 'Yep'. And we've both learnt from guys and both of us independently are very aggressive riders. Whereas girls who have ridden only ever with girls are very timid, very timid.

Anna: What do you mean?

Julz: Just throwing the bike around a lot more, a lot harder. Just have a lot more, well not so much control. I suppose having more control but are more likely to really throttle, so get a lot of speed going out of the corners and break a lot harder into the corners. Whereas if I watch Cat ride, whose obviously never ridden with guys on an ongoing basis, her riding it's not that it's, I mean at the moment, it's just very different, because guys they literally, they throw a motorbike around. Cat will allow the motorbike to ride around a corner. I ride bikes that I can't do that. For starters it's a different style of bike. Cat's got a bike that's very easy to manoeuvre.

Cat: I've got a sports touring bike, because I do a lot of touring.

Julz: I describe it as, if Cat wants to go around a corner like that she just points her bike and the bike goes 'Oh, ok I'll go around the corner, cool'. My bike, if I just go I want to just go around a corner, I'd get to about there and the bike would go, 'Get fucked' (laughs). And so I have to do one of two things, I either have to accelerate and really

dump it down or I'll just come off. And that comes with riding with guys. The fact that you see guys and they will throw the bikes into the corners. You know they really, when they are going around a corner they will dump, physically throw, physically move the bike. If I put Cat on a bike to do that, physically if she rode for two hours riding like that she'd be exhausted, exhausted.

Anna: A totally different feeling?

Cat: Totally different feeling compared to a cruiser, compared to a Harley, compared to my sports touring.

Julz: And to give you an idea, and the typical difference for someone who has ridden with guys and has that more aggressive riding style, I'm the only one in our club with a big sports powered sports bike. There's no one else that has a bike like mine in our club and that's because women generally don't ride them. Because they are male dominated and they need a lot more aggression. The Harley is just difficult to manoeuvre because it's really heavy, you've got a two hundred kilogram bike and physically you just have to move it. You know? Whereas my sports bike is lighter than my [other] bike but it's not about the weight of the bike it's about the ability and the aerodynamics of the bike that force you to physically move it. And you find a lot of women don't ride the type of bike that I've got and same with Tracy who's also ridden with guys. She's got a Sportster which is a very female orientated Harley, it's a small bike but she's done another thing. She's had the engine reconfigured so that she gets absolute maximum power out of that. So most girls would hop on her sports bike and if they jumped on a normal Sportster, so her bikes called a Sportster, and then they jump on hers, hers is just packed full of power versus a normal one. And that's why, it's because the normal Sportster was too non-aggressive for her, so she's had to pack it full of punch, because that's the only way she can get that aggression out of it. And that's typically what you see with women that have grown up with male riders and women who have historically only ridden with females. And so you find that the women who have ridden with male riders are very much into testing each other. Like Tracy will come up and ride with me and she'll be like come on, come on. Come on. So you do get that little competitive stuff.

Cat: Not really with anyone else though, the whole groups pretty much together. I mean we don't do that on group rides.

Julz: Because that style of riding becomes really dangerous and you see that a lot. You used to have that a lot because there weren't that many women riders and the women were riding with men and you know you go riding with the guys and they do a mono [riding on one wheel], so they'll be on their back wheel with the fucking front up, three k [kilometers] down the road, doing one hundred and fifty kilometers an hour. Now I've never seen, I'm the only female, me and a couple of my mates, who have ever done wheelies. I haven't done it on my sports bike but no females do that, we're so used to doing it because that's what the guys would do. It was always on dirt bikes, we'd be like, yeah let's do it. It's just bizarre.

The requirements of belonging to the Dykes on Bikes both troubles and reconfirms normative understandings around motorcycle riding as a masculine performance. At one level, the feminine performance of the Dykes on Bikes – characterised through a relational ethics, collectivity, non-aggressive and non-competitive embodied movements, and the preference for certain motorcycles deemed as 'female', threatens constructions of motorcycling as aggressive, competitive, speed oriented and daring. Further to this, Julz and Tracy's masculinised riding performances trouble normative assumptions that align masculine performances as male and feminine performances as female. In combination, Dyke on Bike requirements work to question constructions positioning motorcycling as a masculine male dominated performance. At another level, the Dykes on Bikes' reliance on gendered comparisons between female and male riders and motorcycles to establish the group's requirements of belonging serves to reinforce normative gendered constructions positioning females as softer, non-aggressive and weaker, and males as dangerous, aggressive and strong. Clear distinctions between female and male performances, discourses and materialities work to enforce essentialised boundaries concerning what belongs to the Dykes on Bikes, and what does not.

Belonging to the Dykes on Bikes is thus both enabling and disabling. On the one hand, the Dyke on Bike identity enables a sense of collectivity not elsewhere available

and offers a space to perform unique intersections of identity, likewise not elsewhere available (specifically, motorcycle rider, dyke and group member). On the other hand, the Dyke on Bike identity is disabling for a number of reasons. Alternative riding styles, for example, are inhibited and governed through the power granted to particular members. Further to this, the essentialised Dyke on Bike identity works to reproduce gendered frameworks in preferencing feminine performances when riding together. Finally, in prioritising certain intersections of identity, others may become inhibited. By way of example, opportunities to explore a fluid sexual identity may be impeding within Dyke on Bike spaces because of a shared group 'dyke' identity.

Having outlined the requirements of preparing and attuning the body to belong to the Dykes on Bikes, I turn now to examine the ways the above elements, among others, enabled belonging to emerge while on-the-move.

6.7 Belonging in co-motion

Conceptualisations of belonging are regularly understood as emergent through place; consequently, mobility is often conceived as the antithesis to belonging. Exploring belonging as fluid, becoming and embodied has the potential to rethink the spatial fixity of belonging as place based attachment, instead enabling belonging to emerge on-the-move. Belonging as mobile is significant for festivals scholarship because it provides a framework to move beyond the exploration of belonging as situated within the spatial temporalities of events – and thus increases understanding around the ways festivals are entangled with broader politics and social change.

Assemblage thinking opens up possibilities to consider how belonging is experienced on-the-road. Assemblages cut through dualistic understandings of body and thing, as bodies and materialities come together and scramble into shifting combinations (Waitt 2014b). Assemblage thinking conceives a sense of belonging as emergent through the coming together of various elements into socio-spatial formations that make sense as a coherent whole. For instance riding bodies do not merely govern bikes, riders are also affected by the agency of the bike, road, other riders and other vehicles, emotions and so on – where the body, bike, group of riders and emotions begin and end is not clear.

Moreover, for the Dykes on Bikes, as bikes, bodies, roads and regulations came together at certain moments during the journey, a seamlessness, or flow, was established – heightening a sense of belonging:

Jac (mid 20s, librarian, first Mardi Gras): I don't like Mardi Gras, like the fact that it was Mardi Gras any more than I would have liked it if we had of just gone down there. But I wouldn't have gone by myself, I wouldn't ride that far without the group. And coming back I loved coming back, because we came back through the New England Highway and I just loved coming back through there. And we didn't get wet the whole way home [on the final day of riding], it was quiet...and on the New England Highway, there are nice rolling hills and you can see horses and cows. We stopped in Armidale for breakfast and we took over this tiny café. All of us together.

Sam: We have a blue tooth. So we can talk to each other. It's pretty good because you can talk to the last person, you can talk to the middle person. That's how we kept everybody really close. Going down to Sydney was really handy, we had all of our members, every single one of us had mics on the bikes. This was the first year that I'd ridden with those in a big group. Usually we've gone away and we don't have them and it gets really hard. You've really got to, you've really got to concentrate on whose where and counting all the bikes. Those [Bluetooth and microphones] make it so much easier on long rides because I can lead and if Cat's at the end, Cat can go, 'Oh we just need to stay there and we've broken up a little bit, just slow down a little bit'. And those [microphones] go [range] about a K [kilometer] and a half. Because you might be doing a hundred but us up the back might be doing eighty. Yeah you can get spread out pretty quick, like Thunderbolt because it's basically one big road, there's not really anywhere where you turn off so. Yeah, and no cars are going to overtake you anyway. You're pretty much in one big set. That road is so bumpy but it's really really good. It's considered, they nicknamed it the roller coaster. So it's just big wide corners, big hills. So with the mic and Bluetooth you just don't worry, everyone just gets a really good rhythm on, and spreads across the road.

Edensor (2010, 14) suggests the metaphor of flow is useful in conceiving 'the sequential process through which imminent experience is replete with successive moments of regular attunement to the familiar, and the surprising and contingent'. The experience of flow, Edensor further claims, holds the potential to escape feelings of alienation. The assemblages of the Chapter's preparation and attunement, alongside the moving material assemblage of rolling hills, wide corners, empty roads, horses, cows, absence of rain and the use of communication technologies enabled the group to remain as one, and brought forth a rhythmic flow – enabling the emergence of belonging. The experience of flow, and consequential emergence of belonging, would not occur had the group not previously undertaken practices of preparation and attunement.

While the absence of other vehicles was generally conceived positively because it enabled the group to remain seamless, during particular segments of the journey the pleasures of belonging on-the-move to a larger 'gay' collective were heightened as other vehicles and symbols of gay Pride became incorporated into the mobile assemblage:

Mel (mid 20s, retail second Mardi Gras) : You'll have coming from Brisbane, or sort of Brisbane, Sunshine Coast, Gold Coast there's a, without knowing the numbers, there's a huge amount of gay people go down to Mardi Gras. It's like their annual travel. It's quite funny because when we ride, we'll ride from here down with our own flags [Figure 6.3] and everything, you'll go past cars with big gay flags on the windows and it's like 'Woo, woo'.



Figure 6.3: Dykes on Bikes on the road. *Source:* Julz.

Sexual politics for the Dykes on Bikes is illustrated through the pleasures of belonging, where the enjoyment of identifying with 'gay' symbols on the road functions as a form of entitlement and reclaiming that works against normative assumptions of a compulsory heterosexuality. Pleasure would not arise without the capacities to, not only establish flow, but also inhabit the road with ease (Ahmed 2004). The incorporation of others into the mobile assemblage extended the boundaries of belonging beyond the group, working to heighten the pleasures of identifying as lesbian or gay.

As outlined in Chapter 3, the capacities of events to render affects beyond their temporal and spatial boundaries is often conceived as limited (Picard & Robinson 2006). The use of queer symbols, such as the rainbow flag, during the journey threatens spatially bounded understandings of Mardi Gras as taking place within Sydney's city

centre. The Dykes on Bikes mobile performance therefore brings into question understandings that Mardi Gras is a liminal and spatially bounded event. Yet, at the same time, this performance is dependent on travel to Mardi Gras – and thus the pleasures derived through moving with other queered vehicles might not be possible in the same way beyond the temporalities of this event.

6.8 Moments of friction – moments of not belonging

The Dykes on Bikes flow was ruptured at particular moments as frictions cut through the assemblage. By way of example, negativity among the Chapter culminated as the Dykes on Bikes entered Sydney at the end of the outward journey. Mel, Jac and Julz explained how rain, cold, traffic, traffic lights, darkness and tiredness emerged after two days riding, all of which worked against feelings of euphoria at arriving in Sydney:

Mel: I enjoyed the ride down because I always enjoy endurance kind of rides. I was a little bit tired towards the end there, when it just started raining and it was cold. Towards the end, just about Hornsby; it just always seems to rain in that one particular spot and it just rained the whole way through, and I was just like, 'I'm freezing, I'm cold, I just want to get there'.

Anna: You were just over it?

Mel: Yeah, definitely over it. By that time, right towards the end there you just want to get home. You're just like I'm over it.

Jac: We were really tired because it took us ages to get to the hotel from Hornsby basically, and it was raining. So we were all really wet and really tired. It was just like 'Oh my god'. It got dark really quickly and then it started to sort of rain. And we were counting headlights because we couldn't really see which of us, because it was dark, and we couldn't distinguish between bikes. I was second last at the back and one of the girls was behind me. So we were counting headlights and we ended up with a group of people from somewhere else in the middle of our group. So we went through a set of headlights and she got stuck at a set of lights.

Julz: Pretty much fifteen k's [kilometers] north of Sydney, as we're heading down to Sydney, it rained and it didn't stop raining. On top of that you have wet clothes because, for example, my wet weather pants had a little hole in the right. So they were soaking wet and I couldn't dry them. And my gloves were wet, so pretty much the next morning you wake up and put your hands back in the gloves, for the whole day it's wet. Just over it. And that's really different for the girls because if you think about it, our monthly rides and everything, we cancel if it's pissing down rain. So they never ride in it.

There was a stickiness entering the city, which pulled the group apart, scattering the seamless assemblage; rupturing the flow, and thus disrupting the sense of belonging circulating between bodies-on-bikes for the previous two days. Heavy suburban traffic, darkness, rain, wet clothes, tired bodies and traffic lights served as frictions, breaking the group's formation. As riding bodies separated, they became vulnerable and uncomfortable. Becoming lone riders they were forced to increase sensory awareness of certain materialities (such as clothing and the headlights of other traffic) – it is through discomfort that the riders became aware of their bodies as a surface that was separate to that of the group's. The cold rain felt on Mel's skin, for example, forced the reflection: 'I'm freezing, I'm cold, I just want to get there'. Exploring the frictions encountered on entering the city hints at the importance and force of belonging to the moving assemblage in enabling riding bodies to not only undertake the journey, but experience the journey as pleasurable and undemanding.

Frictions, rendering moments of not belonging were also experienced when riding together at the parade. As Jac explained:

Jac: I expected I'd have this really high adrenalin rush but it was just, yeah nup. At the start when we moved into the section where it actually started it got annoying because we were sitting there and it was like argh, ok, and they [parade marshals] said 'Ok everybody get on your bikes and then we started the bikes up, and then we moved, and then we stopped and then we were sitting there and then they told us to turn them off because there was something on the road; a tree or something. There was something on the road, so I was like argh!

The irregular and non-sequential rhythm which came about as the riders were governed to stop and start disrupted and scattered the anticipated rhythmic flow of the parade. Waiting, stillness, irregular movement, and the introduction of material frictions triggered embodied responses of frustration leading to feelings of disconnection rather than belonging⁵¹. This disconnect was heightened for Jac through the way this moment contrasted with anticipations of an adrenalin rush.

The flow of the group's riding assemblage was again fractured on the first day of the return journey, when heavy rain over the weekend closed several roads of the planned return route:

Julz: And plus it was quiet, I reckon because it was such bad weather, like the weather was looking like it was going to be shit. We said 'It's probably going to rain, get your wet weather gear on'. I think some of them were quite worried that they might have to ride in really really bad conditions. And that's sort of in your own head that's a bit of a challenge as well. The roads that we wanted to do were closed.

Anna: Was Thunderbolts closed?

Julz: Yeah, Cessnock was shut, Thunderbolt. Everything was cut off.

Anna: So did you just go up the Pacific Highway?

⁵¹ Also see Appendix 8 for copy of the rules the Dykes on Bikes are required to follow to ride as part of Mardi Gras Parade.

Julz: No we went Pacific and then New England, out to New England. And then because we were staying at Walcha, which is at the end of Thunderbolt, or you know up the top, so we actually had to go out to Tamworth, out through Tamworth and then back track because we would have come this way and then up through Thunderbolt. So it was a pain riding all day in the wet, then doing night riding in the freezing cold.

Frictions represented the limits of belonging to the Dykes on Bikes. Despite the immense planning and preparation undertaken by the group, the introduction of rain, detours, darkness and so on, fractured the mobile assemblage. Through the abandonment of the seamless mobile assemblage riders were forced to individualise the journey. The journey, in such instances, became reconceived as a challenge no longer desired and no longer enabling the formation of belonging on-the-move.

6.9 Summary

This chapter contributes to growing scholarship on mobilities, embodiment, and the politics of festivals and belonging. Empirically, I examine the requirements of belonging to the Dykes on Bikes, and the ways belonging (and not belonging) is able to emerge on-the-move during the Dykes on Bikes return journey from Brisbane to Mardi Gras. I argue that attention to the visceral is crucial in addressing the ways belonging is experienced on-the-move. This chapter illustrates two main contributions of this thesis. First, through attending to belonging as an embodied, visceral experience capable of emerging through movement I attempt to trouble assumptions that mobility is the antithesis of belonging. Second, in attending to the important role of belonging in mobilising, preparing and sustaining return journeys to Mardi Gras, a framework is provided that stands against characterisations of festivals as temporally and spatially bounded.

The first empirical section focuses on the ways Dyke on Bike members plan for the impending journey in an attempt to understand the requirements of belonging to, and becoming, a Dyke on Bike. Planning and attuning the body are integral to establishing flow, and thus a sense of belonging, once on-the-move. I argue that planning and attunement requirements both subvert and reassert normative characterisations of

motorcycling as masculine. A politics to the Dyke on Bike identity is identified; distinct conceptions around who is, and who is not, a Dyke on Bike render an essentialised identity that serves as simultaneously powerful and oppressive for members. On the one hand, the Dyke on Bike identity creates a space for members to perform unique intersections of their identity (such as 'lesbian', 'dyke', 'female', 'motorcycle rider') not available elsewhere in their everyday lives. The Dyke on Bike performance is therefore conceived as powerful in enabling members to make sense of their lives, and establish a sense of belonging. On the other hand, the essentialised Dyke on Bike identity serves as oppressive, through the political unevenness generated through the group, its reproduction of normative gendered frameworks and prioritising of particular subjectivities at the potential marginalisation of others.

The second empirical section examined the ways Dyke on Bike belonging was able to emerge on-the-move. I focus attention on the ways various elements, such as riding bodies, materialities, rules and other vehicles came together as an assemblage, facilitating the experience of flow and togetherness. Through flow, belonging surfaces on bodies. I argue that understanding belonging as mobile is significant because it provides a framework to move beyond the time and space of events, and points to how festivals are more widely imbricated with the everyday. Moreover, I detail how the pleasures of belonging to the Dykes on Bikes enabled riders to inhabit the road with ease – a political act working against normative assumptions of a compulsory heterosexuality. I discuss the ways Dykes on Bikes inhabitation of the road was mobilised by, yet also brought into question, bounded constructions of Mardi Gras.

The final empirical section brought attention to encounters with frictions as a way to bring attention to the fragility and limits of belonging. Elements, such as rain, dark, heavy traffic, invisibility and detours ruptured the seemingly seamless assemblage of the group, forcing members' bodies into existence. Moments of not belonging highlight the capacities belonging affords in enabling members to not only prepare for, undertake and finish the demanding 1,800 kilometre return journey, but also experience it as pleasurable.

The next chapter seeks to share another narrative of a return journey to Mardi Gras: specifically the 1,400 kilometre return bus journey of a regional queer collective from Shepparton, Victoria. This chapter troubles thinking that separates activism from leisure through examining the ways emotions and affective relationships are performed through the journey, as a way to sustain the collective longer term.

7.1 *An affective online encounter*

We met online. It was a late spring afternoon. I had been trawling through social media; attempting to connect with queer collectives planning to attend Mardi Gras. Following a few hours of searching I came across Goulburn Valley Pride, colloquially known as GV Pride. GV Pride, I soon discover, is a queer collective located in Shepparton; a manufacturing service centre in regional Victoria, Australia. Population: no more than 30,000. Yet an active webpage, blog, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook⁵² profiles enabled conversations among members, and a barrage of information detailing the group and their many upcoming events. GV Pride had an online presence contrasting strongly with the online activity (or lack thereof) of many other queer collectives. Something interesting was happening here. As a consequence to my research I was first interested in GV Pride's planning of a luxury coach trip to Mardi Gras, but I also become intrigued by their organisation of the region's first Pride festival, *Out in the Open*; a festival designed to celebrate community diversity. Reflecting later, I wondered – what was it about this regional service centre that both establishes and maintains such a visible presence of diversity and sexual politics? And, given this public visibility, what sorts of activism and politics are being performed? Talking with the group online in the ensuing months led to the organising of a stall for recruitment at the Out in the Open festival in November 2012, and joining their luxury coach trip to Mardi Gras in 2013.

This chapter tells the story of GV Pride's 1,400 kilometre return bus trip to Mardi Gras from regional Victoria to Mardi Gras – including the lead up to, and the aftermath of this event. In so doing, I explore the role of mobilities, emotions and leisure in generating and sustaining this queer collective, and thus work to trouble distinctions

⁵² Interestingly, included in GV Pride's mission statement is an aim 'to maintain website profiles (e.g. Facebook/Myspace/Yahoo! group or equivalent) on a regular basis, as a secondary way of providing information/engaging our members'.

between activism and regionality, and activism and tourism. I argue that examining GV Pride, and their return journey, introduces alternative ways of doing queer activism that is mindful of the specificities of place, emotional sustainability⁵³ and a relational ethics⁵⁴. By design, I begin with a critical reading of mobilities and tourism literature. I question the absence of activism in tourism scholarship, and give weight to the consideration of queer leisure mobilities as an avenue in which to understand broader significances of queer politics and activism. I, thereafter, briefly draw on Ahmed's (2004) analogy of 'affective economies' (as introduced in Chapter 2), as well as Anderson's (2014) notion of 'affective atmospheres'. These concepts provide a theoretical framework to explore the spaces of travel, and the meanings and roles of return journeys to Mardi Gras. An examination of the Shepparton context and the methodology is next introduced – rendering insight and reason for the unique version of queer activism performed by GV Pride. Turning to a discussion of the empirical, I further detail the unique version of queer politics GV Pride perform; illustrating the ways this version of queer politics is dependent on the work of emotional sustainability, a relational ethics and the specificities of Shepparton. Finally, I consider the role of return journeys, illustrating how leisure, mobilities and emotions are used in generating and sustaining this regional queer collective – a tenet which serves to trouble distinctions between activism and tourism. In bringing all this to a conclusion, I argue that GV Pride's version of queer politics both reproduces and questions particular constructions of activism. Specifically, I illustrate how the deployment of leisure, as a space to perform queer politics, brings in to question characterisations of activism as absent from leisure. Yet, at the same time, I suggest return journeys to Mardi Gras reproduce constructions positing 'valid' queer activism as urban centric.

⁵³ I use the phrase 'emotional sustainability' to refer to the role of emotions in energising and holding together collectives and politics (Brown & Pickerill 2009).

⁵⁴ I use the phrase 'relational ethics' to refer to a framework of ethics that is situated and emergent through GV Pride performance, and is thus unique to the collective, rather than normative, pre-existing and abstract (Whatmore 1997).

7.2 *The politics of tourism mobilities*

Tourism is often conceived as antithesis to activism (Binnie & Klesse 2011). Tourism is associated with leisure, relaxation, escape and consumption, while activism is commonly identified with involvement, work, effort and 'ethical practice' (Dave 2011). Divisions between activism and tourism prevail through a perception that the success of the tourism sector is dependent on quiet, solitary environments (Buda *et al.* 2014; Hall *et al.* 2003) – while activism in its 'purest' form is radical, overt and controversial (Askins 2009). Yet, such distinctions are questioned within research on Pride parades (Browne 2007; Waitt & Staple 2011), solidarity tourism (Binnie & Klesse 2011) and danger zones (Buda *et al.* 2014). This work challenges characterisations of tourism as necessarily apolitical, or depoliticised, through exploring the interplay between politics, hedonism and tourism. Binnie and Klesse (2011), for example, interviewed participants attending the March for Tolerance in Krakow, which is the city's annual tolerance and equality march. They argue that the touristic concept of hospitality is crucial in the formation of activist networks related to this event. In fact, activist's failure to perform recognised hospitality practices rendered disenchantment among attendees. Likewise seeking to challenge distinctions between politics and tourism, Browne (2007) examines the messy (re)constitution of Pride spaces through politics, fun and commercialism. Browne argues that such spaces are best conceived as 'parties with politics', where hedonism is central to the political (re)constitution of sexed spaces, bodies and identities.

Further to this, some scholars seek to question constructions of 'activism' as necessarily radical, energetic, resistant, oppositional, and national or global in focus. Askins (2009), and Horton and Kraftl (2009), call for a revaluing of activism that acknowledges its performance through more local, every day, and implicit practices. This revaluing acknowledges the politics of the personal, that is, the ways 'everyday' activism holds potentials to affect, and be affected by, issues occurring across scales. Building on these concerns, Brown and Pickerill (2009) note the importance in acknowledging the ways activist groups attend to their emotional sustainability by seeking sites temporally removed from more visible activist spaces. In this chapter I seek to build on these

(re)characterisations of activism by exploring intersections of tourism and queer politics through return journeys. Moreover, it is my intention to bring into focus the notion that queer activism remains cast through a specifically urban lens (Browne & Bakshi 2013; Grundy & Smith 2005; Nash 2005 – although, for exception see Gorman-Murray *et al.* 2008a). Through the telling of GV Pride's activism, I not only bring attention to the performance of activism beyond metropolitan centres, but the different ways activism is performed in relation to specificities of place.

Specific attention to the mobilities of touristic politics stems from two concerns. First, as outlined in Chapter 3, Pride parade scholarship serves as crucial in generating understandings of the performances of sexed spaces, bodies and identities within the temporal and spatial confines of events. Less scholarship, however, has held concern with the ways Pride events are fluid and co-evolving with various scopes of social and cultural vectors (for exception see Waitt & Staple 2011). I follow Picard and Robinson's (2006) suggestion to prioritise the ways events are deeply imbricated with the social realities of everyday life. Through this chapter (and thesis more broadly) I seek to shift focus to the defining moment of the festival journey – as one way to grant insight into the broader motivations, emotions and attitudes leading up to and following Mardi Gras. In so doing, I am able to examine the potential roles and meanings travel to Mardi Gras might hold longer term. Second, as outlined in Chapter 2, to date scholarship that examines queer mobilities tends to focus on longer term queer migration (Gorman-Murray 2007b; Knopp 2004; Lewis 2013). This work serves as an imperative for breaking down dichotomous constructions of queer movement as always permanent, one way directional flows from rural areas to urban centres. Moving beyond a focus on longer term migration, I attempt to widen and extend understandings of queer movement by exploring the motivations and meanings of more ephemeral return journeys. To that end, rather than working to replace productive debates which have come before, I try to broaden queer mobilities research to include return journeys to festivals, and increase understanding of the multiple and complex ways mobilities may be incorporated throughout the life course.

In examining the spaces of travel, and the meanings of return journeys to Mardi Gras, I turn to the notion of 'affective atmospheres', as developed by Anderson (2014) and, as briefly outlined in Chapter 2, the analogy of 'affective economies' as composed by Ahmed (2004). The notion of affective atmospheres is useful for assemblage thinking because it enables understanding of how certain presences, not only emerge through specific encounters, but also potentially pre-exist encounters. In this chapter I draw on the framework of affective atmospheres to conceive the ways affects, moods and emotions are not only emergent through unified encounters – they may also be part of complex conditions occurring in the lead up to examined encounters, derived through other processes, events and relations.

I illustrate how an affective atmosphere becomes configured within the spaces GV Pride uses for activism, through the enrolment of ideas, bodies and objects. Through previous work GV Pride has already created an anticipated atmosphere before undertaking the return journey. While affective atmospheres are background phenomena, they do affect how GV Pride inhabit travel, as affective atmospheres become entangled with other moods, emotions and materialities in varying ways during the return journey. Affective atmospheres, for Anderson, are necessarily abstract and distributed – yet they are palpable, registered in and through the sensing body. They are not, however, emergent or belonging to any one particular body. Affective atmospheres are also not reducible to any one discrete emotion – to be sure, they envelope and surround through dynamic processes. Perhaps of greatest importance, affective atmospheres do mediate capacities to affect and be affected. Yet, at the same time, atmospheres are always felt differently; there are thus always possibilities for individuals to act other than the affective atmosphere.

Ahmed's (2004) analogy of 'affective economies' is also useful in conceptualising the ways emotions circulate between and become attached to social, material and psychic bodies, producing particular affects. To briefly reiterate my outline in Chapter 2, emotions, for Ahmed, work consciously on the surfaces of bodies. Not being tied to any human or non-human body, emotions work in much the same way as capital, 'affect does not reside positively in the sign or commodity, but is produced only as an

effect of its circulation' (Ahmed 2004, 120). As with capital, through circulation emotions increase in magnitude – the more emotions circulate the more affective they become. It is through this process of circulation that emotions increasingly appear to 'contain' affect. The analogy of affective economies is useful in explaining how emotions do not inhabit, or emerge through, any one particular body but rather circulate between human and non-human bodies, becoming attached to the surfaces of particular bodies through increasing circulation. By way of example, as examined throughout this chapter, the affective economy of GV Pride care does not inhabit anybody but rather circulates between social, material and psychic bodies. GV Pride's version of care has undergone a process of intensification through increasing circulation within GV Pride, which serves to shape particular boundaries and surfaces of the group, and the return journey.

7.3 Shepparton, Victoria

Shepparton is located in north east Victoria, approximately 180 kilometres from Melbourne. The population of Shepparton is around 30,000, while the population of the entire Goulburn Valley (in which GV Pride aims to service) is over 60,000 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2013). Shepparton is a major agricultural and manufacturing centre, and is therefore vulnerable to the decline of both industries within the Australian context. In contrast to many other Victorian regional centres (such as Bright, Ballarat, Bendigo and Daylesford), Shepparton has not benefitted from economic diversification into tourism, education or health. Cosmopolitan urbanism is not part of the geographical imagination of Shepparton, which includes diversity, trendiness and gentrification. Instead youth unemployment rose in Shepparton by 40 per cent during the 2013/14 financial year (Australian Broadcasting Commission 2014), sitting at 8.3 percent, compared with the national 5.1 percent (Munro 2012). A *Goulburn Valley Health and Wellbeing Community Profile* (Goulburn Valley Primary Care Partnership 2013) detailed in 2011 only 53.5% of surveyed Shepparton residents felt safe walking alone after dark, compared to 70.3% across the state. Suicide rates are also above state average: in 2013, 15.5 per 100,000 for the region compared to 11.01 per 100,000 for Victoria (Whitelaw *et al.* 2014). Moreover, a 2011 study focused on same-sex

attracted and gender questioning youth suicide prevention in the region found mixed perceptions around non-normative sexualities. When asked to explain Shepparton's perceptions to non-normative sexualities one participant responded:

Pretty conservative. Some sections of [the] younger community are good, very open, lots of experimentation but still a pretty hard core group of homophobic people out there in the adult community; we certainly have same-sex attracted people who would not feel comfortable.

Quote from Hobbs & Hillier 2011

Similarly, a local health worker shared:

It is still a fairly narrow-minded place with small town values and systems. Predominately still a football, netball, soccer region and have archaic thoughts about relationships and how they should look.

Quote from Hobbs & Hillier 2011

In interpreting the above statistics and narratives, among many others not here listed, there is a sense that while Shepparton possesses multiple, conflicting and shifting perceptions around sex and gender, there is still a relatively narrow understanding of what it means to be a man or a woman. Norms and discourses circulating at the scale of the region assist in framing narrow understandings and ideologies of heteropatriarchy. Landscapes of heteropatriarchy serve to underpin the version of queer politics and sexualities, and a relational ethics, GV Pride seeks to perform.

7.4 Methodology

This chapter shares the experiences of 18 individuals⁵⁵ who undertook a return bus trip from Shepparton to Sydney for the 2013 Mardi Gras. The group was a diverse bunch⁵⁶. Participants identified with a range of sexualities, the majority self-identified as queer, lesbian or gay, while two claimed a heterosexual identity. No individuals claimed a transgender, intersex or bisexual identity. They ranged in age from early twenties to mid-sixties. The overwhelming majority worked full-time, although occupations were a mix of service, white collar and blue collar occupations. Previous Mardi Gras attendance varied; for some this was their first time, while others no longer recalled the number of times they had travelled to Mardi Gras. Crucially, some members in their twenties, attending for the first time, held limited knowledge of the political history of Mardi Gras, conceiving the event as opportunity to celebrate diversity, spend time with GV Pride members and party.

As outlined in Chapter 5, the mixed methodology *travel ethnographies* combined semi-structured interviews (both before and after festival attendance), observant participation and online storytelling. No GV Pride participants completed a solicited diary. The emotions of love, joy, sorrow and pride emerged as key themes during analysis, and thus serve as central to this discussion. Participants gave their consent to the use of their names and that of the collective's, rather than the use of pseudonyms. This decision echoed one of GV Pride's principle aims: to increase public visibility of non-normative sexuality across Shepparton.

⁵⁵ Of the 18 travellers, 12 'informally' participated in the research, while six participated 'formally'. 'Informal' participation involved spending time with, and talking to, myself – without any formal data collection (such as recording a conversation). 'Formal' participation involved undertaking a recorded semi-structured interview and/or online storytelling.

⁵⁶ See Appendix 5 for overview of member attributes.

7.5 GV Pride: the role & politics of emotional sustainability & a relational ethics

Entering the conference room in one of Shepparton's many pubs on the opening night of *Out in the Open*, I began to put names to faces. The driver behind both *Out in the Open* and GV Pride, Damien, led the evening's events. In his early thirties, Damien grew up in the outer suburbs of Melbourne, moving to Shepparton in his early twenties when offered a job with Christian non-for-profit organisation, Uniting Care⁵⁷. Recognising a lack of social spaces for gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer and ally identifying individuals, Damien started GV Pride eight years ago. GV Pride runs alongside Diversity Group. Diversity Group is also run by Damien, but designed to provide assistance for same-sex attracted and trans young people. GV Pride, in contrast, aims to be inclusive of anyone desiring 'a safe space for friendship, family, networking and fellowship' (Goulburn Valley Pride 2015).

In conversation with Damien, later that evening, I attempted to understand some of the reasons driving GV Pride to undertake the bus journey to Mardi Gras:

⁵⁷ While beyond the scope of this chapter, connections between GV Pride, Christianity and social planning are intriguing, and potentially problematic. Religion has long held a powerful role in shaping legislation regulating non-normative sexualities, and continues to act as both an enabler and restrictor in the development of sexual orientation equity (Johnson & Vanderbeck 2014). In Australia it is not, however, uncommon for social planning funding to take place in this way (Gorman-Murray 2011). For the reason that, funding decisions relating to social planning take place at the state level, while implementation of projects is generally undertaken at the local scale through not-for-profit organisations. Not-for-profit organisations are required to apply for state funding through grant funding processes for specific projects. Such a funding structure serves as both constraining and enabling (Gorman-Murray 2011). Positively, the process enables the creation of services specifically designed to meet the unique needs of local areas. Yet it also generates significant variations in the levels of services available across states and regions, and places power with certain community groups (such as the Christian group Uniting Care), who potentially possess personal, political and social agendas. To be sure, Damien and other GV Pride members, depicted Uniting Care as progressive, and yielding in its support; there was thus nothing to suggest tensions in the intersection of religion, sexuality and social planning in this instance. More broadly, however, the particular structure of social planning in Australia, which potentially grants power to certain religious, as well as other independent, groups, does warrant further exploration. For this reason, while beyond the scope of this chapter and thesis, future attention may be granted to the intersection of religion, sexuality and regional social planning.

Anna: Have you ever thought of putting together a GV Pride parade float?

Damien: [hesitates] Yeah, um ... we've long spoken about [pause, pensive] um ... Sydney Mardi Gras is recognized throughout the world, it's a major event in our country and I think it is an event for our country, for Sydney, and so I think there should be more state representation. GV Pride is a social group, it is a Shepparton based group and it's Shepparton focused. So, although GV Pride is the coordinator of this road trip, it's very Shepparton centric and I think that putting Shepparton on the map for the purpose of the float in Mardi Gras is less important.

Damien's narrative illustrates the ways the politics of Pride play out differently across scales and spaces. While characterisations of Mardi Gras are multiple, relational and open, as discussed in Chapter 3 the event is broadly popularised for its national and international visibility, flamboyant, overtly sexualised and camp night time celebratory sensibility, and its oppositional, satirical commentary on the politics and laws of the day (Markwell & Waitt 2009). Contrasting with the work of GV Pride, Mardi Gras arguably undertakes an important political role in introducing and managing non-normative sexualities discourses in the Australian narrative – generating immense public visibility at the scale of the nation (Markwell & Waitt 2009). Damien understands this positioning of Mardi Gras, and the ways it differs with the priorities of GV Pride. The political work undertaken by GV Pride is conceived as 'more important' at the local, Shepparton scale, rather than that of the national (or state) scale in which Mardi Gras represents. GV Pride turns inwards, working through discourses of care, inclusion, collectivity, and emotional sustainability. Rather than opportunity to perform a Pride politics aligning with the outward looking and highly visible national representation a Mardi Gras float affords, travel to Mardi Gras is conceived as a Shepparton centric leisure opportunity, enabling stronger relations within the group.

The crucial inward focus on GV Pride and the performances through which the group is sustained became further evident the following morning. Meeting for coffee, Damien introduced me to Georgie in a local coffee shop where she works full time. Georgie is 23. Born and raised in the Goulburn Valley, Georgie moved to Shepparton from a smaller town, 70 kilometres away, following high school. Originally introduced to GV

Pride through a friend, she is now actively involved (since fieldwork Georgie has become president of GV Pride). Speaking with Georgie over coffee she explains how emotions work to render GV Pride membership sustainable:

So I went a few times, and then after going to GV Pride, I tried to be... I would start catching up with a few different people, like out ... as well. So I became really close to Matt and that's kind of... it just kind of evolved from there...

Georgie pauses, reflecting. Pensively, she goes on,

...and I think if it wasn't for that I would've moved because...it wasn't that I didn't love my friends or anything...I just didn't think there was anything else. And now I feel like I have so much more substance in my life...it's really really changed my perspective a lot. People always say: 'Oh you just work at a coffee shop', but for me my job makes me money, there's the things I volunteer my time for that are really important and what I tell people that I love.

For Georgie, the emotion of love sustains her involvement with GV Pride, and prevents her from moving elsewhere. Love toward GV Pride also works as a form of resilience, or immunity from alternative obligations, such as employment. Georgie was not alone in characterising the work that love does in sustaining the group; love worked to bring members into place, rendering belonging to GV Pride, and also Shepparton (Morrison *et al.* 2013).

Further explaining the way GV Pride is held together through emotion, as well as through a relational ethics, Georgie moved on to share:

...and for me, it's getting away from my dramatized friends... which can be very draining...because it's all girls, all the time. It can be very intense and, so it was good meeting new people and making new friends. It's just a really good way to meet people, really. Also like you know because Damien and all the people in the committee, they always organize events. And there's always you know a bus or something so it's always easy to get there. And it's always fun, so.

GV Pride utilizes a framework of care that moves beyond the spatial constraints of Shepparton to spaces of Pride leisure events across New South Wales and Victoria. Organized leisure events generated opportunities for fun – opportunities that further hold the group together. Georgie’s narrative speaks to the ways GV Pride commitment is more than shared identity or mutual politics. Members also sought belonging with GV Pride because, simply, it is fun. It offers possibilities to make new friends and generates a form of organized entertainment, and collective travel opportunities not available to Georgie through more conventional friendships. This doubling affect is important because it highlights the affective role of joy, and the pleasures of leisure, in rendering belonging, and sustaining the queer activism performed by the group (Hynes & Sharpe 2009). For GV Pride, rather than being absent, the use of pleasure and joy perpetuate their politics. Wilkinson (2009) warns, however, that the ruling of certain ‘appropriate emotions’ (such as joy), within political communities may serve to exclude those desiring to perform alternative types of feelings deemed out of place (such as anger or frustration). Following Wilkinson (2009), inhibiting certain emotions deemed less relevant closes down possibilities for reflection and debate, and thus can actually come to mirror the emotions found in mainstream society.

Differing slightly from Wilkinson’s analysis, rather than completely inhibiting more negative emotions, GV Pride utilized a dynamic interplay of emotions – temporally and spatially negotiating the performances of specific emotions as a way to heighten care and belonging within the group. The following narrative, again from Georgie, illustrates the ways sorrow was temporally and spatially constrained within the ‘private’ space of group meetings – a process contrasting with joy, which emerged more freely and frequently across ‘public’ spaces of travel and festival attendance. Georgie shared:

Damien asked Dan [GV Pride member] and myself if we were interested in being leaders at the meetings and I kind of thought about it and I thought it'd be a really good opportunity to see what kind of difference you can make in someone's life. So, yeah, so I love that we're doing that at the meetings. Like Damien still works there as well but it's kind of up to us, what we decide to do at the meetings. It's amazing about teaching life skills and being there so that they can learn to be independent and learn to accept that you know, being out and being proud isn't necessarily a bad thing. Yeah so... support ... you know, they need a shoulder to cry on, share things. And on the other hand, anybody that just needs, doesn't have any friends and needs somewhere to go like, kind of like a would be church youth group. Yeah, kind of like a network ...we can put them in contact with somebody who can help them further along.

Feminist scholars have long acknowledged the dynamic entanglements of emotions, such as love and hate, pleasure and pain, and pride and shame (Fortier 2008; Pavlidis & Fullagar 2014; Probyn 2000b, 2004). The spatial and temporal containment of 'negative' and 'positive' emotions as they unfold through GV Pride performances, emergent through Georgie's narrative, points specifically to a dynamic interplay between pride and shame. Following Probyn (2004), shame stems from something that is read to be 'out of place'. In this instance, non-normative sexuality is out of place within Shepparton. While everyday life is often privatised, reading non-normative subjectivities 'as out of place' rips shame into existence. Pride, emergent from the work of GV Pride, works to reconfigure shame as a strategy to trouble normative discourses that produce shame. Shame, is thus felt as the limits of pride. In interpreting Georgie's words I suggest sorrow, as revealed through crying, bleeds from shame; sorrow is a further acknowledgment that one does not 'fit in' to heteronormative conceptions of Shepparton. Shame and sorrow therefore represent the boundaries of acceptance within Shepparton, serving as the impetus for GV Pride's existence and unique relational ethics (which does not align with the normative ethics circulating at the scale of Shepparton).

The relational ethics performed by GV Pride through their meetings, in part, responds to the broader unevenness of normative care practices across Shepparton. The sorrow,

emergent through feeling out of place within Shepparton, generates the imperatives GV Pride places on performances of care (Milligan & Wiles 2010). Sorrow is a product of those seeking to erase certain identities and experiences. A requirement of Georgie's membership as a 'leader' is to extend comfort to those reduced to sorrow – where to be out of place in Shepparton, is to be in place within GV Pride. Responding to sorrow, pride emerges through the performance of carer – obligatory to her role as leader. In its sustainability, GV Pride depends on these relational emotional power dynamics for its longevity, where a relational ethics and collective welfare permeates among longer term members, extended to newer members, ultimately heightening group pride and identity – and attempting to eradicate sexualised shame felt through the broader Shepparton community.

Emotions travel and circulate as affective atmospheres through a range of different spatialities. GV Pride, however, attempts to manage love, joy, pride and sorrow in specific, hierarchical ways to sustain emotional well-being over longer temporalities. Sorrow as performed in Georgie's narrative, for example, appeared to be confined within the 'private' spaces of organised meetings, and was thus limited in its 'public' appearance. Joy, in contrast, was more readily (re)produced in a range of varying 'public' spatialities, and was closely linked to the less direct spaces of activism deployed by the group – for example, the spaces of leisure travel during their return journey to Mardi Gras – a discussion to which I now turn.

7.6 Outward journey

Arriving just after 7 am, Friday morning it was hard to miss the crowd of members and their mass of rainbow materialities dwelling on the footpath between the parked bus [which can be viewed in the background of Figure 7.1] and Uniting Care. In consequence to the group's visibility within Shepparton, a number of local news outlets had featured reports on the journey. The most prominent to date, GV Weeknights, was filming as I arrived. GV Weeknights is a commercial week nightly news program, broadcasting on all things Goulburn Valley. Keen on generating local visibility, some members arrived early to speak to the GV Weeknights reporter, while

the camera crew took sweeping shots of the group as we boarded the bus [Figure 7.2]. This event layered an excitable buzz over the group, heightening the affective atmosphere of anticipated joy – something big was definitely coming.



Figure 7.1: GV Pride members and coach. *Source:* GV Pride.

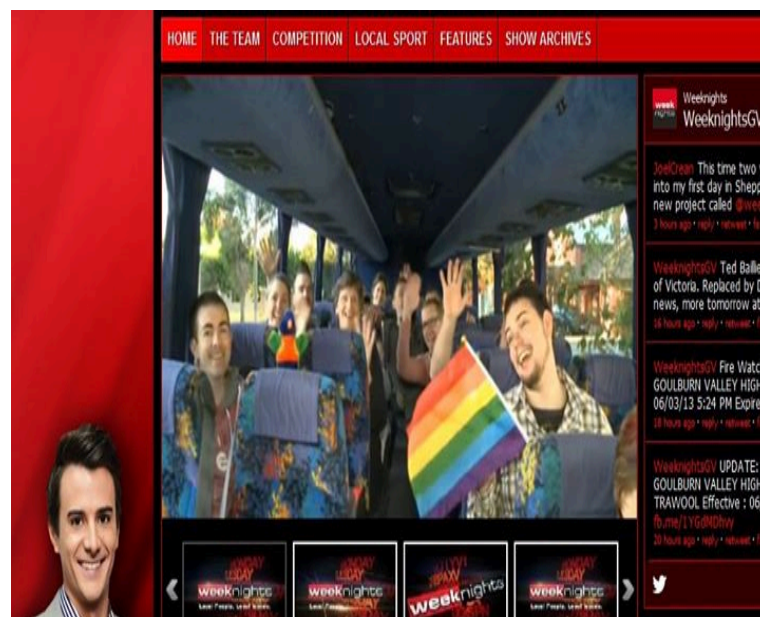


Figure 7.2: Image of local news footage featuring GV Pride on bus. *Source:* Damien.

We finally departed Shepparton around 7:45 am that Friday morning – the day before the Mardi Gras Parade. With over 700 kilometres stretching ahead, a number of stops were planned [see Figure 7.3 for journey route]. First, Albury train station for a coffee and toilet break; next a service centre near Gundagai for lunch, and finally another service centre in Pheasants Nest (the final service centre before suburban Sydney) for another toilet and coffee break, before we met early Friday evening peak hour traffic in the south west suburbs of Sydney. The journey was semi-structured, with mostly unenforced times granted to each stop. Members often remained in large groups during stops – choosing to share meals together, rather than break off into smaller groups. Upon much anticipation the bus finally arrived in Sydney’s eastern suburbs around 7 pm Friday evening, nearly 12 hours after leaving Shepparton. Following three nights in Sydney, the bus returned early morning the next Monday – leaving Sydney around 7:30 am, visiting the same three stops (yet with less time spent at each), before returning to Shepparton to meet some surprisingly heavy peak hour traffic and the late afternoon sun, around 5:30 pm.

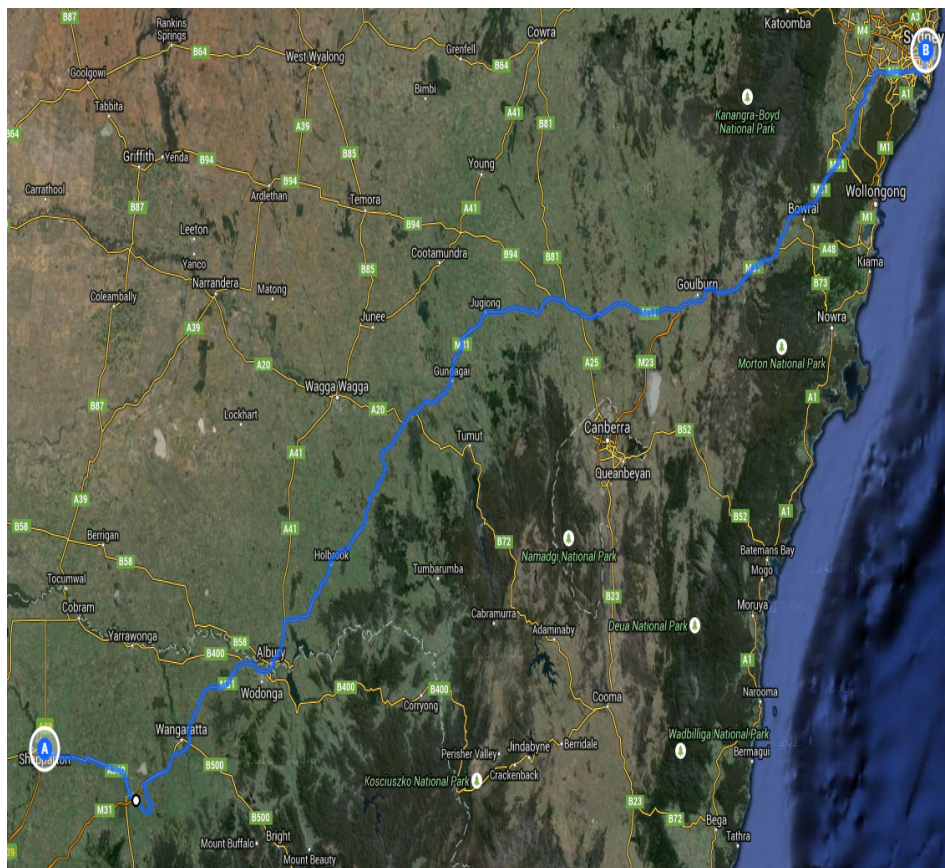


Figure 7.3: GV Pride outward and return journey. *Source:* Map modified using Google Maps by author.

Travelling up the Hume Highway heading towards Sydney early Friday morning, dry farmlands stretching to meet distant mountains, while cars screamed past the relative slowness of our bus, I began to make more sense of the ways this journey was configured for GV Pride members. Upon entering, the bus had immediately been refashioned to accommodate bodies for a long trip – a material and discursive process that involved film, music, decorations and Facebook. With only 20 bodies [18 participants, the bus driver and I] on a bus able to accommodate over 50 – members spread out, extending their bodies and possessions into the space. Early on, rainbow decorations were hung throughout and Damien led a short introduction. These practices helped to territorialise the bus as inclusive of sexual diversity, serving to create an intimacy that transformed the space from a conventional bus into a GV Pride space.

The Facebook page created around the trip was used humorously as members tagged each other in photos and status updates, and shared music and links to various web pages. At the beginning of the journey, for instance, one GV Pride member, Kieran, created an online survey, linked to the group's Facebook page, as a way to determine which movies to watch during the trip. After much deliberation three movies were chosen: *Adventures of Priscilla: Queen of the Desert*, *Transamerica* and *Mamma Mia* (the last taking a somewhat controversial third place). Priscilla, voted at number one, was the only uncontroversial choice; oft labelled as Australia's only queer road musical, it performed as a fitting backdrop to the outward journey. Some of those on the bus playfully linked 'good' and 'bad' movie reviews in the survey's comments section in an attempt to sway other's votes. Asking this question through Facebook brought everyone on the bus into conversations that took place both on and offline. The *in situ* utilisation of the survey on-the-move is an interesting example of using an online space to become closer with those already physically proximate, rather than how it is often understood within academia as a way to bring people together over distance (cf. Schwanen & Kwan 2008).

Chatting with Damien about the atmosphere during the outward journey over coffee a couple of days after returning to Shepparton, he reflected:

There was just this sense of we're on the bus...we're all here for the same reasons...we all must be feeling the same thing.

Pausing:

So very quickly there was just this sense of common purpose, safety, ease of getting to know people...and not just sitting there in their own bubble fearing things, but actually talking.

The atmospheres during the outward journey contrasts with conventional public bus travel. Bull (2005) identifies the ways travellers attempt to create privatised bubbles when making use of public buses for travel. Particular social conventions, such as the use of individual mobile technologies establish a level of autonomy over time and place, rendering an aural privacy when travelling in public space. GV Pride members, conversely, drew on material and discursive processes (such as Facebook, music, frictions and seats) to prevent and break down the emergence of privatised bubbles, pulling travellers' bodies together rather than apart.

Conversations with those around me revealed more of the motivations for travelling with GV Pride. Deb and Peta, the couple sitting in the seats in front explained that it would have been quicker and cheaper for them to just jump in the car to drive to Sydney. Yet, they preferred the slower, sociability of the bus, and the heightened mindfulness of a collective politics of Pride. Vannini's (2014) understanding of slowness is useful in interpreting these ideas. Vannini shares that slowing down means to affect the way we dwell in-the-world and in turn be affected by it; slowing down can be a way of increasing the body's capacity to cultivate affective awareness of the self, others, movement and sense of place. Often conceptualised as negative, slowness was reconfigured by the group as a way to strengthen personal relations – as is evident in the following example, where slowness, alongside the assemblage of friction, long temporalities and the bus's materialities enabled the unfolding of long intimate dialogue between one participant, Fiona, and myself.

Fiona and I started talking when the bus stopped in Albury for coffee. Fiona, in her 40s, moved to Shepparton to become a public servant a couple of years ago after 'living all over the place'. Fiona is now GV Pride's Secretary. Previously sitting on opposite ends of the bus, Fiona and I had not yet spoken. Following coffee break we followed each other back onto the bus, continuing our conversation. Sometimes discussion was only between the two of us, at moments others joined in. In the course of this time Fiona's narrative comfortably became intimate as she soon began folding in her personal life narrative and her role within GV Pride into the space of the bus. At the time I felt slightly surprised with Fiona's immediate care for and about those on the bus (including myself). I had not met Fiona before that morning; despite this she shared experiences regarding her life-course and past intimate relationships.

Care through practices of listening and telling personal narratives was not unique to Fiona. Many on the bus were forthcoming with storying intimate experience, using the space of the bus to further learn about each other's life narratives. I suggest the intensity of care, trust and intimacy relied on certain affects that extended beyond these individual encounters. Following Anderson's (2014) notion of 'affective atmospheres', and Ahmed's (2004) analogy of 'affective economies' an affective atmosphere of care already existed in some sense before members entered the spaces of travel. Since the group's inception eight years ago, care had undergone a process of intensification, increasing in circulation through the group's performance of a relational ethics. Through affective atmospheres, a certain type of care, and by extension trust and intimacy, was thus already circulating among members upon entering the space of the bus, yet was also reliant on the other varying affects encountered through the assemblage emergent through the spaces of the bus. Travelling with the group, I too became a body in this affective atmosphere of care, and was consequently affected by it.

It was not, however, predetermined that care would circulate within the bus, and attach itself to all travelling bodies. Rather its emergence was dependent on the ways it came to intercept with the assemblage. The use of food and toilet stops along the way, for example, served as frictions, reassembling GV Pride's formation, rendering new

encounters with travelling bodies through different seating arrangements. This reassembling of travelling bodies may not have occurred if the bus had kept the same rhythm, moving steadily along the Hume Highway. These re-assemblages worked to inhibit the formation of clusters and bubbles that may have become established over time. Frictions, followed by the patterned, repetitious rhythm of the bus enabled a certain type of long, intimate conversation to occur. The journey's length further generated a time and space for slow, considered responses and long pauses. Intimate conversations, in which practices of care emerged, were also heightened through the material affordances of the bus: tall, padded lounge style seats, sitting side by side, rather than face to face, alongside the hypnotic, uninterrupted dry grasslands [Figure 7.4]. The unique conversation enabled within the space of the bus rendered a reciprocal opportunity to learn more about members. The outward journey was, in consequence, used to further heighten relationships of care, between and for one another. The use of travel in this way aligns with the work of Laurier *et al.* (2008), who found that the motion offered through long journeys, alongside the materialities of the car was conducive to the emergence of intimate, uninterrupted conversation. Similarly, Laurier *et al.* (2008) found travel conversations extended relationships of responsibility and care, producing new expectations, obligations and values.



Figure 7.4: View of Hume Highway from bus. *Source:* Author.

There were moments, however, where embodied connections between bodies broke down. At times, for instance, some members broke into song, or spoke about 'Mardi Gras anthems'⁵⁸. These encounters were felt, and thus, responded to differently depending on members' personal histories, knowledges and subjectivities. Those on the bus, including myself, who were not so aware of the aesthetic discourses of Mardi Gras seemed uncomfortable, fidgety or fell silent during such encounters. Conversely, those in the know became increasingly joyous and excitable through this sharing. These moments divided the group. For those ignorant to this insider cultural capital, such as myself, feelings of alienation emerged. Others, who recognised and consumed these particular aesthetic Mardi Gras products, were able to establish a heightened sense of belonging. Following Bourdieu (1977), knowledge of particular forms of culture enables social mobility, enabling heightened group status for those individuals. The joy emergent through such encounters was not momentary – often generating further dialogue, sharing and humour – rendering contrasting emotions performed by those in the know, and those who were not. These moments hint at the politics at work within GV Pride – where the joy emergent through this cultural capital served as crucial in rendering heightened group status. Recognising the politics of such emotional frictions is crucial for understanding the requirements of belonging to GV Pride, the limits of the inclusiveness advocated by the group, and the ability of members to affect atmospheres, rather than merely be affected.

Capacities of caring bodies were brought into question during the return journey. In contrast to the outward journey, where aligning oneself with the emotions of joy and pleasure served as crucial to collective belonging, during the return journey it was permissible for bodies to act fatigued and less responsive. The return journey, in consequence, was more about working to sustain individual members, rather than working to sustain the collectivity.

⁵⁸ 'Mardi Gras anthems' are songs traditionally played as part of Mardi Gras festival. They are generally either enjoyed ironically or were considered revolutionary for their time.

7.7 Return journey

Contrasting with the livelier outward journey, the early morning departure of the return journey was relaxed and undemanding; tired voices were soft, while tired bodies created slow, considered movements around the bus. The material affordances of the bus – tall seats, curtains, arm rests and pillows – were reconceived as enabling small, somewhat private, clandestine bubbles. Films played much softer than they had during the outward journey, rendering a background hum. Starting out from central Sydney there was a sense of collective ambivalence in returning to Shepparton, evident through members' dialogue. Fiona expressed the ambivalent tensions between relief and disappointment as we left Sydney, in humorously stating: 'It's over now for another year. What do we do? Sleep?' As the bus left the outer suburbs of Sydney, again undertaking the steady and recurrent movement along the Hume, voices slowly dissolved as bodies fell into quiescence (Bissell 2009).

An affective economy of care – already circulating as an affective atmosphere around the bus – had undergone a process of intensification through the extended time spent together since Friday morning. During the return journey an affective economy of care further intensified as it intersected with empathy of a collective tiredness among members – allowing an intimate atmosphere to emerge upon returning home; evident, as Georgie shared:

Georgie: I think it was just that whole atmosphere on the bus, like the...

Experiencing difficulty finding the words, Georgie changes the narrative's direction:

Georgie:...our trip home actually wasn't as bad like, I think ... because I slept for quite a bit and I was quite in an uncomfortable position when I woke up. I ... but um ... I don't know how I had my head on the armrest but ...

Anna: Did you have a sore neck?

Georgie: No, I had my pillow and I had my head like on the armrest so my feet were like up on the window.

Anna: Ohhh.

Georgie: But I am like a crazy sleeper anyway so ... It was good like, it was great coming home. Like, if we'd stayed, I would have wanted to stay but the second we were on the bus, I was like, I hear my bed.

Georgie's narrative identifies the ways GV Pride bodies were able to become vulnerable within the spaces of the bus during the return journey. For Georgie the affective economies of care, alongside her own tiredness, enabled the bubble around her seat to feel closer to her bed, and in consequence she was somewhat unaware of the ways her body performed during sleep. Bodies were able to let go because there was no need to remain alert to the safety of their belongings, where they were heading and what their body might do during sleep. This affective economy of care contrasts between the bus and more conventional long distance travel. Bissell (2009), for example, tells of the ways travelling commuters prevent falling asleep for the fear their body might do things deemed embarrassing. Bissell also details the anxiousness some commuters feel towards sleep because of the importance in maintaining visual contact with luggage. Moreover, Bissell speaks of the ways sleep must be managed during the railway journey because it is the requirement of passengers to pay attention to the various knowledges: such as departure and arrival times, ticketing, and journey routes.

During much of the return journey members worked to sustain their own bodies, through sleep and quiescence, rather than work on the sustainability of the collective. Yet, members only held the capacity to sustain their own bodies because of the affective economy of care that circulated through the group, which was reliant on the work of GV Pride. That is, an affective economy of care was only able to emerge because of the relational ethics performed through the group leading up to the return journey. What all this means is that while at one level the tired bodies evident during the return journey identified the limits of care felt towards the group – at another level an ability to succumb to the fatigued body may not have been possible had the previous care work not been undertaken by the group.

An intimate awakening occurred as the bus turned off the Hume Highway, undertaking the last leg towards Shepparton along the A300. Turning onto a bumpier, slower country road contrasted with the Hume's hypnotic rhythm and smooth materiality. Sun engulfed the bus as we hit late afternoon. The culmination of these affects awoke those sleeping on the bus. Rustling, slow movements, soft chatter, stretching, intimate, sleepy glances, all slowly increased until the bus became charged with the excitement of the impending arrival of Shepparton. At this point talk turned to the future plans of the group – the following events being the Think About It⁵⁹ launch that coming week, and their journey to the Daylesford Chill Out⁶⁰ festival the following weekend.

In the moment of sharing goodbyes and walking back to my accommodation in the late afternoon, I was not quite sure how to understand the ways the Mardi Gras' return journey was positioned within GV Pride. It surely did not fit neatly into any normative constructions of either leisure or activism. The spaces of travel were surely leisure spaces, members spoke of travel to Mardi Gras as if it was a holiday filled with hedonism and opportunity, yet travel was also more than this; it also appeared to serve as crucial to the version of queer activism GV Pride, not only sought to perform, but appeared to require for the long term sustainability of the collective within Shepparton. The spaces of travel were crucial to enabling members to get to know each other more intimately, perform a relational ethics and collective experience. Yet, at the same time, this version of activism very much contrasted with what one might immediately envisage: it was political, and relaxing, collective rather than solitary, reliant on a

⁵⁹ *Think About It* was an art event launched as part of SheppARTon Festival, the week following Mardi Gras. The project aimed to share the voices and emotions of young regional Victorians who identify with non-normative genders and sexualities to the broader community, in the hope the community would then 'think about it'. This project was significant because it was part of the highly visible SheppARTon festival, an event which aims to 'stimulate dialogue and challenge audiences in accessible public environments' (SheppARTon Festival 2015). In its current form, the project has been recreated as an online installation (Think About It 2015).

⁶⁰ Chill Out Festival is one of the biggest and longest running queer Pride events in regional Australia. It is held in the regional Victorian town of Daylesford – which is approximately 200 kilometres from Shepparton. Traditionally, the event takes place the weekend following Mardi Gras.

relational ethics rather than a moral framework following normative structures, both a form of work and escape.

With some hindsight it became clearer that GV Pride simultaneously questions and reproduces conventional understandings of activism. On the one hand, the work of emotions and a relational ethics GV Pride, as outlined in the first empirical section, alongside the employment of leisure as an alternative activist space, as discussed in the final two empirical sections, deconstructs conventional characterisations of activism as radical, outward looking and absent of leisure. Further to this, the highly visible presence of GV Pride within Shepparton threatens dominant constructions of activism as urban centric and non-existent beyond the metropolitan. Yet, on the other hand, the politics of emotions – such as the spatial and temporal constraints placed on certain emotions, the hierarchical privileging of other emotions and the dynamic interplay of pride and sorrow – worked to (re)produce dominant renderings of ‘valid’ activism, and the privileging of certain feelings deemed most relevant. Moreover, the use of travel to Mardi Gras, a mega *urban* Pride event, does not disturb assumptions that activism makes use of urban centres in its performance.

7.8 Summary

To bring this all to a conclusion, this chapter sought to trouble distinctions between activism and tourism, and activism and regionality. It did this by exploring the role of return journeys, and the specificities of place for a regional Victorian queer collective and their 1,400 kilometre return journey to Mardi Gras. I argued that examining GV Pride’s return journey illustrates alternative ways of performing queer activism that is dependent on specificities of place, leisure, a relational ethics and the work of emotional sustainability. Acknowledging the existence of regional activism deconstructs notions that non-normative sexualities and queer politics do not exist beyond urban centres. Granting attention to the alternative ways tourism (and mobilities) may be performed strengthens characterisations of leisure as always more than a space of hedonism and escape. GV Pride provides an example for the ways the spaces of return journeys might be utilised to move away from the more conventional spaces of activism as a way to sustain emotional wellbeing over longer temporalities.

It was found that GV Pride is sustained through the emotions of love, joy, sorrow and pride. Extended time spent together, enabled through the affective economies circulating during travel to Mardi Gras worked to heighten the intensities of these emotions and a relational ethics. Emotions, however, were political in their performance. Particular emotions, such as joy and love, were deemed more acceptable, a process dependent on time and space. In consequence, while GV Pride aimed to perform an inclusive, inward looking version of queer politics, in certain instances some emotions may be silenced or deemed inappropriate, leading to exclusions.

More broadly, this chapter troubles a number of prevailing binaries within conventional constructions of activism, mobilities, sexualities and tourism – including – constructions positioning queer politics and activism to be absent from regional areas, mobilities literature constructing queer mobilities as one way, permanent unidirectional migrations from rural to urban centres, notions of leisure as apolitical, and notions of activism as absent of leisure. Attending to the important role return journeys perform for GV Pride, illustrates the ways Pride events become imbricated within the social realities of everyday life longer term. Understanding the broader significance of events enables scholars to rethink festivals as spatially and temporally bounded, one off events but rather crucial to the ongoing sustainability of queer activist collectives. In considering the use of leisure mobilities by GV Pride, insights were granted to the broader uses of mobility in queer politics and to help make meanings in their lives throughout the life-course; such insights contribute to scholarship working at the intersection of sexualities and mobilities.

Chapter 8 shifts the direction of this thesis, to consider the spatiality of embodied encounters. Shifting direction creates a space to examine the entanglement of Mardi Gras and commodification, and the ways in which such entanglements are political and encountered through the body. I do so with the aim to unpack processes of commodification of Mardi Gras and Pride. Focusing on one participant, I draw on an embodied approach to better understand the multiple nuances and complexities and the different ways the body of an attendee and commodification intersect.

Chapter 8 Embodying commodification

8.1 Positioning

Mardi Gras is intimately entwined with commodification. The event is pitched as the most popular gay and lesbian event in the world; a marketing move annually attracting thousands of international tourists (Mardi Gras 2015a). Commodification is conceived to have taken such a hold on Mardi Gras as to render the event unrecognisable to its 'pre-commodified' form – a process thought to threaten the politics and meanings emergent through this event (Waitt & Markwell 2006). As outlined in Chapter 3, much scholarship engages with the processes of commodification at Mardi Gras (Kates 2003; Markwell 2002; Waitt & Markwell 2006). This work has been pivotal in detailing the event's evolution from a radical street protest to a commercialised, internationally branded event – asking many questions concerning the political potency of such a hedonistic, homonormative and commodified event, and granting insights into the tensions that arise from competing stakeholders as a result of increasing commodification.

Markwell's (2002) work, for example, serves as crucial in understanding the ways organisers of Mardi Gras negotiate the increasing economic significance, alongside that of social, cultural and political importance. Markwell grants specific attention to the tensions arising through the competing demands placed on Mardi Gras by the needs and desires of attendees and the tourism industry. This work thus recognises that while Mardi Gras and its associated tourism is a requirement in positioning Sydney as a gay and lesbian capital, there are ongoing discrepancies between the high levels of public visibility internationally sought by organisers and tourism operators, and the limited political commitment to domestic legal reform sought by gay and lesbian attendees. Along similar lines, Kates (2003) examined tensions emergent between the 'gay collectivity' and the 'heterosexual mainstream' (a typology including large

corporations) as a result of Mardi Gras' increasing commodification. In interpreting Mardi Gras' future, Kates (2003, 18) predicted that:

The darker possibility is that economic factors and meanings involved in Mardi Gras' production may come to dominate and effectively constitute the festival, appropriating and reinsignifying seemingly progressive and even deviant images to promote capitalist aims.

This chapter seeks to build on this work by further unpacking the politics of Mardi Gras' commodification, and more specifically the commodification of Pride. Influenced by the work of Bell and Binnie (2000) I suggest, while invaluable, previous scholarship concerned with intersections of Mardi Gras and commodification largely focus on a critique of the shift from social to commercial goals of governance (and the accompanying neglect of social needs and cultural aims). This focus in turn inhibits sustained and critical analysis into the nuanced and complex processes of commodification. In examining academic discourses circulating the 'pink economy', Bell and Binnie (2000) note the ways certain scholars condemn queer consumption practices through normative moralistic frameworks (Field 1995; Smith 1997). Conversely, other critics have argued the rights of non-normative sexualities might be secured through capitalism (Evans 1993; Gould 1998). Bell and Binnie's work suggests both frameworks to be equally problematic – the latter's through its exclusion of those not in a position to purchase liberation, the former for not comprehending the potential political dimensions of consumer space. Alert to the tensions at play between the opposing discourses, Bell and Binnie (2000) call for a more nuanced discussion, which avoids over simplified characterisations of capitalism as liberating, victimising or pathologising.

Seeking to build on this work, yet turning specific attention to the commodification of Pride through Mardi Gras, I suggest commodification at Mardi Gras occurs in context specific ways, across multiple sites, by numerous groups. I therefore illustrate that in taking the bodily agency of those who 'consume' the commodification of Pride seriously, we can *begin* to unpack commodification in all its contextualisation, nuances

and multiplicities. I put forth an embodied approach that focuses on the moment of encounter. The empirical material draws on one participant as they encounter various iterations of the commodification of Pride during Mardi Gras. Attention to the encounter enables focus on the ways judgement emerges in the moment, is always embedded within, yet is not determined by, discursive structures. While I make a case for following one participant, I also seek to raise questions around who may be granted capacities to mediate understandings around the instances of the commodification of Pride at Mardi Gras.

In shifting focus to mobilities once arriving in Sydney, this chapter examines the agency and life-course of attendees, and the process through which they arrive and leave Mardi Gras with certain perceptions, experiences and expectations. This shift similarly illustrates the fluid and processual ontology of events, and the ways they are entangled with broader social worlds, yet also grants attention to the ways meanings and experiences occurring during Mardi Gras are always more than one off encounters; attendees always arrive with their own embodied histories that in part affect anticipations and the ways encounters unfold during events.

To that end, in the discussion that follows I embrace an embodied approach to explore the commodification of Pride through the body. Firstly, to assist conceptualisation I introduce my embodied theoretical and methodological approach. I briefly recap Ahmed's (2004) analogy of 'affective economies' and suggest an intensive focus on the narratives of one participant as a framework to begin making sense of the multiple ways individuals encounter commodification in complex, telling ways. Turning to a discussion of the empirical, I first make a case for the potential capacities of certain individuals to mediate and grant insights into commodification processes, before presenting three renderings of commodification - corporate, organisational and governmental - examining how they are differently encountered. In so doing, I illustrate the complexities of the commodification of Pride, and the ways the effects of commodification are intimately entangled with the politics of this event, as well as an individual's subjectivities and life-courses. The chapter ends with a broader discussion concerning the ways situated knowledge, and dynamic relations between the personal

and social, are crucial to unpacking the complexities and multiplicities of Pride's commodification.

Yet, before launching into a discussion of the embodied theoretical approach and methodology it is first helpful to detail exactly what I mean in utilising the terms 'commodity', 'commodification' and 'commercialism'. I borrow from Castree (2004) in broadly conceiving a 'commodity' as something that can be sold or exchanged, while commodification, and processes of commodification, are the processes through which a previously non-saleable thing (material or non-material), comes to be (re)evaluated through economic value. Commercialism, in turn, refers to a process through which emphasis is placed on maximising economic profit. While presenting definitions for comprehension, I do not seek to essentialise these terms and understand their use cannot be reduced to these stated definitions.

8.2 An embodied theoretical approach to commodification

To introduce a corporeal dimension to understandings of Mardi Gras I draw on Ahmed's (2004) analogy of 'affective economies'. As outlined in Chapter 2 and 7, Ahmed's (2004, 120) analogy is useful in conceptualising the ways emotions work in much the same way as capital, 'affect does not reside positively in the sign or commodity, but is produced only as an effect of its circulation'. I make specific use of Ahmed's concept in this chapter in relation to the affective economy of Pride. An affective economy framework conceives Pride as not inhabiting any-body but rather circulates between social, material and psychic bodies. Pride has undergone a process of intensification through increasing circulation, which has served to shape particular boundaries and surfaces. Through circulation, Pride becomes stuck to certain human and non-human bodies, such as the rainbow flag. In consequence, the accumulation of meanings associated with objects, such as the rainbow flag, works to evoke certain affective politics during particular encounters.

8.3 An embodied methodological approach to commodification

I follow Bissell (2014), and Waitt and Macquarie (2014), in granting in-depth insights into the narratives of one participant, David. To be sure, attention to one participant's experience omits any possibility of suggesting a uniformity of experience. Yet, this is the very reason why intense focus on one participant is of interest: exploring encounters grants intimate insights into the multiple and context specific ways Pride is commodified and encountered at Mardi Gras – such insights cannot be reduced to either broader cultural structures, normative valuing systems or individual agency alone, but rather tells us things about how commodification is embodied in complex ways by those invested in alternative sets of ideas around this event. Attention to one participant aims to generate a space for them to 'speak', rather than making normative judgements around commodification (Castree 2004).

David participated in all elements of the methodology (outlined in Chapter 5); including semi-structured interviews (both before and after travel), online storytelling and the creation of a solicited diary during the return journey, which included photos and writing. David's narrative is the focus of this chapter because his investment in queer activism, alongside his subjectivities and histories render particularly telling encounters of what commodification does to those entangled with alternative sets of ideas around Mardi Gras, as well as sexual politics more broadly. David also interpreted the open diary instructions differently to other participants, providing limited detail of the plane journey undertaken from New Zealand to Australia, choosing rather to narrate his embodied encounters while walking around Sydney once arriving – rendering unique insights into how the commodified materialities of Mardi Gras and Pride were experienced and enacted through varying embodied performances. David's diary was particularly extensive, comprising 11 entries and 60 images. Intensive attention to one participant's intimate and personal encounters seeks to extend the more commonly told scholarly commodification narrative concerned with the production and selling of Mardi Gras.

8.4 David

Mardi Gras is a milestone in the development of my identity

Of me as a whole person

It complements my past work and journeys

Marriage equality, working in politics and campaigning

Coming out to my Dad⁶¹

Attendees are not empty vessels – mindlessly consuming the commodification of Pride. As is evident through the above ethno-poem, attendees such as David, arrive with their own sets of politics, histories and subjectivities, all of which affect perceptions regarding the different ways Pride is commodified at Mardi Gras. In presenting David's histories, politics and subjectivities I seek to illustrate how he is an example of one individual, who is in a unique position to decode the nuances and complexities of commodification. In so doing I attempt to make a broader case for attending to the bodily agency of attendees as a way to unpack the multiple, context specific ways Pride is commodified by different groups, across different spaces and to different affects during Mardi Gras.

David lives in Wellington, New Zealand - is New Zealand born and of Chinese-Vietnamese decent. At the time of the project David held a tertiary degree, is in his thirties, and identifies as queer and single. David talked of the difficulty in negotiating his queer identity alongside his traditional Chinese-Vietnamese middle class upbringing – particularly evident through relations with his Chinese father. In the process of publicly identifying as queer, David found it easier to discuss his sexuality through politics, rather than with his family. For this reason, David became heavily active in queer activism while at university, serving as president of the University Students' Association. Following university he went on to become the co-chair of Rainbow Labour⁶²; a position that enabled active participation in the legalisation of

⁶¹ Ethno-poem collated through David's diary excerpts by Gorman-Murray *et al.* (2014a) for the 'On Islands: Eramboo Festival'.

⁶² Initiated in 1997, Rainbow Labour is part of the New Zealand Labour Party. There are branches across the nation, while a number of Rainbow Members are also members of parliament. The group has been able

New Zealand's legalisation of same-sex marriage. While David is now a staffer for the New Zealand Labour party, active attendance at rallies and Pride events remains crucial to his politics and identity. Regular involvement at these events is enabled through his residency in Wellington – a city oft presented as the centre of culture and constitutional progressiveness in New Zealand (Lonely Planet 2015; New Zealand Tourism 2015).

While David had not previously attended Mardi Gras, his affirming experience at San Francisco Pride alongside other Pride events, rendered impetus to travel to Sydney. David was interesting in the way he chose to travel to Mardi Gras; contrasting with other participants, he preferred to travel alone, attending Mardi Gras Parade and the after party by himself and only meeting with friends for short periods while in Sydney. Further differing from other participants, David's travel was highly planned and structured, and centred on walking around Sydney visiting historically significant queer spaces and Mardi Gras events. Alone, David spent time dissecting encounters in particular ways that were entangled with his own political positionality and history. The combination of all these elements, David's ethnicity, urban residency, progressive Left wing politics, method of solo tourism, long personal investment in queer activism and so on, rendered certain expectations around Mardi Gras and generated a certain lens in which David used to decode dimensions of the event – particularly in relation to his encounters with the commodification of Pride.

The method, in which David chose to walk around the streets of Sydney, commenting on Pride's commodification, may evoke certain conceptions of 'the flâneur'. The concept of 'the flâneur' emerged as a literary tool through the writings of Baudelaire (1972), and later Benjamin (2002), and describes the performance undertaken by males of a certain social position who casually wandered, observed and reported on the street

to generate considerable power in recent years enabling the advancement of a number of issues within the New Zealand Labour Party, including relationship property reform, human rights reform, the Civil Union Act and Marriage Equality Legislation (New Zealand Labour Party 2015).

life in the modern city of 19th Century Paris⁶³. Emerging from romantic discourses of the self, this form of solitary walking has since been critiqued – for it generates particular perceptions of an ‘expert’ white, male, middle class, hetero subject discovering and commenting objectively on the spaces of the city (Wilson 1992; Wright 2013; Wylie 2005). Indeed, David’s alignment with a male, middle class subjectivity may have generated certain economic and social capacities, which enabled him to walk alone through the streets of Sydney in a certain way – observing and commenting on commodification, Pride and Mardi Gras. Yet, I here present David’s encounters as a process through which commodification came to be understood and also to illustrate just some of the ways we might begin to understand commodification, rather than as any form of absolute truth. Further to this, David’s histories and subjectivities also work to rupture any coherent, representational emblem of a white, hetero flâneur. For these reasons, while I am aware of the conceptual lens of the flâneur in which David’s narrative might be framed, following the aims and objectives of this chapter (and thesis more broadly) I have chosen to differentiate my conceptual lens from this earlier work.

8.5 Corporate commodification

As detailed in Chapter 3, many corporations across Sydney seek to capitalise on Mardi Gras through aligning themselves with the brand during the festival. Certain symbols of Pride are easier to commodify than others (Binnie 2004). The rainbow flag aligns easily with dominant representations of Mardi Gras as respectable, and is thus often appropriated. Designed by Gilbert Baker, the rainbow flag is a symbol of Queer Pride. The flag was first used in the 1977 campaign of the United States’ first publicly identifying gay County Supervisor, Harvey Milk in San Francisco, California. Following Milk’s assassination by Dan White at the end of 1978, and the consequential acquittal of White from first degree murder charges to the lesser verdict of voluntary manslaughter, the local community mobilised. The visibility of this mobilisation assisted in popularising the rainbow flag (Sawer 2007). Originally with eight stripes, practicalities of flag making quickly led to a redesign with six stripes. The different

⁶³It is not a priority to here give justice to the complexities of flâneur conceptualisations. For detailed discussion see Wilson (1992).

colours aim to represent diversity in sexuality, and the flag is often used at Pride events to illustrate support and is hung in particular spaces to queer space (Gorman-Murray *et al.* 2008a).

Over time, through increasing circulation, the meanings layered on the flag in regards to Pride and support has intensified. Commodification plays an interesting role in the increasing circulation of the rainbow flag – both increasing the circulation of the flag and consequential affects, while simultaneously serving as threatening to its historical associations with Pride politics. The accumulative circulation of the rainbow flag may work to promote a certain queer culture as mainstream, rendering sameness rather than difference. Similarly, while the commodification of the rainbow flag increases the visibility of more mainstream queer cultures and politics, other forms of culture and political issues may become further marginalised through this process (Binnie 2004; Binnie & Skeggs 2004). While contested, the clearly identifiable rainbow flag stands as a meaningful symbol for many.

In this section I contrast two differing encounters with the corporate commodification of Pride. The first, a Coca-Cola rainbow billboard in Kings Cross. The second, a rainbow banner by a cruise ship moored in Circular Quay. David's narratives assist in making sense of some of the various contexts in which Pride is commodified by different corporations through the appropriation of the rainbow flag. By way of example, encountering Coca-Cola's commodification of the rainbow flag David reconfirmed dominant conceptions positioning Pride's commodification as negative:

This Kings Cross Coca-Cola mural really annoyed me [Figure 8.1]. I was walking to Kings Cross to look around. I was aware of the large Coca-Cola billboard they had near the intersection but I was not expecting that large rainbow billboard. Again I see a wilful and blatant misuse of what Pride and being queer is all about. I did actually glare at the billboards across the road for a little while, mildly raging. I don't think people fought so hard over the decades for their rights just so big companies cherry pick the rainbow flag for commercial purposes. I am of two minds – it's nice to see the company making the gesture, yet I know that the company is not doing this necessarily out of charity or generosity but rather to bolster its brand image by using others' imagery. I take several photos wanting to document this monstrosity.

Diary, Thursday 27th February, 2014



Figure 8.1: Coca-Cola rainbow billboard. Source: David.

Curious in trying to make sense of David's encounter with the Coca-Cola sign I asked for further explanation when we met again for the follow up interview:

For me, because identity is so connected to that symbol of the rainbow flag I feel that when it's used, not flippantly, but out of context it's just a bit weird....So that probably explains why I objected to it being used in places that you wouldn't expect. But often I have found, and I think it's a good thing, members of the queer community often, it seems to be a much more diverse set of interests and views...and perspectives on the world, which is quite valuable...and quite different to the mainstream.... that's what the rainbow flag symbolises to me...and that's why it disturbs me a little bit when I see the rainbow flag appropriated for other purposes. When those purposes it's probably quite conformist or establishment in that way because generally people use, and I've seen the rainbow used as a queer statement and an assertion of something, not just fitting in.

The commodification of Pride does not affect bodies as empty vessels. Rather the emotion of annoyance surfaces through this encounter due to David's queer activist history and intense political investment in Pride. David's personal political history as entangled with a particular affective economy of Pride, which is circulated through the rainbow flag, evokes negative emotions, named as annoyance. This is because its use by Coca-Cola is read as threatening to the meanings David himself layers over the symbol. The incorporation of the rainbow into the Coca-Cola brand is felt as an aggressive disruption because it attempts to reposition Pride as conformist, establishment, fun and light hearted, rewriting David's version of Pride and queer history as positioned against the mainstream. The threat of the Coca-Cola rainbow mural operates to distance David from the brand; reinforcing boundaries between commodification and Pride. At the same time, annoyance directed towards Coca-Cola brings into existence, and intensifies, love for that which is threatened, queer pride.

The affective and emotional relationships triggered by branding of Pride on a cruise ship docked at Circular Quay contrasted with those of anger triggered by the commodification of Pride by Coca-Cola in Kings Cross. As David explains:

I was really surprised and laughed out loud when I saw the very large banner draped on the cruise ship by the Rocks [Figure 8.2]. I thought it was an unexpected but positive surprise.

Diary, Saturday 1st March, 2014



Figure 8.2: Mardi Gras banner on cruise ship. *Source:* David.

While Coca-Cola's appropriation of the rainbow flag generated anger because it was read as threatening to sexual politics by the mainstream, David's encounter with the cruise ship offers insights into the possibilities of the commodification of Pride. The differences between these two encounters, the Coca-Cola sign and cruise ship docked at Circular Quay, speak to the complex ways Pride is commodified by different organisations, across different spaces and to differing affects during Mardi Gras. Attending to these differences offers insights into the differing affects commodification generates to those who strongly identify with Mardi Gras' politics and history, and

sheds light on how commodification may be negotiated through Mardi Gras, and other Pride events.

Ahmed's (2004) distinction between 'likeness' and 'unlikeness' assists in unpacking differences between these two encounters. Ahmed posits that love is produced as a 'likeness' through forms of identification that align a subject with another; at the same time identification also informs dis-identification from objects, symbols and human bodies that do not align – this dis-identification produces the character of the hated as 'unlikeness'. From this narrative we can begin to ascertain that for David the use of the rainbow flag becomes problematic when there is no longer an explicit connection, or 'likeness', to his own version of Pride, when it is 'appropriated for other purposes', that are 'conformist or establishment' – such as, exclusively attempting to attract customers, as is read by David in encountering the Coca-Cola sign. In the absence of a 'likeness' felt between Coca-Cola and Pride, a dis-identification or 'unlikeness', along with annoyance emerges. In contrast, David's surprised reaction to laugh out loud (joy) when encountering the cruise ship banner at Circular Quay suggests an immediate likeness was felt that somehow went beyond, or in some way complimented, the commodified dimensions of the banner.

There are a number of material, cultural and spatial distinctions that may be drawn between these two versions of commodification, which work to further understand the ways David identified their 'likeness' and 'unlikeness' towards Pride. By way of example, Coca-Cola's use of the rainbow flag in this instance is clearly aligned with the Coca-Cola brand – through the image of the Coke bottle, the hashtag 'openhappiness' (which is a notable brand slogan), appropriation of the infamous 'white swirl' (employed in brand logos since 1969) and the positioning of the rainbow side by side with infamous Coca-Cola billboard. All of which, contrast to the absence of branding on the cruise ship banner. The incorporation of the 'open happiness' hashtag further suggests Coca-Cola is seeking to become part of an online conversation generated through this event - an approach seeking to blur lines between commodification and Pride politics. Moreover, existing awareness of the Coca-Cola billboard, alongside its positioning within one of Sydney's major commercial centres, Kings Cross, renders an

encounter already embedded within capitalism. Interestingly, however, the Coca-Cola billboard has historically served as a symbolic cultural icon for the Kings Cross district. Kings Cross has notoriously long stood as inner Sydney's 'red light district' (Sayer & Nowra 2000). The billboard, therefore, often stands as a beacon for an alternative, subversive culture often aligned with this suburb – despite, paradoxically, being an advertisement for a multinational corporate brand. Considering David states his cultural awareness of the Coca-Cola billboard, it is interesting this does not affect his reading of the rainbow billboard as mainstream.

The cruise ship banner, conversely, presents no identifiable branding or attempt to generate something that goes beyond the banner. Its affects may therefore be read as a humbler, and consequentially less threatening, attempt to align with Mardi Gras. Connections between place and surprise are also crucial. The placing of the rainbow banner on a cruise ship moored at Circular Quay is surprising because it disrupts assumptions of Circular Quay as a heavily governed tourist centre, and thus politically assists in queering place. Further to this, cruise ship companies are entangled with narratives of Mardi Gras and lesbian and gay tourism. Many offer cruises specifically designed for Mardi Gras attendees, which dock in Sydney Harbour during the festival (Mardi Gras 2015b). Atlantis Cruises, for instance, praises itself for being 'the world's largest gay and lesbian speciality holiday company', and has offered holiday packages 'tailored specifically to gay and lesbian guests' for twenty two years (Mardi Gras 2015b). While these cruises are commercial, they are designed to serve a particular queer culture; a likeness aligning with David's own understandings of Mardi Gras and Pride. The joy emergent through the cruise ship encounter is telling. Identification of 'likeness' between the cruise ship and Mardi Gras works to extend comfort to David rather than working to alienate him from Pride identification, suggesting there is a place for Pride's commodification that is not read as out of place, conformist or threatening to particular political representations of the rainbow flag.

8.6 Organisational commodification

Both the representative and material corporeality of gendered, sexualised and raced bodies are central to the construction of Mardi Gras as a celebration of diversity. As such, Mardi Gras' privileging of white, European faces in constructing a marketable, respectable queer sexuality within the pages of the official programme evoked intense bodily reactions for David, which strongly contrasted with the pleasure derived from the diverse material 'reality' of the parade:

I was really pleased to see the huge diversity of people, teams and floats in the parade. There were lots of different ethnicities, interests and sexual identities represented, which was fantastic. This was in contrast with one Mardi Gras publication (it was the official programme – the large one with the white face with coloured triangles on it⁶⁴). It irritated me a lot as I read through it. While the theme and language about Mardi Gras is all about 'diversity' – the programme itself had very little ethnic diversity in it. I got to the root of my irritation and counted the faces in the programme content and ads, and out of 117 only 5 had non-European faces. That's beyond a joke. I realise a lot of work goes into publications like this but I wish they would give some more thought as to what subliminal messages their choices may convey.

Diary, Saturday 1st March, 2014

At first unable to identify the source of this irritation, yet sensing something is not adding up, David turned to quantify the ethnic diversity represented in the program. This visceral process plays an important role in sensing diversity. In reading this excerpt I sense David's tenseness in first flicking through the program, becoming increasingly irritated before returning to the start in an attempt to make sense of his bodily reaction, methodically quantifying all 117 faces as either European or non-European. Two sources of David's irritation may be identified here. The first arises from disconnections between the 'actual' diversity observed in the parade and a lack of diversity portrayed by Mardi Gras in the official program. For David, characterisations of diversity extend beyond that of sexuality; pleasure was derived during the parade

⁶⁴ Unfortunately I could not access a copy of this specific programme.

from the diversity of ethnicities, interests, teams, floats, as well as representation of sexual identities – consequently pleasure dissipated when disconnections were felt between the parade's materialities and the event's official representation.

The second source of irritation stems from divisions between the presence of 'diversity' discourses and the limited ethnic diversity among the bodies supposedly representing diversity *within* the official programme. Given Mardi Gras' positionality as a queer political organisation, there is a sense that Mardi Gras should know better: 'I realise a lot of work goes into publications like this but...'

Seeking to learn more about this encounter, I asked David to further reflect in the follow up interview. In a deliberate, sober manner he shared:

Yeah...I think that was definitely one jarring thing. That's why I wanted to include it, it just irritated me. Because when I first read it...started reading it, I just got increasingly irritated

Pausing:

...and then I realised why....

Agitated, he asked forcefully:

I guess it's more of that awareness, or that notion that it's one thing to talk, and use the words of diversity, but are the things we do, do they actually include or encourage that diversity?

I can feel David's irritation – he cannot comprehend Mardi Gras' lack of awareness in the danger of failing to use ethnically diverse faces. His irritation lingers. I look down at my notes. I don't answer the question; it is rhetorical – designed for someone else, somewhere else. After a moment he takes a breath, and then more calmly goes on:

I guess that's part of where I was coming from and that's why I was really pleasantly surprised and really pleased to see there was real diversity in the parade. I think especially the first five or six floats, because there was deliberately Aboriginal Australians, there's transgender, intersex. They were amongst the first few floats. And I think that was a really good message to have....that was for me political.

Interview, March 2014

Mardi Gras disconnection between the official program and the parade – which enables corporeal diversity to be simultaneously affirmed and disavowed – is perhaps best understood in terms of Mardi Gras' temporal and spatial regulation enforced by organisers. As detailed in Chapter 3, during the parade a regulated representation of sexuality is allowed, yet controlled, within specifically designated times and spaces to ensure just the right mix of spectacle, sexuality, politics and hedonism is achieved. The spatial and temporal epicentre of the festival – the beginning of the parade – is a crucial moment where more risqué forms of diversity are enabled by organisers without serving as a broader threat to normative boundaries and limits. In contrast, representations of diversity that do threaten spatial and temporal boundaries, such as the internationally distributed official program, arguably delivers a watered down, entertaining and respectable version of 'diversity' that serves as easily digestible and non-threatening to wider audiences in the lead up to the event. The aim of the official printed program is, after all, to 'maximise publicity' and generate profit for the month long festival, rather than represent and cater to the queer community (Mardi Gras 2014). As part of the broadly marketed official programme 'diversity' discourses and materialities are packaged to form as showpieces for a broad tourist market (Fincher *et al.* 2014). What results, however, is a normative homogenisation of sexual diversity, which is equated with white bodies, obscuring the realities of the event.

David's irritation stems through the intersections of his subjectivity, politics and contrasting encounters with the program and parade. David identifies as both Asian and queer, and therefore, comes to feel excluded through the dominance of white faces, as well as Mardi Gras' disconnect between utilising diversity discourses and representation of diversity within the pages of the programme. Further to this, David's

political experiences produce understandings around the importance of moving beyond diversity discourses, and the power in actually representing diversity within promotional materials. David recognises conceptions of diversity do not pre-exist their use, but are rather emergent through encounter; David understands the normative affects in the misalignment between marketing and material reality, where marginalised subjectivities (such as the intersection of Asian and queer) become further silenced through the production of a homogenised 'diversity' (Fincher 2015). Irritation thus arises through this misalignment.

Crucially, however, David's discomfort does not need to be characterised as simply constraining or negative. Thinking through a politics of inclusion, discomfort can act as generative in so far as it opens up possibilities, by drawing attention to the ways Mardi Gras organisers make use of diversity discourses, represent queer bodies, and ultimately reproduce certain homonormativities, while silencing certain subjectivities. Granting attention to David's comforts and discomforts, clear distinctions, and thus directions are brought forth concerning the ways Mardi Gras might represent bodies, alongside diversity discourses, differently in the future.

8.7 Governmental commodification

Governments across the Global North are increasingly recognising potential in using public structures to assist in aligning the state with events celebrating sexual diversity. Impetus stems from a number of directions, including motives to capitalise on visitor spending power, by selling and branding the city momentarily as 'queer', as well as motivation to welcome those seeking to celebrate sexual diversity (Binnie & Skeggs 2004). For instance, during San Francisco's 2013 and 2014 Pride Week, City Hall was illuminated in rainbow lighting for the event's entirety. Likewise, Auckland City lit up four iconic locations (the Sky Tower, War Memorial, the gantry at Silo Park and The Cloud), and flew rainbow flags from a number of government structures across the city for one week in conjunction with the 2014 Auckland Pride Festival. In 2010, the City of Sydney established a tradition to raise the rainbow flag to mark the beginning of Mardi Gras, and fly it for the duration of the festival; an act that served to symbolically extend

belonging from the municipal authority to Mardi Gras attendees during the festival. David spoke of the joy in encountering the rainbow flag on Sydney Town Hall:

I was really pleased and happy to see the rainbow flag flying off the Sydney Town Hall for Mardi Gras [Figure 8.3]. I had briefly read about the [Town Hall rainbow] flag before I got here and to see it was quite heartening. From my view it follows seeing a series of rainbow flags flying off Aotea Centre, which is a major arts and entertainment centre opposite the Town Hall in Auckland for our Pride festival [one week earlier]. The Sydney flag is not quite as big as the flag they fly in the Castro⁶⁵ [San Francisco], but still it's a great sight and symbol. I thought it was quite lovely in the sun and waving in the wind. I am happy to see it here. I take several photos to try and get the flag waving in the right position as I wait for the friend I had arranged to meet in the late afternoon before going to dinner. I am personally more favourable towards the rainbow flag being associated with public or governmental places, because there is the more logical notion of democracy and its promise of fairness, equality, and inclusivity that one usually tends to (or hopes to) associate with civil and political institutions.

Diary, Tuesday 25th February, 2014

⁶⁵ A giant rainbow flag is flown from the Harvey Milk Plaza in the Castro, a recognised gay neighbourhood in San Francisco.



Figure 8.3: Rainbow flag flown from Sydney Town Hall during Mardi Gras. *Source:* David.

This display draws David in, acting as a symbol of belonging to the scale of the city and as a form of pride, which shows itself through pleasure and happiness; leading him to take photos and reflect as he lingers in the late afternoon sun. Recognising David's historical entanglements with governmental queer politics, pride is heightened in this encounter because of the Town Hall's positioning as the material centre of governance for the City of Sydney. Where, for David, associations between pride and governance are powerful because of the broader obligations civil and political institutions possess in creating a fair and inclusive democracy for citizens. The intersection of Town Hall and rainbow flag is thus felt as a powerful form of inclusion, as the affective economy of Pride becomes wrapped up in the affective economy of Sydney city. Crucially the affective intensity of this encounter is heightened by similar moments experienced by David in Auckland and San Francisco. At the same time the

affective intensity between Pride and City of Sydney is dulled because the flag's size does not compare to what is flown in the Castro, San Francisco (a place arguably representing the centre of Western, middle class, progressive queer politics (Knopp & Brown 2003; Valentine 2001b)). This comparison highlights how the politics of festivals are entwined with embodied histories beyond the spatial and temporal frame of the event.

Gorman-Murray *et al.*'s (2008) analysis is helpful in making sense of the use of the rainbow flag by City of Sydney. Gorman-Murray *et al.* (2008a), similarly, examine the politics at work when the regional Victorian Daylesford local council refused to fly the rainbow flag from the Town Hall during the 2006 ChillOut festival⁶⁶. Their work highlights the ways belonging takes place differently across a number of scales within Australia. Internationally, Australia is often viewed as a tolerant, liberal society, illustrated through the visibility and size of events, such as Mardi Gras Parade. At the scale of the nation, however, conservative politics governs; evident through the current same-sex marriage debate, where despite recent moves to legalise same-sex marriage across the Global North, influential Australian politicians, such as Prime Minister Tony Abbott continue to view this legislation as a threat to the institution of heterosexual coupledness, and Australian family values (Grattan 2013). Meanwhile, the scale of City of Sydney, again represents a progressive, liberal Left wing politics, that actively works to be inclusive of non-normative sexualities. City of Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore, by way of example, was the first Councillor to publicly support Mardi Gras in the 1980s, and the first Member of the Legislative Assembly to march in the parade, in 1992. Moore is also a public campaigner for the legalisation of same-sex marriage (Moore 2012). Given Sydney Town Hall represents the material epicentre of governance for the City of Sydney, this site works at the scale of Sydney City. Flying the rainbow flag from the Town Hall thus welcomes, and extends belonging, to Mardi Gras attendees at the scale of Sydney.

⁶⁶ ChillOut festival is Australia's largest rural gay and lesbian festival, traditionally held the weekend following Mardi Gras Parade.

Encounters with government authority uses of the rainbow flag, however, were not always celebratory. Feelings of disappointment emerged when governmental uses of Pride were felt to be ‘out of place’ or constrained. For instance, the dynamics of pride and disappointment, and the ways they circulated within the affective economy of Pride is evident in David’s reaction upon encountering a City of Sydney Mardi Gras banner on the Harbour Bridge during the morning of the parade:

It surprised me to see a small banner on the Harbour Bridge [Figure 8.4]. I was surprised, firstly to see it in the first place, secondly that it was so small compared to what they could have done perhaps, and thirdly that it was only obvious on the day of the parade. I was disappointed by how small it was. I think if they [City of Sydney⁶⁷] were going to do something on the Harbour Bridge in terms of Mardi Gras it would have made sense to do something bigger and a bit bolder.

Diary, Saturday 1st March, 2014



Figure 8.4: City of Sydney Mardi Gras banner on Sydney Harbour Bridge. *Source:* David.

⁶⁷ While the Harbour Bridge is privately managed by Bridge Climb, decisions around bridge displays are governed by the City of Sydney municipal government authority (City of Sydney 2015).

Public spaces are embedded with meanings (Leib & Webster 2004). The Sydney Harbour Bridge is part of Australia's national consciousness; often used as a space to circulate and strengthen images considered uniquely 'Australian'. Arguably the Sydney Harbour Bridge is bound up with the affective economy of Australian national belonging and in consequence, governmental decisions regarding how, where, and when to utilise the bridge as a space to represent national belonging are political (Gorman-Murray *et al.* 2008a; Leib & Webster 2004). A bold and highly visible display of Pride potentially acts as a way to open up the affective economy of national belonging, consequently extending feelings of inclusion to Mardi Gras attendees. Yet, in this instance belonging is only extended so far within this iconic Australian space – serving, for David, to reinstate the celebration of sexual diversity as remaining contained within the confines of designated Mardi Gras spaces – within Sydney. Recognising the politics at work here David welcomes the banner, yet because of its inhibited visibility, simultaneously reads this display as 'tokenistic' and exclusionary.

Disappointment, rather than pride, emerges from this encounter through the unexpected components on display – a single lonely banner exists, hanging from one column of the highly visible Harbour Bridge; its size, temporality and number contrast to the size and iconic status of the bridge, rendering a sense of tokenism. David's disappointment is directed towards the City of Sydney local government authority, at their missed opportunity, for not being daring enough to do something bigger and bolder and initial surprise as to why they bothered at all with this spatially and temporally contained banner. Disappointment is again productive here in identifying the effects of governmental attempts to appropriate queer symbols for their own purposes. Governmental recognition of Mardi Gras and Pride require more than heedlessly affirming this event within its temporal confines – negotiating the dynamics of pride and disappointment requires careful consideration of the politics of the rainbow flag, and other queer symbols; including when and where they are flown, and their size.

City of Sydney's decision making process around the hanging of the banner is unknown. Limited budgets, time, competing priorities and so on may have come into play. A more pessimistic reading of this display is emerges through contrasting the Mardi Gras banner to alternative uses of the bridge for events historically entangled with Australia's national identity, such as during major male football tournaments and Australian New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) day (Figure 8.5 & 8.6). During such events the entirety of the bridge is often utilised as a canvass to circulate national honour; extending belonging to the Australian nation. On this view, contrasts between bridge and banner serve to reinforce power differentials between government and attendee.

Further to this view, in comparing the flags flown on the Harbour Bridge and Town Hall we can further make sense of scales at which the politics of belonging plays out in Australia. While the Town Hall represents the scale of City of Sydney, the Harbour Bridge acts as a notice board for the Australian nation – with images of the harbour bridge often circulated through national news broadcasting services. Socially conservative national politics thus come into play through the harbour bridge; where there is potential to threaten the orthodox affective economy of national belonging if anything too daring or bold was to be displayed on the bridge.



Figure 8.5: National Rugby League sporting installation on Sydney Harbour Bridge. *Source:* Attila (2012).



Figure 8.6: ANZAC installation on Sydney Harbour Bridge. *Source:* News.com.au (2015).

8.8 Unpacking Pride's commodification

Attendees at Mardi Gras are not empty vessels – mindlessly consuming the commodification of Pride. Rather they arrive at the event with their own sets of embodied politics, histories and subjectivities, all of which affect how they sense, and make sense, of the ways Pride is commodified at Mardi Gras. In the above examples I illustrate the agency of one individual, David, to begin unpacking the multiple, context specific ways Pride is commodified by different commercial, organisational and governmental institutions, across different spaces. In suggesting focus on embodied encounters I move away from pre-existing normative valuing systems that position processes of commodification in particular ways, to rather understand the commodification of Pride as unfolding in a myriad of multiple and context specific ways. In this final section I want to first turn to a broader discussion concerning the ways situated knowledges, and dynamic relations between the personal and social, are crucial to unpacking the complexities and multiplicities of Pride's commodification. Following this, I seek to propose Ahmed's distinctions between 'likeness' and 'unlikeness' as one process through which we might unpack encounters with commodification.

The deemed 'rightness' or 'wrongness' of certain instances of commodification are always personal, and based on individual's situated knowledge and value systems. Yet, at the same time particular positionalities affect, and are affected by, broader political processes. David's self-identified queer identity, political involvement in the New Zealand Labour party, his historical and ongoing involvement in queer activism and so on, as well as the specific way he chose to experience Mardi Gras alone – travelling to particular sites, placed him in a specific position to decode the nuances and complexities of encounters with commodification. In presenting David as a case study of one, I wanted to make a point that there was something about David's life-course that enables particular insights. In recognising the ways attendees, such as David, arrive at Mardi Gras with their own knowledge systems is crucial to unpacking the complex ways Pride is commodified.

Further to this, attention to the moment of encounter opens up a space to analyse the ways attendee's personal positionality intersects with wider social norms and cultural processes. Encounters with the commodification of Pride are not predetermined but are rather assembled through the coming together of bodies, spaces, ideas, emotions and affects. Attending to the spatiality of embodied encounters thus enables one way to overcome attachments to pre-existing normative value systems positioning instances of commodification in particular ways.

Alongside attending to the spatiality of embodied encounters, I suggest Ahmed's (2004) characterisation of 'likeness' and 'unlikeness' offers a space in which to make further sense of the multiple, and context specific ways subjects encounter the commodification of Pride. Applying Ahmed's approach to David's encounters, this chapter illustrates that the appropriation of the rainbow flag became problematic when 'likeness' was not felt – a process which worked to alienate and irritate David. The absence of a felt 'likeness', that is 'unlikeness', assists in identifying when commodification is read as threatening, illustrating when a specific instance of Pride's commodification no longer aligns with certain alternative associations attached to this symbol. Conversely when 'likeness' is experienced the commodified version of the rainbow flag works to draw David in, extending (and heightening?) belonging and inclusion. Attention to the spatiality of embodied encounters, alongside Ahmed's construction of 'likeness' and 'unlikeness' may therefore serve as one way in which to dissect varying judgements of the commodification of Pride.

8.9 Summary

This chapter examines the spatiality of embodied encounters with the commodification of Pride during Mardi Gras. The chapter built on Pride festival scholarship concerned with processes of commodification. Processes of commodification, as they unfold through Mardi Gras are multiple and contextual, producing differing visceral affects depending on who is doing the commodifying, where it takes place and embodied histories, politics and subjectivities. In light of this, the focus of this chapter unpacks the messiness and complexity of the commodification of Pride, through attending to

the spatiality of embodied encounters. Attention to the moment of encounter through the body, I argue, works to inhibit falling back on any *a priori* normative judgement system concerning instances of commodification, which work to position commodification as either wholly negative or positive. I illustrate how sets of embodied anticipations, politics, subjectivities and histories contribute to the ways the spaces of Mardi Gras are encountered. In attending to the ways Mardi Gras encounters are affected by one's life-course, the fluidity of festival boundaries are further challenged.

Empirical sections present three different renderings of commodification: corporate, organisational and governmental. Differences across the three sections, as well as divergences of encounters presented within each section, highlight the complex ways Pride is commodified during Mardi Gras, and the multiple ways this commodification is encountered. The example of David, illustrates the importance of paying attention to how the affective and emotional relationships that shape individual encounters are always embedded with broader social structures and norms.

In the final section I turned to a broader discussion concerning the ways situated knowledge, and dynamic relations between the personal and social, are crucial to unpacking the complexities and multiplicities of Pride's commodification. I argue encounters with the commodification of Pride are not predetermined but are rather assembled through the coming together of bodies, spaces, ideas, emotions and affects. Attending to the spatiality of embodied encounters was thus presented as offering a space to overcome attachments to pre-existing normative value systems positioning instances of commodification in particular ways. Alongside attending to the spatiality of embodied encounters, I propose Ahmed's (2004) characterisation of 'likeness' and 'unlikeness' as a framework through which to further unpack the multiple, and context specific ways subjects encounter the commodification of Pride.

Chapter 9 Returns, endings & futures

In concluding this thesis I first take us back to where we began – that anxious encounter on the train platform as a companion questioned the contemporary relevance of Mardi Gras in asking: *‘Mardi Gras? It’s just one big commodified party these days, isn’t it?’* Through sharing this encounter I sought to point to the research impetus – rethinking festival scholarship through the empirical lens of return journeys to Mardi Gras. This thesis revealed how festival scholarship often prioritises what occurs during the timeframe of an event. Such focus is pragmatic in characterising the performed, lived and embodied experiences of festivals. Unfortunately, however, in consequence to inward focused priorities, festival scholarship often falls short in understanding the ways events spill out into the everyday, and coevolve with various scopes of social and cultural vectors. What becomes lost in focusing research questions around the time and space of events are the ways festivals effect, and are affected by, broader social realities – and the ways festivals become positioned in varying ways within the everyday lives of those invested in them. In this thesis I rethink and unbound festivals by shifting focus to the festival journey, and the personal experiences of those who attend, as they moved in, through and out of Mardi Gras; a focus which served as one way to question broader discursive narratives positioning events in particular ways. Mardi Gras is often ambivalently positioned as apolitical, commodified and homonormative. This thesis revealed how some of Mardi Gras’ dominant meanings become threatened and (re)confirmed through examining the ways this event is imbricated in the everyday lives of those who attend.

Four main research questions have been addressed in this thesis. Chapters 4 and 5 examined the methodological implications in undertaking a feminist visceral approach (which included online storytelling and bodies’ on-the-move) in considering return journeys to Mardi Gras. Chapters 6 and 7 analysed the ways subjectivities, identities, politics and belonging are generated and sustained through return journeys to Mardi Gras. In Chapter 8, I considered how shifting representations of Pride are encountered,

and how these encounters influence associations with Mardi Gras, and Pride politics. To complement the individual summaries provided at the close of each chapter, this conclusion points to the significance of the main contributions. I first identify the main theoretical, methodological and analytical contributions of this thesis. In bringing this all to the end of the road, I address the fourth research question through outlining how this thesis contributes to understandings of sexual politics, subjectivity, identity, Pride parades and mobilities within geography, and more broadly, in relation to Antipodean feminist geographical agendas. I do so through the use of two sections – *Analytical futures* and *Feminist futures*.

Intersecting relations between sexualities, tourism and mobilities scholarship, through a feminist framework, acted as a political move which threatened any unified, bounded construction of Pride festivals and events. I argued that focussing on the ways human and non-human bodies are made and remade through the process of movement disrupts positivist assumptions of a pre-existing unified travelling tourist subject – and troubles conjectures positioning festival attendees as necessarily, always, and only ‘tourists’. A feminist visceral framework thus created a space to explore individual, nuanced and complex embodied encounters on-the-move. Through this framework insights were granted to the very moment where embodied experiences are felt, alongside discursive and social structures. The visceral therefore enabled insights into the ways the social, psychic and embodied come together – insights that cannot be ascertained through attending solely to either the emotional, affective or discursive. Utilisation of the visceral was thus argued to be a unique contribution to tourism and leisure scholarship, and offers a productive avenue to examine entanglements between personal politics and agency, and broader material and social forces pertaining to Mardi Gras.

Alongside contributions to tourism and leisure studies, this research built on existing work within mobilities studies. An important focus of this research is to bring studies of mobility into dialogue with the visceral. Despite characterisations of mobility as experienced differently in relation to differentiated embodied subjectivities and power relations, scholarship recognising the entanglements of movement and subjectivities

remains on the margins of mobilities studies. A feminist visceral approach enabled possibilities to more fully understand relationships between space, subjectivities, power and mobilities. Attending to the visceral dimensions of return journeys, as I have done throughout the empirical chapters, disrupts the unintentional masculinist framing of mobile bodies as homogenously seamless white, male, Western, middle class and able-bodied.

Methodological challenges were met in applying a feminist visceral framework to bodies-on-the-move. Specifically, implications stemmed from attempts to examine the politics of differentiated bodies and power relations of mobile bodies. The mixed methodological design, *travel ethnographies*, was curated to meet these challenges. Travel ethnographies drew on the qualitative methodologies of interviews, observant participation, solicited diaries and online storytelling. The combination of these methods rendered insights into the embodied and discursive dimensions of mobile participant experience, and the co-production of these dimensions with broader discourses around Mardi Gras. The methodology *travel ethnography* demands attention from scholars seeking to trouble bounded characterisations of festivals and events, as well as research investigating the ways festivals become imbricated in everyday life and social change.

In contributing to feminist critiques towards characterisations of knowledge as neutral, objective and rational I situated myself in the research. I bared the ethical ruminations negotiated in the field, and reflected on how my embodied subjectivities, as well as those of participants, influenced what is now 'known' around the roles, meanings and politics of return journeys to Mardi Gras. In so doing, I acknowledged the partialities, emotions and encounters affecting, and affected by, fieldwork; an acknowledgment, I argued, which rendered rigour to the research process.

Incorporation of storytelling through Facebook advanced methodological discussions around the use of netography in mobilities studies and tourism and leisure scholarship. Using Facebook on-the-move expanded knowledge of the ways bodies move through space. Maintaining engagement beyond the more orthodox confines of

‘fieldwork’ enabled participants to become more active in shaping the research and rendered intimate insights into participants everyday lives; insights crucial to understanding the ways festivals become imbricated within individuals lives, beyond the event. Online storytelling generated opportunity for participants to shape knowledge production, and thus offers a productive methodology for qualitative researchers seeking to undertake collaborative fieldwork.

This thesis utilised a narrative approach to interpret three differing iterations regarding the personal roles, meanings and politics of return journeys to Mardi Gras. Rather than serving as representative, narratives granted justice to the multiple, fluid, complex, subtle, shifting and embodied characterisations of Mardi Gras – in so doing, the ways personal narratives (re)construct and trouble broader characterisations of Mardi Gras were illuminated. It was therefore shown how narrative analysis offers a way to meet feminist agendas concerned with the politics of the personal and tensions between accounting for both structure and agency.

Leading the empirical journey, in Chapter 6, *Performing Dyke on Bike*, the Dykes on Bikes were used to examine the ways individual and collective identity and belonging are generated and sustained through return journeys to Mardi Gras. It was revealed that belonging and subjectivity are bound up with, and constructed through temporal, spatial and social powers that are wider than, yet dependent on, the event of Mardi Gras. In showing this fluidity, this chapter brought into question the bounded assumptions framing belonging, and individual and collective identity formation, as restricted to the temporal and spatial boundaries of Mardi Gras.

Shifting mode of transport, Chapter 7, *Rethinking activism* investigated the politics of Mardi Gras for regional Australia by following the return bus journey of GV Pride from Shepparton to Mardi Gras. Two key contributions formed the catalyst for this chapter. First, GV Pride’s return journey holds significance for studies of queer mobilities. Constructions of queer mobilities as once off, uni-directional movement from the rural to urban are rendered problematic – ultimately troubling distinctions positioning the rural and urban in opposition. Troubling rural/urban distinctions is

imperative because it grants visibility to non-normative sexualities beyond urban centres. Second, interpretation of the ebb and flow of affective and emotional relationships revealed the messiness of distinctions between activism and tourism, and activism and regional areas. Acknowledging the existence of regional activism deconstructs notions that non-normative sexualities and queer politics do not exist beyond urban centres.

Turning to the empirical home straight, Chapter 8, *Embodying commodification* revealed the agency and life-course of attendees, and the process through which attendees travel in, through and out of Mardi Gras with certain perceptions, experiences and expectations – all of which affect encounters during this event. Here, the commodification of Pride was utilised as a way to examine how attendees make and remake, (re)confirm and trouble constructions of Mardi Gras. In granting attention to the agency and life-course of attendees, the fluid and processual ontology of events and the ways events are entangled with broader social worlds were illustrated – rendering a further challenge to bounded constructions of events.

9.1 Analytical futures

Despite a considerable body of festival scholarship, I propose work needs to continue in order to understand the ways everyday life is made, and remade, through return journeys to festivals. Complicating assumptions of events as temporally and spatially contained requires increased attention to mobilities, alongside recognition of the agency and politics of the personal, because the combination of all these elements works to heighten understandings around the processual, fluid and multiple dimensions of events. To this end, increased empirical explorations following the body, peripatetically in, through and out of events ought to be undertaken. Findings emergent through each of the three empirical chapters also inform future analytical directions.

Mobilities scholars have been slow to explore the mobilities of women motorcycle riders. This thesis focused on the experiences of only one all-women motorcycle group, illustrating how the politics of identity and belonging are performed on-the-move. As

shown in Chapter 6, there is immense growth across the Global North in the number of women choosing to ride, and finding meaning in biking identities. There is thus impetus in further analysing why women are finding significance through this mobility, how motorcycling (re)constructs identity, and the ways women motorcycle performances blur lines between masculinities and femininities.

Intersections between sexuality, religion and social planning are particularly understudied in geography. As revealed in Chapter 7, this is despite the powerful role many religious organisations possess in the governing of social planning. Geographers acknowledge the institutional power religion has long held in shaping legislation regulating non-normative sexuality, and the ways religion continues to act as both enabler and restrictor in the development of sexual orientation equality (Johnson & Vanderbeck 2014). Geographers also recognise the ways social planning funding structures act as both constraining and enabling in meeting the needs of local community groups within the Australian context (Gorman-Murray 2011). Yet, in order to understand the specific politics and power religious organisations possess within the social planning process, more attention needs to be directed to the role of religious organisations in providing social and public health projects at the regional scale. Future research may further investigate the uneven processes through which social plans are determined differently across states, and across regions. Kildonan Uniting Care's welfare network, for example, reaches from metropolitan Melbourne to northern regional Victoria (Kildonan Uniting Care 2015). Despite covering this immense area and offering over 70 individual services across eight locations, Shepparton's Diversity Project remains the only program designed specifically to support same-sex attracted, and sex and gender diverse young people. Public understandings as to why this is the case, or the effects of this unevenness are unknown.

Chapter 8 just began to unpack Pride's commodification by exploring the intertwining of Pride, commodification and the body. At Mardi Gras different bodies encounter commodification in different ways, dependent on their situated histories and subjectivities. Further study of the commodification of Pride, as experienced through

the body, will assist in understanding the multiple and context specific ways Pride is commodified through Mardi Gras. Garnering increased knowledge about the processes of commodification, through spatially embodied encounters, enables movement beyond any *a priori* normative judgement system positioning a unified 'commodification' as either 'positive' or 'negative'. Attention to the encounter, alongside Ahmed's characterisation of 'likeness' and 'unlikeness' may serve as a useful way to further examine intersections of Pride, commodification, embodiment, sexuality, space and the life-course.

9.2 Feminist futures

In this final section I return to a central theme of this thesis: the possible contemporary priorities of Antipodean feminist geography. As part of the thesis introduction I suggested four potential priorities, which emerged through the research process. In this section I detail how this thesis illustrates their potentials, and how they might contribute more broadly to Antipodean feminist geographical agendas. I do not present these four priorities, and their potentials, as a dogmatic way forward for feminist geographers. Instead each is presented as possible avenues in which to productively continue Antipodean feminist geography as an approach that can recognise and promote otherness, identify and decentre power, and engage beyond the boundaries of the sub-discipline.

In this thesis I attempted to outline the productive potentials of enacting an affirmative politics. In this thesis, an affirmative politics is perhaps most evident through the interception of mobilities studies, alongside that of sexualities, leisure and tourism scholarship. A mobilities approach acted as a productive way in which to acknowledge the fluid and processual dimensions of festivals – ultimately assisting in troubling spatially and temporally bounded conceptions of events. Mobilities studies, as I noted however, often meets feminist critique because of its tendency to reproduce an undifferentiated body-subject. Remaining alert to the difficulties in attending to subjectivities, power and politics of a mobilities approach I introduced a visceral framework, which aimed to attend to individual difference. This process followed an

affirmative politics that engaged both the productive potentials of the mobilities paradigm, while also recognising its limitations – attempting to work through them. Rather than standing in opposition, or working parallel to the mobilities paradigm, I viewed myself as working from within, engaged explicitly with it. This does not mean I ignored feminist criticisms of mobilities frameworks; rather I attempted to draw on the productive elements of mobilities approaches, while pointing to, and hoping to overcome, what mobilities approaches exclude and silence. In introducing a visceral approach to mobilities studies I attempted to illustrate what engaging with mobilities studies might offer feminist scholars. Whichever way readers may stand in regards to the ‘successes’ of my feminist engagement with mobilities studies, I hope to have drawn attention to here is the productive potentials rendered through following an affirmative politics.

A key historical legacy of feminist geography has been to pull apart any notion of masculinist, universal, absolute truth. Sharing three narratives of how return journeys to Mardi Gras are framed, and felt differently, opened up alternative configurations, which bring into question, and trouble, dominant framings of Mardi Gras as apolitical, commodified, homonormative and hedonistic. By attending to the politics of the personal, masculinist assumptions essentialising characterisations of commodification and belonging are complicated. Moreover, constructions positioning festivals in opposition to the everyday, activism in opposition to leisure, and the rural in opposition to the urban are rendered incoherent. Attention to personal narratives not only illustrated the politics of return journeys to Mardi Gras, but also more broadly, the politics in recognising ways of living differently and sites of difference (in addition to recognising sites of similarities). This thesis thus contributes to the importance in continued recognition of the personal as political as an avenue in which to trouble masculinist assumptions of coherent, bounded and universal categories.

Characterisations of Mardi Gras as commodified, homonormative and hedonist are continually made and remade through the discourses and encounters of those who attend. Attention to tensions between structure and agency generated understandings of the ways agency is never free, but is always inhibited, or enabled to differing

degrees by structure. Examination of agency/structural relations is crucial for understanding the structural constraints and comforts extended to certain subjectivities, and hypothesizing how oppressive structures might be (re)negotiated. Tensions between agency and structure are perhaps most evident within David's encounters with commodification – which served as the final empirical chapter, Chapter 8. Commodification is a powerful structure in its enabling of Mardi Gras' longevity; therefore rather than criticise its role, I affirmatively redirected my focus to further understand commodification's complexities by unpacking varying encounters during Mardi Gras. The work of Ahmed (2004), alongside the conceptual utilisation of the encounter, enabled us to follow David as he dissected varying iterations of commodification. Attendees are not empty vessels, mindlessly consuming the commodification of Pride. Through taking the agency of David seriously I was able to identify the multiple and context specific ways Pride is commodified across different spaces, by different parties and to differing affects. At the same time, attending to the encounter enabled insights into the way David himself was always positioned within particular broader structures, which affected judgements around commodification. David's narrative lends weight to the importance in recognising tensions between structure and agency for feminist geographers. I would like to suggest that attention to these tensions allows us to understand encounters affirmatively, as never wholly powerful or powerless – but rather as always possessing possibilities for understanding and change.

Finally, through this thesis I defended the political potentials of a strategic essentialism. I acknowledged that conceiving identity as fluid and becoming is a crucial move for post-structuralist feminists seeking to disrupt oppressive masculinist structures. Masculinist structures essentialise identity categories hierarchically – positioning, for instance, men as powerful in contrast to women. While recognising the concerns in conceiving identity as innate and stable, I aimed to render justification for continued recognition in the power of performing certain essentialised identities. This aim is perhaps clearest within the first empirical chapter, Chapter 6. Rather than critiquing the Dyke on Bike identity as essentialist, I chose to explore Dyke on Bike

performances through an affirmative politics during the return journey, granting interest to the possibilities this identity enables and disenables. The essentialised Dyke on Bike identity is revealed as crucial to achieving belonging, enabling performances not elsewhere available, and troubling gendered distinctions between man and woman. At the same time, the politics of desiring belonging with the Dyke on Bike identity was displayed – revealing how certain dimensions of identity are always lost when desiring to belong. What I argued for are the political imperatives in acknowledging varying theorisations of identity, rather than remaining loyal to any one dogma. Strategic essentialism need not form an oppositional position to that of post-structuralist becoming – acknowledging ontological differences between identity as constructed through subjects, and identity as understood theoretically, creates a space to examine the potentials, politics, and limits of each. Following Moss and Falconer Al-Hindi (2008), one of the crucial motivations for many feminist geographers, after all, is not to critique, nor even necessarily to explain, but rather to render new possibilities and realities. I hope, in some small way, through the contributions of this thesis, alongside the feminist priorities outlined as part of this final section, to have moved some way toward this purpose.

9.3 Epilogue: a very different encounter?

Once more turning to where this thesis began, I now wonder how my body might respond if I were to return to the train platform encounter, to be again asked: 'So, what is your PhD on?', followed by the inescapable: 'Do people even still go to Mardi Gras? It's just one big commodified party these days, isn't it?' Would I once more become undone, anxious, apprehensive or inarticulate? Would I be calm, or engaged, perhaps? How would I reply, granted I now not only 'know' some of the multiple ongoing meanings connected to this event, but also the vulnerabilities emergent through circulating particular contemporary Mardi Gras' discourses; such as the commodification narratives characterised in that anxious encounter?

Recognising the assumptions located within my companions questions, and the ways such conjectures ignore the agency of those who continue to find meaning through this event, I have hope my response would follow an affirmative politics focused on the politics of the personal. Affirmative in the sense of seeking to open up these questions, in a way that generates conversation around the complex ways Mardi Gras is, indeed, configured by those who travel from afar to attend. Affirmative in the sense that I would seek to reconfigure this encounter as opportunity to voice the personal politics and meanings of participants – as a process through which to trouble broader power structures. Affirmative in the sense that, rather than positioning myself in opposition to my companion, I would hope to engage and make sense of how, why and to what affect, such powerful assumptions have come to stand as 'truth'.

This thesis has argued that Mardi Gras remains an important event because it plays meaningful roles in the everyday lives of those who attend. It has thus sought to trouble contemporary dominant discourses positioning Mardi Gras in particular ways, such as discourses position Mardi Gras as commodified, apolitical and homonormative. I have sought to illustrate that recognising the agency and personal politics of those who attend, through an affirmative visceral feminist politics, goes some way to repositioning Mardi Gras as an event that remains crucial in making and remaking identities and rendering politics and social change beyond its perceived temporal and spatial confines.

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Appendix 1: Copy of survey



Big Day Out Survey

This survey will only take a few minutes of your time

You are invited to participate in a University of Wollongong study exploring the importance of the Big Day Out in the lives of those who attend. The survey will only take a few minutes to complete. The study is being carried out by Anna de Jong a student from the University of Wollongong. Anna has received permission from the Big Day Out event organizers.

1. Your age:.....
2. Your gender:.....
3. Post code of residential address:.....
4. Approximately how far did you travel to attend the Big Day Out (in km)
5. How did you travel to the Big Day Out?
.....
- 6a. Did you travel alone (Please tick)

☐ Yes ☐ No
- 6b. If no, who did you travel with?
7. When did you start planning to attend the Big Day Out?
- 8a. Is this the first Big Day Out you have attended? (Please tick)

☐ Yes ☐ No
- 8b. If not, how many Big Day Out's have you attended?.....
9. Why do you attend the Big Day Out?.....

.....
.....
10. Who are you attending the Big Day Out with? (Please tick all that apply)

☐ Friends

☐ Partner

☐ Sibling / Cousin

☐ Parents

☐ Other Please note:

11. What do you *like* most about attending the Big Day Out?
.....
.....

12. What do you dislike most about attending the Big Day Out?
.....
.....

13a. Is attending the Big Day Out important to you? (Please tick)

☐ Yes ☐ No

13b. If yes, why is it important to you?
.....
.....

14a. Is it important to you that the Big Day Out is held in Sydney?

☐ Yes ☐ No

14b. If yes, please explain why holding the event in Sydney is important to you:
.....
.....

15. Would you attend the Big Day Out if it were held somewhere else?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Invitation to Participate in Future Research

Anna is seeking people who attended the Big Day Out to share their stories about planning to attend the event, travelling to the event and their experiences of the festival. If you would like to participate further in this project please provide your contact details below. Your contact details will remain confidential, and will only be used by the researcher to invite you to participate in this project at a later date.

16. Are you interested in further participating in this research? (Please provide contact details if you are interested in further participating in the this research)

1. Name:.....

2. Phone number and email

Mobile:.....

Home:.....

Email:.....

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your input is greatly appreciated.

Appendix 2: Example of survey link



Anna's Profile · The Bronx's Profile · Anna's Wall



Anna de Jong ▸ The Bronx

Did any one go to the Big Day Out?

I am doing some research with the university of wollongong to find out why music festivals are important to young people – I would appreciate it so much if those who went to the BDO would take a couple of minutes to fill this survey out. Cheers!

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/GY9WKXL>

Like · Comment · February 6 at 7:37am · 🌐

Appendix 3: Participant information sheet

University of Wollongong



Participant Information Sheet for Journeying to Mardi Gras Study

The Project: This project is interested in documenting return travel to the Mardi Gras Parade, Sydney Australia. This project's aim is to better understand the role of Mardi Gras Parade in people's lives beyond metropolitan Sydney. What is the role of Mardi Gras for those living outside of Sydney, in a context of changing sexual politics and citizenship?

The Focus: The focus of this project is to explore how return travel and attendance at Mardi Gras Parade connects with participant's everyday life. Hence, the key questions driving this project are: why is 'going away' to Mardi Gras Parade important to individuals everyday lives?, how does 'going away' to attend Mardi Gras change understandings of 'home'? and how does 'going away' to Mardi Gras shape experiences and ideas?

The Purpose: The purpose of this project is to better understand the changing role of Mardi Gras for those living outside of metropolitan Sydney, in a context of changing sexual politics and citizenship.

What you will be asked to do: Participation involves participating in a semi structured interview, and if desired sharing video and photographs of the return journey and Mardi Gras and to create a diary exploring the role of Mardi Gras in your everyday life. You are invited to request a copy of the data produced from this interview, and to submit edits / revisions. You will also be asked if you wish to be given a pseudonym as direct quotations from the interview may be used in scholarly publications. However, your responses may be identifiable even with the use of a pseudonym. Further, if during the project participants disclose facts about illegal activities then the researcher's duty of confidentiality is overridden by the public duty to disclose to the police the facts about felonies. The greatest burden in this project is the expenditure of time. For this reason participant's may choose to withdraw consent at any time should participation become inconvenient.

The Project Organizer: If you have any enquiries about the research please contact: Anna de Jong (+61431675396; aldj998@uowmail.edu.au) or Dr Gordon Waitt (00612 42213684; gwaitt@uow.edu.au).

This study has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Social Science, Humanities and Behavioural Science) of the University of Wollongong. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the way this research has been conducted, you can contact the UoW Ethics Officer on 00612 4221 4457.

Thank you for your interest in this study.

Appendix 4: Consent form

University of Wollongong



Consent Form for Participants

Journeying to Mardi Gras study

Anna de Jong

Department of Geography and Sustainable Communities, Faculty of Social Sciences

I have been given the information about the 'Journeying to Mardi Gras Study'. I have had the opportunity to discuss this research project with Anna de Jong who is conducting this research through the University of Wollongong. At this time I have asked any questions I may have about the research and my participation.

I have been advised of the potential risks and burdens associated with this research. Potential risks and burdens associated with this research include maintaining privacy and confidentiality, transparency of recorded data and verification of transcripts, harm and burden of time. To maintain privacy and confidentiality I have been given the option to use a pseudonym and I will not be asked to comment on my own practices of illegal activity at Mardi Gras Parade. To ensure transparency of recorded data and verification of transcripts, material relating to this interview will be made available to me upon request, within the timeframe of the project. In regards to harm, harmful or distressing lines of questioning will be avoided. The greatest burden in this project is the expenditure of time. For this reason I may choose to withdraw my consent at any time should participation become inconvenient.

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary; I am free to withdraw from this research at any time. My withdrawal from the project will not affect my relationship with the University of Wollongong.

If I have any enquiries about this research, I can contact Dr Gordon Waitt (00 61 2) 4221 3684; gwaitt@uow.edu.au). If I have any concerns or complaints regarding the way the research is or has been conducted, I can contact the Ethics Officer, Human Research Ethics Committee, Office of Research, University of Wollongong on (00 61 2) 4221 4457.

Please tick one of the following

- ☐ Be directly quoted in publications with the use of my given name
- ☐ Be directly quoted in publications with the use of a pseudonym (made up name to protect identity)

I consent to participate in all or some of the research phases, but I am aware that I can change my decision at any time by contacting the researcher (please tick where appropriate):

- ☐ Phase 1: Face to face interview
- ☐ Phase 2: Diary, self-directed photography and voice recordings
- ☐ Phase 3: Follow up interview (email or Skype if required)

I understand that the data collected from my participation will be used for a Doctoral thesis, scholarly publications, conference presentations and reports, and I consent for it to be used in that manner.

Name (please print)

.....

Signed

Date

.....

...../...../.....

Appendix 5: Participant attributes⁶⁸

Name	Age	Place of Residence	Occupation	Sexuality ⁶⁹	Mardi Gras' previously attended	Group
Alana	Mid 20s	Brisbane	Retail	Lesbian	1	Dykes on Bikes
Andy	Early 20s	Wollongong	Student	Lesbian	1	University of Wollongong Queer Collective
Ben	Early 20s	Bendigo	Student	Gay	0	Sexuality, Acceptance Freedom and Equality (SAFE), La Trobe University
Brant	Mid 20s	Goulburn Valley	Hospitality	Gay	0	GV Pride
Cat	Mid 20s	Brisbane	Retail	Lesbian	1	Dykes on Bikes
Damien	Mid 30s	Goulburn Valley	Project Officer	Queer	4	GV Pride
David	Early 30s	Wellington	Policy Officer	Queer	0	-
Frankie	Late 20s	Wagga Wagga	Student	Lesbian	2	Momentum Charles Sturt University
Georgia	Early 20s	Melbourne	Student	Heterosexual	1	-
Georgie	Early 20s	Goulburn Valley	Hospitality	Queer	1	GV Pride

⁶⁸ This is a list of individuals who participated 'formally'. Many more individuals participated 'informally' through informal, unplanned conversation.

⁶⁹ Self-defined at time of research, by each participant.

Jac	Mid 20s	Brisbane	Liberian	Lesbian	0	Dykes on Bikes
Jason	Early 30s	Auckland	Policy Advisor	Gay	2	-
Jessica	Early 20s	Armidale & Tamworth	Student	Lesbian	0	Gender and Sexualities Minorities Alliance (GSMA), University of New England
Julz	Mid 30s	Brisbane	Paramedic	Lesbian	Many?	Dykes on Bikes
Lucy	Early 20s	Armidale	Student	Lesbian	2	Gender and Sexualities Minorities Alliance (GSMA), University of New England
Marcus	Early 20s	Bendigo	Student	Bisexual	0	Sexuality, Acceptance Freedom and Equality (SAFE), La Trobe University
Mel	Mid 20s	Brisbane	Retail	Lesbian	1	Dykes on Bikes
Nikky	Mid 20s	Wollongong	Student	Lesbian	4	University of Wollongong Queer Collective
Pat	Early 20s	Bendigo	Student	Heterosexual	1	-
Phillip	Late 20s	Goulburn Valley	Retail	Gay	1	GV Pride
Rod	Early 30s	Goulburn Valley	Retail	Gay	0	GV Pride
Sam	Mid 20s	Brisbane	Mechanic	Lesbian	1	Dykes on Bikes
Wendy	Early 40s	Wollongong	Tertiary education	Queer	Many?	-
Yolanda	Late 20s	Goulburn Valley	Vet	Lesbian	2	GV Pride

Appendix 6: Diary instructions

Dear Diary-writer,

Thank you so much for taking part in this stage of the research ☺

Your diary, photographs and voice recordings will help you to reflect and share more of your Mardi Gras travel experiences as they happen during your journey.

The diary, camera and voice recorder have been provided to give you *options* on how you wish to share your journey to and from Mardi Gras. Do not feel that you have to use all three options, just what works best for you and provides insight into your experiences. You are more than welcome to use all three options if it is enjoyable!

Diary

This diary is a space to write about your *activities, emotions and experiences* of travelling to Mardi Gras Parade. Reflect on things that happen during your travels that you think will help me understand the meaning and importance travelling to Mardi Gras Parade holds to you.

If you choose to use the diary please try to write in your diary each day of your trip to Mardi Gras Parade and one day after returning from your travels, but if you cannot that is fine. It is up to you how much you write and do not worry about spelling and grammar. This is a time to share your thoughts, there is no right or wrong – this is *your* space so feel free to write and draw whatever comes to mind during your travels. Feel free to include anything that is meaningful to your Mardi Gras journey, things like poetry, magazine clippings, pamphlets, drawings etc.

Photos

Think about what is meaningful (good or bad) to you when taking your **photos**. Photos may be of things, people, places, and activities, anything that is a reflection of your journey to Mardi Gras Parade. For example you may wish to capture moments that are particularly emotional for you, you may be really excited when your plane takes off from New Zealand, or you may be exhausted and bored when returning after the parade. It may be helpful to write a brief explanation of each photo in your diary, explaining why

you decided to take the photo and what you were feeling at that time – it is fine if you choose not to do this.

Voice Recorder

Similar to the photos option, think about and reflect on what is meaningful (good or bad) when choosing to record. Recordings may be reflections about activities, emotions and experiences of your journey to Mardi Gras.

If you choose to use the recorder, please create at least one recording from each day of your travels and one once you have returned after Mardi Gras. It is up to you how long you wish the recordings to be. It is your recorder, so feel free to record anything and everything that is meaningful to you. Recordings may be things like a favourite Mardi Gras anthem playing at a venue, a memorable sound, singing, a conversation, your own personal reflections etc.

Returning diary, camera and voice recorder

Return the diary, camera and voice recorder by placing all three items in the prepaid post pack provided and popping it into your closest postal box. I will be forever grateful if you could do this during the first week of March Please let me know if you have any problems with returning the items, I'm here to help ☺

I hope these instructions are clear and you enjoy participating in this stage of the research. If you have any questions please call me at +61 431 675 396, or email me at aldj998@uowmail.edu.au.

Voice recording instructions

To work the voice recorder, follow these steps:

1. Make sure the 'hold' button on the top left side of the recorder is switched to off
2. Press the play button (centre button on front of recorder) to turn on
3. To record press the button with the red dot (top right button on front of recorder)
4. To stop recording, press the stop button (below recording button – bottom right on front of recorder)
5. If you wish to play back recording press the play button (centre button on front of recorder)
6. To turn the recorder off hold down the play button (centre button on front of recorder) while the recorder is stopped until the display shows 'bye'

7. To ensure the recorder is not turned on unintentionally it might be helpful to switch the hold button on when you are not using the recorder (switch on top left side of recorder)

There is also a voice recorder instruction manual in the inside pocket of your voice recorder pouch. If you have any questions please call me at +61 431 675 396, or email me at aldj998@uowmail.edu.au.

Appendix 7: Number of motorcycle licence holders, NSW

<i>Year</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Total</i> ⁷⁰
1999	35,804	347,495	383,858
2000	36,902	353,664	391,179
2001	37,728	357,135	395,493
2002	39,223	365,050	404,924
2003	38,569	361,160	400,370
% increase			
1999-2003	<u>7.7%</u>	3.9%	4.3%

Source: New South Wales Roads and Traffic Authority (quoted in Australian Transport Safety Bureau 2004).

⁷⁰ Includes cases where a licence holder's gender was not recorded or did not conform to normative gendered binaries.

Appendix 8: Dykes on Bikes parade ride route



MARDI GRAS 2012 - PARADE RIDE RULES

Please Check Website Closer to Mardi Gras to Check for any Changes
www.dykesonbikessydney.org.au

Welcome to Mardi Gras 2012. We intend to make it as safe and fun for all concerned. Please read this carefully as it contains all necessary information.

MEETING POINT

All riders and pillion need to arrive **BETWEEN 3PM & 4.30PM** at the Coach Turning Bay, Driver Ave, Moore Park. This is place where we normally pull up to unload our helmets and jackets.

* You will all be required to go through our check point, where your bike will be checked for a **registration** label and your **licence will be checked**. You will receive flags, head light gels, security bands and a bag to put your belongings in. This will ensure your bike gear and helmet are secure during the parade ride. You will then be given directions to your team colour where you can prepare your bike for the parade ride and meet your Ride Leaders.

* **Roadworthy:** Please make sure that your bike is roadworthy, able to withstand slow riding, stop start clutch work and also **REGISTERED** with registration label showing!! (No Trade Plates). No valid registration label = NO RIDE!

* **Fuel up:** Before the run ensure that your bike is filled up with the appropriate petrol, oil, and water and that your tyres are to the correct pressure.

* **All road rules Apply:** By Law **YOU MUST HAVE YOUR LICENCE ON YOU AT ALL TIMES!!** NO LICENCE = NO RIDE!! Even after you have put your helmet away in the bag area, keep your licence on your person during the parade. There will be police checks before parade starts. If you are on your L or P Plates, by law, in NSW, you are unable to carry a pillion irrespective of age or other State licensing. Please respect Dykes on Bikes by adhering to this law.

* **Drugs and alcohol:** No drugs, other than your personal prescription permitted, for personal use only. Please be aware that police dogs will be checking parade equipment including you and your Bike.

* You will be breath tested by the police, be aware that all breath tests can also be random drug tests. This is every day law, not just a Mardi Gras law. Your licence, your choice!

ON THE PARADE ROUTE

We will be riding up the parade route and back down again. We will run at a constant speed of 15km/h.

* All licensed motorcycle riders **MUST** be capable of performing a slow speed **U TURN within a width of 3 traffic lanes**, without the need to stop, foot paddle or push the bike in the turn.

* **No trick riding:** your feet must remain on your foot pegs at all times, bottoms on seats at all times, all pillion and riders must remain seated during the ride on the parade route and the parade itself

* **No tailgating** your fellow riders ever!

* On the parade route you will ride **3 Abreast**, until the U turn then filter down to one for the u turn.

Once you have completed the U Turn you will reform up **3 abreast**

* **The preparation for the turn** in start central will commence in the lane closest to the gutter on the left (south) side of Oxford St. The permissible turning circle within Whitlam Square will be marked off with Traffic Cones.

* It is imperative to the timing of the completion of the run that all riders **MUST** be able to perform this turn safely at slow speed. A fall in this area could endanger other riders, volunteers and spectators in the area especially if a collision was to occur from a following bike. We will have DOB crew here to assist if this occurs.

* If there is an emergency on the parade route you will form into single file.

* You will not ride in the emergency lane

* **If you breakdown** on the Parade route push your bike off to the side and wait for the support vehicles on second pass. They will pick you up. If your bike restarts (such as simple overheating) **DO NOT RIDE THROUGH THE RANKS** to rejoin your colour group. Simply join whatever group is next to you.

THERE IS **NO SPEEDING ALONG PARADE ROUTE** & never overtake another bike(s). The speed limit for all vehicles is 15kph.

*** No bikes will stop in the bus lanes during the run, in either Direction!!!!**

*** ALL PILLIONS** – Your feet must remain on foot pegs at all times & your bum must remain on the seat. Remember to wave & make a noise but only as much as your rider is comfortable with. Don't be embarrassed by causing the bike to spill.

*** At No point during the parade will Riders / Pillions dismount from their Motorcycle except in case of emergency, breakdown or under direct instruction from NMG officials.**

*** Once you have passed the Glamstand proceed directly and without stopping to our start area to collect your helmet and gear.**

AT THE END AREA

*** There are no provisions for DOB members to remain within the park or to use the End area as a Parking area during the parade or party.**

*** You must collect your gear and helmets immediately after our parade ride ends.**

*** Remember to remove your headlight gel before leaving. It is illegal to ride with these on public roads**

*** DON'T Park your bike in the end area it will be REMOVED by CPMPI rangers impounded and Fined.**

Now go to either the official Mardi Gras party or come have a drink with us at the Hampshire Hotel, 91 Parramatta Rd, Camperdown – gold coin donation entry

DO NOT DRINK AND RIDE, if you do you're a bloody idiot.

**THE SYDNEY D.O.B COMMITTEE WANTS TO WISH ALL
OUR RIDERS AND PILLIONS A SAFE AND FUN MARDI
GRAS!!
RIDE WITH PRIDE**

Meeting Point

Driver Ave, Moore Park

Committee Contacts

President	Nic Fletcher	0438 405 669
Vice Pres	Jenny Gunther	0405 352 304
Treasurer	Gail Wilcocke	0117 465 724
Secretary	Lisa Londregan	0416 325 665
Media	Lyn Doherty	0410 239 050
Merchandise	Noreen Holmes	0124 401 173
Membership	Rex Hildreds	0401 378 828
Ride Leader	Pip James	0415 415 022
Ride Leader	Ian Dodd	0151 011 147
Ride Leader	Rex Brennan	0414 493 411
Ride Leader	Karen Cooper	0422 000 037

