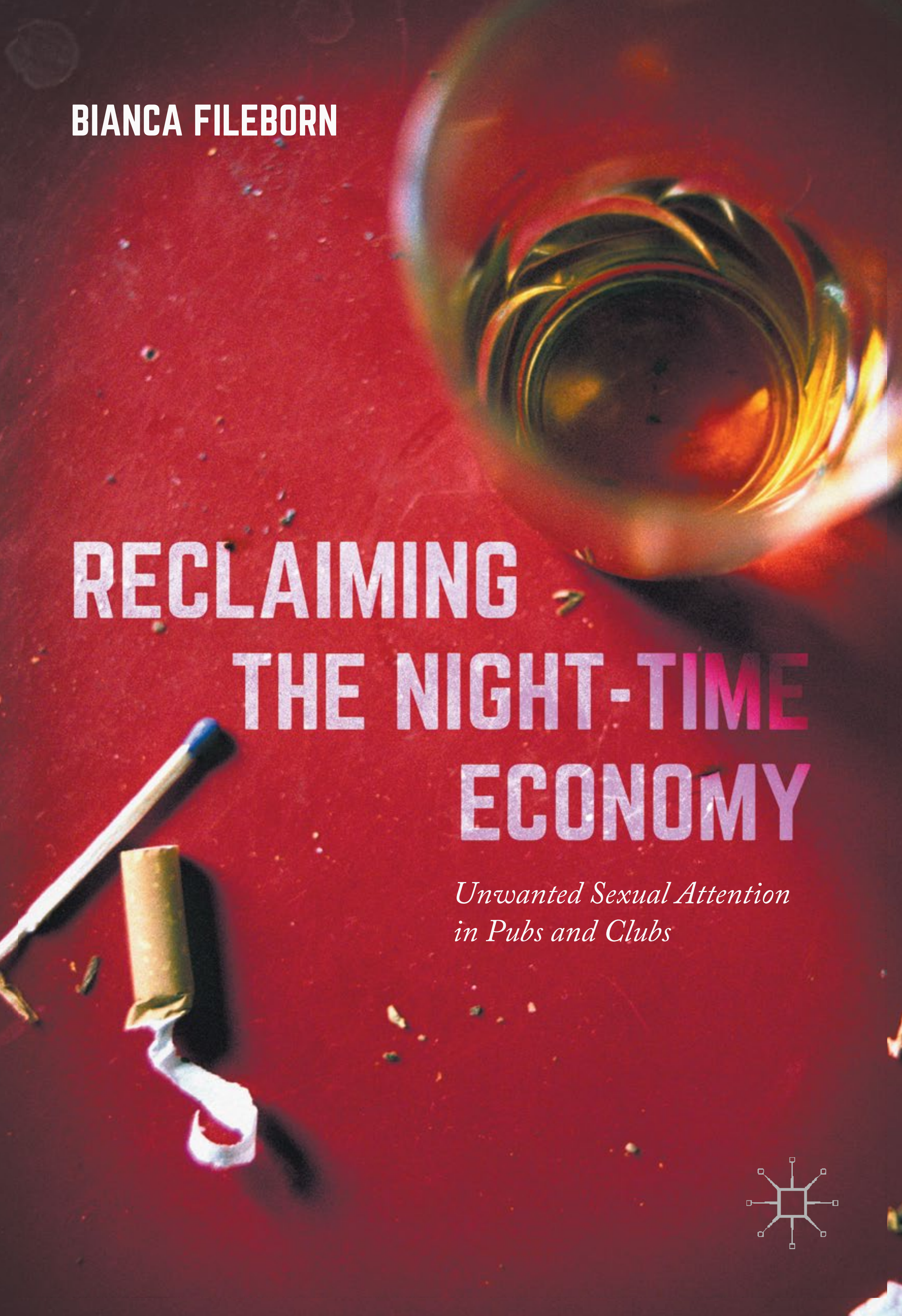

BIANCA FILEBORN

RECLAIMING THE NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY

Unwanted Sexual Attention in Pubs and Clubs

Reclaiming the Night-Time Economy

Bianca Fileborn

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Unwanted Sexual Attention in Pubs and Clubs

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In loving memory of Joyce and Ken

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Setting the Scene: Space, Identity, and Sexual Violence

> *A woman stands in a bar in the Melbourne CBD, enjoying a night out with friends after a long week. Unexpectedly, a man—a stranger to her—approaches her from behind and grabs her, pinning himself against her while he gropes her breasts. She manages to break free from his hold and returns to her friends. The woman informs bar staff of the man's actions. However, he is in the bar as part of a large group that had booked to be in the venue, and the bar staff do not wish to lose these 'valuable' customers. The bar staff inform the woman that she is making a 'drama', and that the man is just a bit drunk. The woman leaves the venue and phones the police. The perpetrator is eventually charged with indecent assault.*

The above vignette portrays an incident of sexual violence that occurred in a Melbourne bar as I was nearing the end of my research for this book on young adults' perceptions and experiences of unwanted sexual attention in licensed Melbourne venues (see Hollaback, 2013; McColl, 2013 for further information on the incident). It sharply reminded me of my initial reasons for conducting this research, as well as highlighting that in the several years it took to complete this project, sadly, little had changed. Indeed, as I sat down to write this book there were several other high profile incidents of sexual violence in licensed venues around Melbourne,

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and grass roots campaigns aimed at combatting sexual harassment and violence in pubs and clubs have been introduced recently in other global cities such as London

This woman's experience also encapsulated a number of the key themes and issues raised in my research. Why did the incident occur in this bar? What made the perpetrator engage in his course of action? Was there something within the culture of the bar that encouraged sexual violence? For example, did the dismissive attitudes of the bar staff, and the value placed on profit above patron well-being, facilitate the perpetrator's actions? How should the bar staff have responded, and what responsibility did they have to respond in any particular way? Did the fact that the victim/survivor was away from her friendship group at the time her perpetrator assaulted her make a difference? Did the manner in which she related to the culture of the bar and the people in it influence how she interpreted her experience and the level of harm she endured? These are all key questions that I will explore throughout this book.

While encounters such as this are anecdotally common (Grazian 2007; Snow et al. 1991), there has been only minimal attention paid, whether in academic, policy, or public discourse, to sexual violence and unwanted sexual attention within licensed venues (although this situation is, of course, continually evolving). This lack of attention sits in contrast to the considerable focus on men's physical violence in the night-time economy in Australia and in other Western countries such as the UK. Yet this anxiety around men's 'alcohol-fuelled' violence did not reflect or respond to the types of sexualised harm that I had encountered as a young woman in the Melbourne venue scene, and that so many (if not all) of my female-identified friends had also been exposed to. Indeed, the experiences of anyone other than heterosexual men seemed to be largely excluded from discussions on harm and violence in the night-time economy. In many ways my research on unwanted sexual attention in licensed venues was designed to respond to this knowledge gap by providing a platform to document and give voice to a more diverse range of experiences within the city at night.

Several decades of research on sexual violence, and other forms of sexually unwanted or coerced experiences, have firmly established that it is a heavily gendered experience, with men usually the perpetrators and women usually the victim/survivors. Feminist and other theoretical contributions have identified a broad range of social, structural and political factors that underlie sexual violence. Patriarchal power relations, gender inequality, and social and cultural attitudes have been identified as creating the conditions that allow sexual violence to take place. Such contributions have been highly valuable, yet we still know relatively little regarding how sexual violence comes about in different cultural and social settings such as licensed venues. Intersections between gender identity, sexuality, and sexual violence also remain sorely under-examined. In investigating young adults' perceptions and experiences of unwanted sexual attention in licensed venues, this book is concerned with the intersecting themes of gender, sexuality, and space and place.

Setting the Scene: The Research Context

In my research for this book I set out to explore young adults' experiences and perceptions of unwanted sexual attention in licensed venues. I wanted to find out what young people were encountering on a night out, as well as how they understood and perceived unwanted sexual attention. In what ways were their experiences and perceptions shaped by the particular venue they occurred in, or by facets of identity such as gender and sexual orientation? In order to examine these questions, I conducted interviews, focus groups and surveys with 252 young Melbournians. The experiences of these young people underpin this book.

As I argue throughout this book, the context in which unwanted sexual attention occurs is vitally important in informing how young people understand and experience it. Melbourne has a large, dynamic licensed venue scene, with around 1000 venues located within the central and inner city and extending out to some suburban regions (Millar 2009). Melbourne's pubs and clubs vary in terms of their size, culture, and core patron demographics, among many other features. Each of these venues has a distinct physical environment and design. Large commercial nightclubs often sit next to small underground bars and upmarket clubs and restaurants. Melbourne's intricate laneways form a vast labyrinth, with venues located at every unexpected turn. Often, clubs and pubs are hidden within these dark, graffiti-marked laneways, with access to them dependent on culturally acquired knowledge and word of mouth.

However, as I have already intimated, Melbourne's night-time entertainment scene has been marred in the past decade or so by (supposedly) increasing levels of drunken violence, with an ensuing moral panic (driven largely by local media and a number of high profile incidents of drunken violence) influencing a significant change in policy and police response (Houston 2007a, b; Johnston and Houston 2008; Millar 2009; Xuereb 2008). As well as being a site of pleasure and a place for people from different cultures and backgrounds in which to socialise, relax, and have fun, the Melbourne night-time venue scene is simultaneously a site of social control, social exclusion, and risk. A similar focus on interpersonal violence has occurred across a number of other large urban centres in Australia, including Newcastle, Sydney, and the Gold Coast (Briscoe and Donnelly 2001; Miller et al. 2012; Palk et al. 2010), and internationally (Winlow and Hall 2006). A range of measures such as increased police presence and the use of lockout tactics (where venues are prohibited from letting in new patrons after a designated time) were introduced across these sites. Much subsequent domestic and international research was concerned with establishing the nature and extent of interpersonal violence in and around clubs and pubs, evaluating these various attempts at social control and at identifying the contextual factors within licensed venues that may be conducive to violence occurring (Fitzgerald et al. 2010; Graham et al. 2006a, b; Graham and Wells 2003; Homel et al. 2004; Palk et al. 2010). However, gender and sexuality have only occasionally featured as areas of concern within this body of research.

While interpersonal violence among men has been considered in some detail in existing literature (see for example Briscoe and Donnelly 2001; Fitzgerald et al. 2010; Graham et al. 2006a, b; Homel et al. 1992; Palk et al. 2010), there has been only minimal accompanying research accounting for the experiences of women or gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer (GLBTIQ) young people within Melbourne's night-time economy. Therefore, it is unclear what forms of interpersonal violence are of concern for these groups when accessing the Melbourne nightlife scene. In many respects, this book is a response to the insistent focus on interpersonal violence between men in the night-time economy. It seeks to present a more diverse picture of the nature of the social, physical, and psychological or emotional harms that young adults may encounter when using pubs and clubs.

What is 'Unwanted Sexual Attention'? Initial Reflections on the Conceptual and Theoretical Framework of This Book

The second chapter of this book provides an in-depth exploration of what, precisely, unwanted sexual attention is. As this later discussion will elucidate, unwanted sexual attention is a highly complex, fluid, and situated occurrence. It is not necessarily an experience that can be defined easily or neatly. It is useful here, however, to briefly explain why the term 'unwanted sexual attention' was implemented in this book and to provide the reader with an overview of the conceptual and theoretical approach taken. In many ways, this research challenges and disrupts, but also builds upon, current, dominant accounts of sexualised violence.

A Note on Terminology

It is important to account for why 'unwanted sexual attention' has been used in this book as opposed to, say, the more familiar terms 'sexual assault' or 'sexual violence'—although I do occasionally draw on these terms as well. Language matters when discussing sexual violence (Girschick 2002: 100; Ristock 2002), as it can be used to exclude or deny experiences (Girschick 2002; Kelly 1988; Kelly and Radford 1990; Ristock 2002). It can also provide the means to name and express harms committed against us, to give voice to our experiences (Girschick 2002; Kelly and Radford 1990; Ristock 2002).

Given the lack of research on sexualised violence in licensed venues, I wanted to take as broad and inclusive an approach as possible. Determining the boundaries of what 'counts' as sexual violence is also an inherently political act, as I have alluded to above. My work is largely concerned with challenging and reshaping the boundaries of sexual violence, and with exploring experiences that sit 'on the margins' of our current understandings of sexual violence. I wanted to explore the ‘minor’, ‘background’, or ‘everyday’ experiences of sexualised violence as much as I wanted to uncover and investigate experiences that fall within dominant understandings or constructions of sexual violence. This required using terminology that was able to include this spectrum of experiences.

The working definition of ‘unwanted sexual attention’ developed for this study included an infinitely broad range of behaviours, from the seemingly ‘minor’ occurrences of staring, and verbal comments, through to sexual assault or rape; although, as the next chapter illustrates, unwanted sexual attention is far more complex, fluid, and messy in practice. This definition was based heavily on Kelly’s (1988) continuum model of sexual violence, and this concept is explored further in Chap. 2.

The term ‘sexual assault’ has been avoided, as it is associated with legal definitions of sexually offensive or harmful behaviour. Legal definitions often perceive sexual harm in a limited manner, or produce sexual violence in a particular, narrow way. As such, drawing on a legal approach would have potentially excluded many of the harmful or problematic experiences of young adults. Some forms of unwanted sexual attention, such as staring, would most likely be of little concern to the criminal justice system. Indeed, historically and currently the legal system has functioned as a key site for the denial and minimisation of (particularly, though not only) women’s experiences of sexual harm (Heath 2005; Heenan 2004; Kelly 1988; Kelly and Radford 1990; McGregor 2012).

In contrast, I sought to privilege young adults’ experiences and understandings of unwanted sexual attention. I was not concerned with examining whether these incidents fell under current legal definitions of sexual offences, or with how they would be addressed by the law as it currently stands. Thus, while some participants in this study may have encountered a form of unwanted sexual attention that would fall within the scope of a legal definition of sexual offences, such as in the scenario presented at the beginning of the chapter, using legal definitions (for example, indecent assault or rape in the Victorian context) would have ultimately excluded many experiences of unwanted sexual attention.

Theorising Sexual Violence: Accounting for Identity, Space, and Place

A central aim of this research is to draw attention to, and reignite discussion on, the broader spectrum of sexually violent and unwanted behaviours. This has particular implications for our theoretical and conceptual understandings of sexual violence, and these will be explored at length throughout this book. Although a number of landmark feminist studies on sexual violence have documented and drawn attention to the 'everyday' or 'minor' encounters of sexual violence that women encounter (notably the work of Liz Kelly, Elizabeth Stanko, and Jill Radford), the bulk of current research and discourse on sexual violence continues to be concerned with forms of sexual violence that would meet a legal definition of harm (Kelly 2012b).

While this book is in many ways informed by the groundbreaking work of feminist criminologists such as Kelly and Stanko, in other respects it also takes a radically different approach to theorising and conceptualising sexual violence. I adopt what can be described primarily as a post-structuralist approach to understanding the categories of sexual violence or unwanted sexual attention. That is to say that I do not view unwanted sexual attention or sexual violence as pre-given, fixed or stable. As Heberle and Grace (2009: 2) eloquently put it:

> The problem of sexual violence in itself is not self-evident in its essence; it does not have an essence … there is no singular form that sexual violence can be reduced to even as we seek to make it visible as an unjust and damaging action.

Rather, sexual violence is an inherently fluid and unstable category that is constantly being (re)produced in contextually specific ways (Cahill 2009). In many respects this is a radically divergent approach to dominant existing feminist accounts of sexual violence, which have tended to view it as an essential or pre-given category. Existing scholarship is primarily concerned with exposing and documenting women's accounts and experiences of sexual violence (certainly, an extremely important task and one which I also take up in this book to some extent), rather than considering how such discourses actively produce and shape sexual violence. Earlier feminist accounts have been concerned with challenging the dominant (usually legal) narratives of sexual violence by examining and privileging women's experiences, in turn producing a picture of what constitutes 'real' violence against women.

While such accounts produce a more coherent and inclusive account of sexual violence, they nonetheless tend to view it as a fixed, stable category that emerges from women's perspectives and experiences. Instead, I follow the approach of Kate Seear (2014: 13)—though Seear's work is not concerned with sexual violence—in understanding the construction of reality 'as a dynamic and ongoing process, where objects are constituted through continuing, iterative practices, rather than a set of processes that take place over a finite period and eventually come to a halt'. None of this is to suggest, however, that power and social structure are somehow irrelevant to this ongoing constitution of sexual violence. While sexual violence is indeed constantly in the process of being formed and reformed, the ways in which we understand it—and *whose* understandings are privileged—are fundamentally shaped by existing power relations (though these too are constantly in a process of negotiation and contestation).

Throughout this book I argue that unwanted sexual attention is an inherently unstable category. The accounts presented in this book actively produce and reproduce unwanted sexual attention in ways that are intimately related to identity, culture and belonging. Young people's experiences of unwanted sexual attention shift across contexts. Their accounts and discussions of unwanted sexual attention also act as a way of 'accomplishing' or 'performing' various aspects of their identity, such as gender and sexual orientation. Given the fluidity and constant (re)production of unwanted sexual attention, the discussion presented in this book can only ever be seen as a partial and situated account of young adults' experiences and understandings.

Such an approach to understanding sexual violence and unwanted sexual attention has very particular, and important, political and ethical implications. In particular, it runs the risk of being commandeered to produce arguments suggesting that this fluidity means that sexual violence is somehow 'not real', or merely a matter of differing perspectives. If sexual violence is 'fluid' and 'unstable', this also lends itself to the production of meanings or definitions of this category that are counterproductive to feminist aims in combatting sexual violence, or which do not reflect women's lived experiences of this violence. To say that sexual violence is an unstable category is not to suggest that victim/survivors do not experience very real, material harms. Certainly, such concerns have significant implications for feminist political activism, although I would counter that a post-structuralist approach also offers the potential to *open up* definitions of sexual violence, and to in fact be more responsive to and inclusive of diverse experiences (Atmore 1999).

While a post-structuralist approach may result in the production of different readings and/or discursive productions of sexual violence as a category, this does not mean that all such readings need be weighted the same or given the same credence (Atmore 1999). 'We' can make a choice to value and promote the accounts, experiences, and (re)productions of victims above other constructions of sexual violence. The privileging of certain productions of sexual violence is an inherently political act, and I take the stance here that the victim's account(s) should be privileged above other alternate readings. Post-structuralist accounts also assist in avoiding the trap of reproducing discursive positions on sexual violence and gender that render it as an unavoidable reality in women's lives on account of women's passivity and vulnerability (Gavey 2009).

Yet in other respects a purely post-structuralist approach to understanding sexual violence is unsatisfactory. While sexual violence is indeed an unstable and fluid category, it is not a purely discursive occurrence. Unwanted sexual attention and sexual violence are also material phenomena: put simply, there are also 'physical' and/or embodied realities to such experiences. Sexual violence is constituted by certain corporeal, auditory, and visual components. These corporeal, embodied 'realities' cannot be ignored or excluded in our theoretical accounts of sexual violence: it fundamentally involves acts happening *to, with, and through bodies*, as much as our understanding of these actions is also fluid and discursively produced. The 'material' and the 'discursive' constitute and co-constitute one another.

Geographies of Sexual Violence

A final point to raise here is the role of space in the occurrence of unwanted sexual attention and sexual violence. What role, if any, might geographical or spatial location play in facilitating, shaping, or producing unwanted sexual attention or sexual violence? There has been relatively little attention paid in existing feminist scholarship to *where* sexual violence takes place. Earlier feminist work considering space was largely concerned with the (important) task of exposing and challenging the public/private divide of space and the ways in which this spatial (as well as ideological and political) bifurcation is implemented in the production of 'real' sexual violence (see, e.g., Stanko 1990). Most notably, sexual violence occurring within the 'private' sphere (e.g., perpetrated by a husband against his wife) historically received legal immunity (Boyd 1996, 1997; Brownmiller 1975; Kelly 1988; Russell 1982, although for other groups, notably same-sex attracted individuals, there has been an historical over-regulation and intervention in 'private' sexual activity).[1] The tireless efforts of feminist academics and activists challenged and destabilised this divide, leading to widespread legal, social and cultural change across most Western countries (Boyd 1997; Duncan 1996; García-Del Moral and Dersnah 2014; Russell 1982; Stanko 1990).

More recent feminist geographical work, notably that of Rachel Pain, seeks to disrupt and challenge hierarchies of violence which differentiate between 'forms' of violence on the basis of space and scale. Pain (2015) argues that the concept of 'intimate warfare' provides a more useful framework for understanding the interconnections and relationships between violence occurring at the intimate/domestic and geopolitical levels. While these forms of violence are viewed as conceptually and spatially distinct, Pain argues that they are, in fact, 'a single winding complex of violence' (2015: 72; see also Pain and Staeheli 2014).

While such work has been fundamental in shifting our understandings of *where* (and in which relationship contexts) sexual violence occurs, and has made important political claims regarding which types of sexual violence receive state recognition, it says little about the ways in which spaces themselves may be productive. What role(s) might space and place play in the production of sexual violence? Does it actually matter that these experiences of unwanted sexual attention and sexual violence are taking place within pubs and clubs in comparison to any other spatial location (such as the home, for example)? How might the material, social, cultural (and other) elements of the night-time economy come together to produce certain experiences, while acknowledging the fluid and often ephemeral nature of these components?

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[1] This is, of course, a vast simplification of feminist analyses of the public/private divide, and the role of this distinction in sexual (and other) violence against women. Readers can refer to Boyd (1996, 1997), Coole (2000), Duncan (1996), Pateman (1987), and Russell (1982) for more detailed discussions.

The concept of 'assemblage' is helpful here in providing a framework for making sense of the role of space and materiality in the occurrence of unwanted sexual attention in licensed venues. Assemblage is useful in this regard as, according to Shaw (2014: 88), assemblage is 'about arranging co-existences: about how the stable and the unstable, the solid and the light interact to produce the thing' (see also, Marcus and Saka 2006; Venn 2006). An assemblage is not, Shaw continues (drawing on the influential work of Deleuze and Guattari), 'permanent connections between domains of practices, but the instances or places in which they sometimes meet' (2014: 88). The city at night is formed and reformed through the unstable and temporary coming together or meeting of unique material, affective, cultural (and other) factors. It is distinct and bounded from the city at day (Shaw 2014; though these distinctions and boundaries are not immobile or impermeable either). The concept of assemblage provides a useful tool for allowing us to understand the emergent, fleeting, temporary arrangements of space, culture, bodies, and discourses within pubs and clubs, and to consider the role that these may be playing in the production of unwanted sexual attention.

Accounting for Gender and Sexual Diversity

Another important consideration in this book is the extent to which existing theoretical and conceptual approaches to sexual violence are able to account for the experiences of same-sex attracted and gender-diverse people. There were (and still are) important political reasons for this almost exclusive focus on the experiences of women in heterosexual relationship contexts. Nonetheless, sexual violence has largely been understood within feminist theory as a form of gender-based violence. It is primarily perpetrated by men against women and is clearly implicated in the continuation of gender-based power relations and men's oppression of women (Anderson and Doherty 2008; Brownmiller 1975;

Kelly 1988; Kilmartin and Allison 2007; Lombard and McMillan 2013; Messerschmidt 2012; O'Toole et al. 2007; Radford et al. 1996; Sheffield 2007; Stanko 1985). There are also differences between men's and women's experiences of sexual (and other) victimisation and the subsequent impacts of these experiences (Kelly 1996; Lombard 2013). Certainly, the gendered nature of sexual violence is well supported by extensive research evidence, and it is important to reiterate here that it is not my intention to deny or downplay this.

However, such theoretical accounts also present a particularly heteronormative view of what constitutes gender-based violence: that is, gender-based violence is seen as men perpetrating violence against cis-gendered women within the context of heterosexual relationships. The ways in which gender comes into play in same-sex sexual violence is not clearly articulated in these accounts, and there is generally silence in regards to how gender might intersect with other forms of oppression related to sexuality, or sex and gender identities that sit outside of male/female, man/woman binaries. Although gender is fundamental to our understandings of sexual violence, to what extent can it account for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer (LGBTIQ) people's experiences? Indeed, we should also question the extent to which gender alone can account for women's experiences of sexual violence perpetrated by men, although more recent theoretical approaches have sought to account for the intersections of gender, class, (dis) ability, race/culture and so forth.

Although some theorists have begun to develop accounts of sexual violence that are inclusive of the experiences of LGBTIQ communities (Kelly 1996; Girschick 2002; Ristock 2002; Kilmartin and Allison 2007; Lombard 2013), dominant understandings of sexual violence still work to obscure or ignore them (Tomsen and Mason 2001; Girschick 2002; Erbaugh 2007; Fileborn 2014). As Erbaugh (2007: 451) articulates, dominant frameworks for men's violence against women do not sufficiently explain the occurrence of violence in same-sex contexts, or for those who sit outside of binary understandings of sex, gender, and sexuality. In particular, these dominant frameworks fail to take into account the role(s) of heterosexism, homophobia and transphobia in LGBTIQ sexual violence (along with a myriad other intersecting identities and forms of oppression) (Erbaugh 2007; Kay and Jeffries 2010; Fileborn 2014). This is not to suggest that gender is irrelevant to the experiences of LGBTIQ people, but rather that men's gendered oppression of women alone is unable to account for the scope of sexual violence that LGBTIQ people experience.

What implications does this have for how LGBTIQ people understand and experience sexual violence and unwanted sexual attention? The ways in which we theorise sexual violence have important implications for policy, practice, and broader community understandings of this harm. Jindasurat notes that the exclusion of LGBTIQ experiences from dominant accounts of sexual violence has implications 'for survivors' willingness to seek services as well as their access to services and treatment from service providers' (2013: 60, see also Kay and Jeffries 2010; Fileborn 2012a). In the context of intimate partner violence (IPV) involving gay men, Kay and Jeffries (2010) argue that the heteronormative framing of this experience can result in victims remaining in an abusive relationship on account of being unable to recognise or define their experience as constituting IPV (see also Gillum and DiFulvio 2012). This raises questions regarding how young LGBTIQ individuals understand and experience unwanted sexual attention in the context of these largely heteronormative discourses. The experiences and understandings of same-sex attracted and gender-diverse young people, and the subsequent implications for how we theorise and conceptualise unwanted sexual attention, are a central concern of this book.

Gender

The concept of gender is vital to this book. Relevant questions in the light of this are what is gender and how is it understood and defined within the parameters of this work? There are multiple and competing accounts that make claims as to what gender is, and from where it arises. Gender has been explained as biologically determined and fixed from birth, or as the result of a mix of biological and social determinants, or as determined entirely by social factors, or as determined by other combinations of factors entirely (Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) 2009). The stance taken here rejects notions of gender as fixed and biologically determined and views it instead as fluid and as shaped by social, cultural, and political forces.

This approach to gender strives to recognise that gender can indeed be 'fragmented, fluid, hybrid … contradictory' and performative in nature, while also accounting for the persistence of structural factors (such as sexuality, age, and class) that continue to limit and shape the way(s) that gender is performed (Heilman 2011: 80). Thus, while I do not take the stance that there is some 'true' underlying gender or universally shared experience of gender, nor does gender performance escape the influence or pressure of enduring structural restraints. These theoretical positions do not necessarily have to exist in tension with one another.

This stance is particularly appropriate when researching licensed venues, where gender performance has been shown to be fluid, yet structural factors such as class and ethnicity can clearly be seen in operation. Lindsay (2006), in her study of Melbourne-based licensed venues, observed great variation in enactments of gender in different 'types' of licensed venue. In particular, Lindsay (2006) distinguished between commercial and niche venues, with stark differences noted in the way gender is 'done' in these scenes. Similarly, the work of Anderson et al. (2009) indicates that not only are different 'types' of gender roles seen in different genres of venues, but that some patrons may adjust the way they express their gender in response to the venue they are in. Others have highlighted the contestation of traditional gender roles that takes place within some venue settings (Hunt et al. 2010: 173).

Even this brief account of gender in the night-time economy points to the need for a theoretical position that allows for the variation that appears to be occurring in gender performance based upon the licensed venue setting. Judith Butler's work on gender performativity and West and Zimmerman's work on 'doing' gender are of particular relevance here. Butler's theory of gender performativity, located within a post-structuralist feminist framework, seeks to challenge and disrupt understandings of gender as natural or fixed. In arguing that gender is performative, Butler posits that 'gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylised repetition of acts' (1990: 191). In this way, gender is *accomplished* and reaccomplished by the individual (West and Zimmerman 1989).

Thus, 'bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self' (Butler 1990: 191), suggesting that gender is an act or construction, rather than emanating from any 'natural' difference. It is the repetition of acts to perform gender that provides space for agency, and consequently to subvert or challenge dominant gender roles (although how this occurs is not well articulated—Powell 2007). As Butler argues, repetition of these acts presents 'the possibility of a variation on that repetition' (1990: 198). We know, according to Butler, that gender is a performance precisely because it can be challenged, subverted, or parodied, for instance through the act of drag (1990: 187), where the surface of the body 'becomes the site of a dissonant and denaturalised performance that reveals the performative status of the natural itself' (1990: 200).

The potential for variation in gender performance, or to actively subvert or challenge gender roles, is important for the purposes of this study as it accounts for variation in the dominant gender performance of patrons between different venue types. Further, if gender is a performance and subject to change upon repetition of performance, then an individual's performance of gender may be fluid and able to change to meet the 'desired' performance according to a specific venue's culture. That is, post-structuralist approaches to gender permit us to account for the complexity of gender identity at an individual level, and acknowledge that individuals may adapt how they 'do' gender depending upon the venue or social space they are in. This creates the space for an association to be made between the enforced gender performance of a venue and the occurrence of unwanted sexual attention. Indeed, in their study on clubbing masculinities and crime, Anderson et al. indicated that nightclubs function 'as an important environment where gender is negotiated' (2009: 234), and that the manner in which gender was negotiated had a direct relationship with involvement in criminal behaviour.

It is important to note, however, that while I am adopting a post-structuralist approach, it is not a 'pure' post-structuralist approach. Although I adhere to the view that gender is performative and 'fluid between certain contexts and divergent situations' (Anderson et al. 2009: 304), structural factors such as class, hegemonic gender roles, and ethnicity continue to shape the lives of young adults and the 'types' of gender role they are likely to perform. For example, while gender expression may be fluid, those that challenge traditional gender roles may still be judged and policed by their peers for doing so, in turn constraining the ability of young adults to subvert or challenge gender roles (see, for example, Hutton 2006: 99).

Connell and Messerschmidt's work on masculinities is useful in making sense of this 'post-structuralist but structuralist' approach to gender (or 'structured action theory' as according to Messerschmidt 1999). Structured action theory accounts for both the fluidity and context-dependent nature of gender performance as well as the factors that shape, constrain, and limit how gender is performed in any specific context. While Connell takes something approaching a post-structuralist position to gender—that is, that gender is fluid, dynamic, varies depending upon social context, and is concerned with disrupting man/woman binaries—the limitations of this fluidity are recognised.

Connell argues that while masculinity is fluid, men have a limited range of 'acceptable' masculine performances to enact. Gendered practice 'never occurs in a vacuum. It always responds to a situation, and situations are structured in ways that admit certain possibilities and not others … Practice constitutes and re-constitutes structures' (Connell 2005: 65). Gendered performance is monitored and regulated both internally and by other social factors. It is shaped to meet the perceived requirements of a specific social context (Messerschmidt 1997). Broader social structures, defined by Messerschmidt as constituting 'regular and patterned forms of interaction over time' and including structures such as 'divisions of labour and power and sexuality' (1997: 5), function to 'constrain and channel behaviour in specific ways' (Messerschmidt 1997: 5). Thus, for instance, the dominant notion of what it means to 'be a man' in a specific social context (referred to as hegemonic masculinity) will shape how masculinity is performed, and which forms of masculinity are valued and rewarded, and this is likely to differ between social contexts.

Gender is an iterative, fluid performance with malleable boundaries. Our performances are able to adapt to the dominant norms of a particular social or cultural context, as well as shifting over time. Yet, while in theory these performances may be open to seemingly endless iterations or possibilities, in practice they are shaped and limited by broader structural factors and social norms. In light of this, we may ask, how do such performances emerge in licensed venues? How might this accomplishment of gender shift both across different 'types' of venues, but also within the same space across the course of a night? What are the dominant gendered norms in venues, and in what ways might young people contest and subvert these? Most importantly, what role might these performances play in the occurrence of unwanted sexual attention?

Why a Situational Approach is Necessary

By this point the reader may well be wondering 'why licensed venues'? That is, what is it about licensed venues that make them a location of particular interest in exploring unwanted sexual attention? Moreover, why is a situational analysis of sexual violence, which this book undertakes, necessary? Does location matter when it comes to understanding and accounting for the occurrence of sexual violence?

Recent research has highlighted the importance of exploring the role of different social contexts, and the prevalent behavioural and attitudinal norms within them, in understanding how and why sexual violence occurs. Clark and Quadara (2010: 30), in their study of sexual assault victim/survivors' knowledge of offending tactics, found that social norms around gender roles, sex, and seduction were a key factor in facilitating sexual offending. Social norms refer to the 'rules that guide how we behave in any given social situation' (Clark and Quadara 2010: 30). However, it is important to note that social norms are not static, but are rather 'context dependent, and may change over time, space and culture. Thus, the social norms guiding sexual interaction in a nightclub may vary from those guiding sexual activity within a relationship' (Clark and Quadara 2010: 30).

Clark and Quadara's research indicates that locating the dominant attitudinal and behavioural norms within a social environment is key to understanding how and why unwanted sexual attention occurs. The research presented in this book identifies some of the prevalent behavioural and attitudinal norms of venues, and explores how they may be operationalised in the perpetration of unwanted sexual attention. This includes a consideration of norms around sexual interaction, sexual desire, alcohol, and sexual violence. However, young adults also contest and resist these norms, and relate to them in complex and multi-faceted ways. Young people are also likely to relate to and understand the social and cultural norms of venues in different ways. A sense of place within a particular venue may influence how young adults perceive and experience unwanted sexual attention.

Why Licensed Venues?

This book is not concerned with unwanted sexual attention broadly but that which occurs within a particular social space and context. This implies that licensed venues are unique social and cultural environments. That is, they are the site of experiences, emotions, and bodily performances that are not reproduced in their entirety in other spaces. Venues can also be highly sexualised spaces (as Chap. 4 will explore in more detail), and this makes them of particular interest in examining the occurrence of unwanted sexual attention. In the discussion that follows, I outline some of the 'unique' elements of licensed venues that render them as a site of interest in exploring unwanted sexual attention.

Emotion, Space and Pubs and Clubs

The temporal divide between city space during the day and night-time is of particular relevance when considering emotion and affect in licensed spaces, which are typically (though not exclusively) accessed at night (Hubbard 2005; Watson 2006; Williams 2008). Hubbard (2005: 120) asserts that 'there can be little doubt that night-time remains very different from daytime, being a realm indelibly associated with both the dreams and nightmares of urban living'. The city at night, and, indeed, night-time more generally, is an emotionally evocative space. It has long been associated with the unknown, risk, darkness (in both a literal and figurative sense), and the potential for danger (Hubbard 2005; Williams 2008).

Yet the night also signifies excitement, pleasure, hedonism, and a time and space for liminal social characters to play. The 'unknown' nature of night-time spaces also gives rise to the possibility of experiences that are not available in day-time spaces, and 'the potential for "non-normalised" behaviours is present' (Williams 2008: 519). In fact, according to Bianchini, the night is inherently a space of potential as it 'is "the time of nobody"… it is the time of friendship, of love, of conversation. It is freer than the daytime from social constraints, convention and persecutions' (1995: 124). It allows us to break free from the routine and drudgery that can often accompany the lived experience of our 'daily' lives, and can provide a space of solace to liminal groups scrutinised in the unforgiving light of the daytime. Thus, the experience of those accessing the city at night may be characterised by 'emotional extremes … where anger, elation, sorrow, fear and desire may be routinely experienced (and perhaps all in the space of one evening out)' (Hubbard 2005: 120). For some, according to Hubbard (2005: 120), the risk and unpredictability associated with the city at night is part of its attraction. For others, 'the challenge is to negotiate these pleasures and dangers, using practical knowledge of the city to avoid situations that they would rather not deal with' (Hubbard 2005: 120). Young adults may view and use the city at night in diverse ways, with their particular emotional engagement influencing the particular experiences they may wish to have, and how those experiences impact upon them.

Clubs and pubs are therefore situated within the complex emotional realm of the night. The discussion above indicates that, like the city at night generally, the act of clubbing or accessing licensed venues is likely to be an emotionally charged one. Clubs and pubs provide a space for patrons 'to express modes of existence other than that of the oppressive routinisation of work: they evoke joy and stimulate the out-of-the ordinary' (Williams 2008: 520). In a similar vein, Matshinhe (2009: 118) suggests that 'the festive mood in these spaces eventually infects them [patrons] with emotional refreshment at some level'. Pubs and clubs are, first and foremost, a space created for leisure and pleasure. They can provide a temporary escape from 'everyday' life, and present great potential for positive emotional experiences.

Venues use a range of techniques to encourage, or create the illusion or promise of, certain emotional responses. Referring to the work of Malbon (1999), Hubbard notes that 'the material surroundings of a club heighten desire through the combination of lighting, music, décor and the cultivation of a sexually-charged atmosphere' (2005: 122). In a more focused analysis of the dance floor, Matshinhe observes how 'these enclaves of emotional excitement are spatially organised to stimulate human senses and arouse emotions … physiology, psychology, sociology, and technology interweave to stimulate the entire body' (2009: 124). Venue staff and management are able to manipulate the environment of a venue in order to elicit certain desired emotional outcomes. However, this is far from a straightforward relationship. Patrons may respond to or interpret these attempts in an array of ways, and there are many other factors mediating emotional responses that are beyond the influence of venue staff.

Part of the inherent appeal of attending pubs and clubs may lie in the potential for these desired, positive emotional states to be fulfilled. Of course, whether patrons actually experience or reach these desired emotional states is another matter entirely. Urry (2005: 70) soberly reminds us that 'places are often places of disappointment, frustration, bitterness … there is often a massive gap between what people will anticipate will be a place's pleasures and what is actually encountered'. Where positive emotional states are met, they may be experienced only briefly or intermittently. The 'unknown' or risky nature of the city at night gives rise to the possibility of unforeseen acts that undo, or exist alongside, any 'positive' emotional state that has been experienced. How might these emotive states and fluctuations inform young adults' perceptions and embodied experiences of unwanted sexual attention?

Unwanted Sexual Attention in Pubs and Clubs: What Do We Know So Far?

As noted earlier, there has been a profound lack of academic attention given to sexual violence taking place in clubs and pubs. To date, within the Australian context there have been two studies that have focused on young women's perceptions and experiences of unwanted sexual attention or sexual violence when attending nightclubs. In 2000 the Centre Against Sexual Assault (CASA House) conducted the Right to Party Safely project, which was initiated following seventeen young women contacting CASA after having been sexually assaulted in, or just outside of, licensed venues (Watson 2000). My own earlier research also touched more specifically on young women's perceptions of unwanted sexual attention in venues (Fileborn 2012b). Both studies indicated that women were at risk of sexual violence or unwanted sexual attention in clubs and pubs, and participants in both studies reported experiencing or observing a broad range of sexually problematic behaviours when using venues.

A small body of international research regarding women's experiences of sexual violence and harassment in licensed venues is also emerging, and this research also indicates that encounters of sexual harassment and sexual violence are common for young women (Kavanaugh 2013; Parks et al. 1998; Snow et al. 1991). Kavanaugh's (2013) work in particular highlights that young women's experiences of sexual harassment and violence in venues fall along the continuum of sexual violence developed by Kelly (1988). While the existing literature provides some valuable insights into women's experiences, overall there remain more questions than answers regarding unwanted attention in venues. We still have minimal insight into how experiences and understandings of sexual violence are shaped and produced in licensed venues, how venue types might facilitate or prevent sexual violence, and, perhaps most glaringly, what are the experiences and perceptions of men and same-sex attracted and gender-diverse individuals.

Structure of the Book

In this book, I address some of the significant gaps in knowledge on unwanted sexual attention by undertaking a situational analysis of this behaviour in licensed venues. I argue that unwanted sexual attention is in many respects a fluid and context-dependent occurrence, and one that is fundamentally informed by the social and cultural context in which it occurs, as well as the identities of those involved. There are also unique aspects of venue culture and environment that contribute towards and shape experiences of unwanted sexual attention.

The ensuing chapter explores the question of what 'unwanted sexual attention' is and some of the complexities around this. I illustrate here how the experiences of my participants hold particular implications for our conceptual and theoretical understandings of sexual violence.

Chapter 3 investigates the role of community and belonging in shaping young people's experiences and perceptions of unwanted sexual attention. Chapters 4 and 5 take a cultural 'turn'—that is, they seek to examine the intersections of identity, culture, and unwanted sexual attention. Chapter 4 explores the issue of sexual culture and sexual consent in pubs and clubs, and how young people's understandings of consent inform the ways in which they view the boundaries and causes of unwanted sexual attention, while Chap. 5 takes a more detailed look at the role of venue culture as it relates to drug and alcohol consumption. In the penultimate chapter, I explore how the physical environment of venues may facilitate the occurrence of unwanted sexual attention. Finally, the book concludes with a consideration of the implications this research has for our theoretical and conceptual understandings of sexual violence. Perhaps most importantly, I address the question of what can be done to work towards preventing unwanted sexual attention from occurring in the first place.

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2

Blurred Boundaries: Establishing the Contours of Unwanted Sexual Attention

What, precisely, is unwanted sexual attention? Although the notion that young women (in particular) are routinely harassed in licensed venues is a relatively prominent one, it is largely unclear what these experiences entail. That is, what does unwanted sexual attention 'look like'? What are some of its 'characteristics' and impacts (to the extent that these can actually be defined or pinned down), and how do young people understand or make sense of this behaviour? Additionally, how do young adults *produce* (and reproduce) the concept of unwanted sexual attention in their discussions? Which discursive positions do they draw on in discussing and (re)producing unwanted sexual attention? This chapter explores young adults' experiences and perceptions of unwanted sexual attention and the ways in which these were shaped by, or intersected with, gender and sexual orientation. The context in which unwanted sexual attention occurs is fundamental in shaping how it is experienced or perceived by young adults, and the role of venue context begins to unfold here.

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What is Sexual Violence?

Before continuing, it is helpful to briefly elaborate further on the dominant ways in which sexual violence has been conceptualised in mainstream feminist thought, as well as within public discourses. There are multiple, competing accounts of what sexual violence 'is', and these knowledge claims shape and (re)produce the possibilities for understanding sexual violence, though they do not necessarily determine our understandings in their entirety. There are, of course, many other accounts beyond what I cover here. This discussion is indicative of some of the more prevalent accounts of sexual violence that may have shaped my participants' understandings/experiences, and is by no means exhaustive. As I outlined in the opening chapter, these accounts of sexual violence tend to be underscored by theoretical positions that understand 'why' sexual violence occurs in arguably narrow and heteronormative ways (Brown 2012).

Liz Kelly's continuum of sexual violence marked a radical shift in understanding what 'counts' as sexual violence, and exposed 'the everyday and everynightness of violence … that these more mundane encounters with gendered power relations were connected to the extremes which are deemed worthy of legal regulation and media attention' (2012b: xxi). In her oft-quoted definition, sexual violence includes:

> any physical, visual, verbal or sexual act that is experienced by the woman or girl, at the time or later, as a threat, invasion or assault, that has the effect of hurting her or degrading her and/or takes away her ability to control intimate contact. (Kelly 1988: 41)

Kelly argues that these forms of violence all represent 'manifestation[s] of men's gender power' (1988: 27). Kelly's work has profoundly influenced my approach here, particularly with regards to the scope of experiences which may constitute unwanted sexual attention, and the ways in which this spectrum (or continuum) of experiences inform and are interrelated with one another. Kelly also resists linear, hierarchical conceptualisations of sexual harm, acknowledging that these different forms of violence cannot be organised into 'clearly defined and discrete analytic categories' (1988: 76). However, as noted in Chap. 1, my own work is underpinned by a considerably different (though not necessarily oppositional) theoretical framework to Kelly's.

Yet the somewhat fluid and non-hierarchical understanding of sexual violence developed by Kelly is not necessarily reflected in other dominant discourses of sexual violence. Legal constructions of sexual violence provide a striking example here, as these tend to be 'rooted in strict demarcations between what is and is not permissible, and … is built through gradations of seriousness framed in terms of behaviour' (Kelly 2012: xxii). That is, legal constructions of sexual violence produce this category in a linear, hierarchical manner in which behaviours are ordered in terms of their perceived harm or seriousness relative to one another, although a pertinent question here is, harm or seriousness according to whom?

This linear, hierarchical ordering produces the harm/seriousness of different forms of sexual violence as fixed and immutable and creates the illusion of a shared understanding of the harm/seriousness of acts of sexual violence. Legal constructions of sexual violence, as noted in the previous chapter, also tend to be narrow in their focus. They exclude many experiences of sexual violence, particularly the 'everyday' or supposedly 'minor' iterations of sexual violence (Kelly 1988; McGregor 2012). This is not to suggest that legal definitions of sexual violence are themselves fixed in place. Indeed, the law is constantly shifting and evolving in terms of the scope of behaviours it includes within its definitions of sexual violence and the particular narratives it produces in relation to this violence (McGregor 2012). However, despite these evolutions the linear, hierarchical construct of sexual violence has held strong.

There is also a range of entrenched stereotypes and myths regarding sexual violence (many of which have been actively shaped and perpetuated through legal discourses, Kelly 1988; McGregor 2012). These work to shape and produce particular understandings of what sexual violence 'is' in the general community, why it occurs, and who is responsible for its occurrence (Kelly 1988). Such myths include the notion that rape is predominantly perpetrated by a stranger in an isolated public place (the 'real rape' myth), that victims actively contribute towards their experience through their manner of dress, flirting, or consumption of alcohol, that victims routinely lie about their experiences, and that men cannot be the victims of rape (Burt 1980; Kelly 1988; Jones 2012; Powell and Henry

2015; Stanko 1985; Weiss 2010). While such misconceptions and stereotypes are also contested and resisted, they nonetheless persist in influencing our understandings and responses to sexual violence (see, for example, VicHealth 2014). Such myths do not reflect the embodied experiences of the majority of victims of rape. They work to undermine feminist political claims that seek to privilege the experiences of victim/survivors and that place the onus for sexual violence on the perpetrator. Rape myths occlude other possibilities or ways of knowing and understanding sexual violence.

The dominant discursive representations of sexual violence, whether in the legal, popular, academic, or other spheres, have very real implications for whose experiences are recognised or labelled as sexual violence and whose are excluded at an individual, social, and institutional level (Jones 2012; Kelly 1988). These discursive accounts of sexual violence actively work to (re)produce it and construct the 'reality' of sexual violence. They contribute towards what Nicola Gavey terms the 'cultural scaffolding of rape', by which she means 'the dominant discourses of sex and gender that position men as normatively and naturally both sexually driven and aggressive, and women as sexually passive and vulnerable' (2009: 96). Such discourses actively produce the possibility of sexual violence occurring, and being an inevitable occurrence at that, while simultaneously working to excuse, downplay or exclude certain experiences from the category of sexual violence.

What Is 'Unwanted Sexual Attention'?

What forms of behaviour do young adults experience as unwanted sexual attention? Young adults' experiences of unwanted sexual attention ranged from the relatively 'minor' to what are often considered (in dominant popular and legal discourses) severe forms of sexual violence. These experiences were largely consistent with Kelly's (1988) continuum of violence, although, as I shall argue throughout this book, unwanted sexual attention is constituted by more than just physical behaviour or an embodied experience, but this is of course a central component of this phenomenon. Because of this, it is not possible to develop a straightforward typology of unwanted sexual attention. Rather, any definition of unwanted sexual attention is dependent upon a range of contextual, discursive, personal, affective/emotive and other factors. Young people reported experiencing sexually harassing behaviours such as groping, staring, and unwanted advances, as the following comments from survey respondents illustrate:

> Sometimes I get unwanted attention and I can't even tell who it's coming from, e.g., being groped by someone walking past or in a crowd. (Survey participant, heterosexual woman)
>
> From what I have experienced I generally get approached by older men (35+) when I've been 'chatted up'. You end up laughing about it later. (Survey participant, heterosexual woman)

While the types of experience encapsulated in these comments were the most typical or common, other participants recounted experiences of unwanted sexual attention that perhaps fall more readily into our commonsense understandings of sexual violence. For example, a number of young adults discussed experiences of being groped, digitally raped, and being raped in circumstances involving the intentional use of drugs and alcohol or physical violence by the perpetrator. The scope of the behaviour experienced by these young adults is consistent with the limited existing research documenting women's experiences of unwanted sexual advances, sexual harassment and sexual violence in licensed venues (Fileborn 2012b; Kavanaugh 2013; Parks et al. 1998; Snow et al. 1991; Watson 2000).

Who was experiencing these behaviours, and who was responsible for perpetrating them? As my earlier discussion illustrated, sexual violence is an overwhelmingly gendered experience, and this is reflected in our dominant theoretical and conceptual understandings of this violence. Certainly, the experiences of the young people in my own research largely mirrored these gendered patterns. It was, by and large, female participants who reported experiencing unwanted sexual attention in its various incarnations, and I predominantly draw on women's experiences throughout this book. In the majority of instances, men were the perpetrators of this behaviour. This is an important point and one that I do not wish to downplay. However, the gendered nature of unwanted sexual attention was also considerably more complex than this, and gender/gendered performance came in to play in ways that are less commonly acknowledged or recognised in broader discursive constructions of sexual violence.

Gender

Given the strong focus on, and experience of, sexual violence as gender-based it is largely unsurprising that the young adults in this research also viewed unwanted sexual attention as being a gendered phenomenon. For the young adults who participated in a survey, unwanted sexual attention was seen primarily to have an impact on women. Approximately 77 % (n = 180) of the survey participants thought that unwanted sexual attention impacts on women, while just under 20 % (n = 46) thought that it impacted on men and women equally. A small minority (2.2 %, n = 5) believed that it impacted mostly on men. Of the people who responded that unwanted sexual attention impacts on men and women equally, 21 of these were gay males (61.8 % of gay male participants). This suggests that the ways in which unwanted sexual attention is experienced, understood and discussed by young adults is influenced by sexual orientation as much as gender.

None of the heterosexual men who took part in the survey indicated that unwanted sexual attention had an impact on men. Curiously, however, some of these individuals did go on to make comments that revealed that they had experienced unwanted sexual attention. That men were reluctant to identify themselves as the victims of unwanted sexual attention suggests men can face significant barriers to disclosing experiences of sexual violation and to labelling themselves as victims (Abdullah-Khan 2008; Graham 2006; Kramer 1998).[1] This also speaks to the influence of the dominant discursive construction of sexual violence, which often occludes the possibility that men could be victims. Such responses can also be understood as a masculine performance, and I return to explore this claim later.

That said a number of young adults did identify that unwanted sexual attention was something that happened to men, and a small number of men shared their first-hand experiences of unwanted sexual attention. Overall, however, participants constructed situations in which men experienced unwanted sexual attention as exceptions to a norm:

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[1] In saying this, it is not my intention to ignore or downplay the significant barriers faced by all victims of sexual violence in identifying, labelling, and disclosing their experiences.

Haley: fI would say most of my friends have discussed some sort of situation where they've felt uncomfortable at a licensed venue.

Researcher: Do you mean your female friends, or?

Haley: I've got a couple of male friends who are the same as well, but generally female, yeah. (Focus Group (FG)4)

Elise: I had a boyfriend who kept getting hit on by other guys … He didn't really like that (laughs). (FG1)

Cameron: It depends on the venue. I mean, at a gay bar … it could be anyone. Depends on the context and who's involved. But … it's mainly for women and resulting from men I would say would be … the main issue. (FG5)

Elise's response of laughter when talking about her boyfriend being the recipient of unwanted sexual attention suggests a downplaying of the harm this behaviour may cause male victims, or a level of discomfort around the notion of a male victim,[2] as this contravenes normative understandings of masculinity (Braun et al. 2009; Davies et al. 2006, 2008; Graham 2006; Kramer 1998; Weiss 2010). As Braun et al. note, hegemonic performances of masculinity 'and male sexuality … portray men as in control and relatively invulnerable, but also render the possibility that sex could be unwanted for men as an almost unthinkable proposition' (2009: 337). This may, at least in part, explain the general reluctance of young adults in this study to either identify men as victims of unwanted sexual attention, or for men to identify themselves as victims. It also reflects the fact that men are, on the whole, much less likely to experience sexual violence.

The manner in which unwanted sexual attention was either experienced or perceived was also influenced by gender. Participants' discussions of unwanted sexual attention can be viewed as a performance of stereotypical gender roles (though, at times, young people also challenged these), or an avenue for 'doing' gender (Sandberg and Tollefsen 2010). For example, male-identified young people tended to draw on hegemonic constructions of masculinity, and stereotypical gender scripts around sex and sexuality, in discussing unwanted sexual attention. The trope that men are 'always up for sex' was a common theme in the responses of male respondents (Braun et al. 2009; Humphreys 2004; Weiss 2010):

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[2] See Lowe et al. (2012) in relation to laughter as signifying participant discomfort.

> **Benjamin**: And personally I don't think I've ever had any unwanted sexual attention in my life. (FG2)
>
> **Frank**: I don't know if I've ever been the subject of unwanted sexual attention. I … probably always want it. (FG6)

Interestingly, at a later point in the focus group discussion Frank did identify personal experiences of unwanted sexual attention (albeit not in a licensed venue setting). Men may attempt to establish themselves as suitably masculine within a group setting before they are willing to expose any potential vulnerability or experience that might negate their status as masculine. Further, when men did identify and discuss actual experiences of unwanted sexual attention (often after having first gone through the motions of a sufficiently masculine performance, such as that seen in the comments of Benjamin and Frank above), there was a tendency to downplay their seriousness. For example, they often expressed that they could 'handle' unwanted sexual attention:

> **Cameron**: I got a bit of unwanted sexual attention when I worked at [a large venue complex], but I really didn't care. But that's just me. (FG5)
>
> It has made me feel uncomfortable on occasion, which isn't an issue. It's when it affects my friends (more commonly girls) that problems can arise. (Survey participant, heterosexual male)

Both male and female participants had a tendency to 'downplay' experiences of unwanted sexual attention. However, while women tended to frame their discussions around the lack of risk posed to them (for example, the behaviour was 'harmless'), men tended to downplay harm through assertions that they can take care of themselves, are physically strong, or were not threatened by the experience. This can be viewed as a means of young men re-asserting their (hegemonic) masculinity, as 'real men are expected to be powerful and in control' (Weiss 2010: 299; see also, Abdullah-Khan 2008). The survey respondent quoted above, for example, both downplays his own experiences and contrasts it to that of his female friends, for whom this behaviour is framed as a problem. He reframes himself from being vulnerable or a victim/potential victim, to being a chivalrous protector of his female friends, who he positions as being more vulnerable than himself (see also, Day 2001).

This type of hegemonic gendered performance was apparent in the comments of a number of both male and female participants. For instance, many young women commented that they felt safer with their male friends there to 'protect' them (see also, Day 2001). However, a number of individuals also challenged this norm, which suggests that young women 'differ in the extent to which they fully comply to… socially constructed expectations' (Cops and Pleysier 2011: 62–63) around gender, fear, and responses to threat.

Physical strength was often drawn on as an explanation for why men were able to 'handle' unwanted sexual attention, or for why unwanted sexual attention was less threatening for men than for women when it did occur—the implication here being that men are less at risk of being sexually assaulted or raped because they are able to physically defend themselves (and the role of physical strength has also been implicated in men's sense of safety in public space—see Day 2001). Elise and Florence drew on a range of stereotypes in their discussion on why unwanted sexual attention is 'less problematic' for men than women:

> **Elise**: Maybe it's just like … the fact men are there for sexual attention so unwanted sexual attention isn't really part of the game play for them.
>
> **Florence**: … I mean in the worst case situation men are usually physically stronger and all of those things so if things get out of hand men can get themselves out of the situation easier than a woman can, in general terms, um, so it might not be such a big problem if you're thinking about that as well. (FG1)

Constructions of men as physically strong or always 'up for' sex can function as major barriers for male victims of unwanted sexual attention or sexual violence (Abdullah-Khan 2008; Kramer 1998; Weiss 2010).

Upholding these myths communicates to men that they have somehow failed in performing hegemonic masculinity if they are victimised (Weiss 2010). Male victims may consequently be reluctant to identify as victims, or to disclose or report their experience(s) (Abdullah-Khan 2008; Kramer 1998; Weiss 2010). Discourses constructing men as non-victims also contribute towards our understanding of the reluctance of many men in this study to openly disclose and discuss their experiences of unwanted sexual attention.

In contrast to the positioning of men as non-victims, one focus group participant suggested that men would be lacking the internal frameworks for coping with unwanted sexual attention:

> **Benjamin**: Men have problems dealing with … women as well as men's sexual attention … girls practise it from when they're 15, going out in groups and how to keep … whereas … I guess some boys don't, once they get older don't actually know how to deal with the attention they're getting. (FG2)

Given the general reluctance of male participants to discuss their experiences of unwanted sexual attention, and their tendency to draw on masculine tropes of strength or always 'wanting' the attention, it is difficult to determine whether young men feel equipped to respond to unwanted sexual attention. Benjamin's comments also draw attention to the role of safekeeping routines as a means of feminine gender performance—with these routines being *practised* from a young age, denoting this as a learned, re-iterative process. As many young adults discussed men's experiences of unwanted sexual attention in a dismissive way, or in a way that downplayed their potential harm, it is likely that this functions as a barrier to men openly discussing and disclosing experiences of unwanted sexual attention and the full extent of the harm caused by them (see also Abdullah-Khan 2008; Davies and Rogers 2006; Graham 2006; Weiss 2010). Graham offers a similar explanation in relation to the disclosure and reporting of male rape, suggesting that 'experiences for men have particular stigma attached to them', and this may account for the reluctance of many male victims to report (2006: 190). Participants' reluctance to discuss or disclose male victimisation makes it difficult to determine the extent to which unwanted sexual attention impacts on young men. Although there was certainly no evidence to indicate that men were encountering unwanted sexual attention to the same extent as women, or that it impacted on or harmed them to the same extent when it did occur, it was clear that some men encountered unwanted sexual attention on occasion. If these experiences are occurring, it is quite possible that men are experiencing some form of harm from them. Challenging and disrupting entrenched norms of hegemonic masculinity may enable young men to more openly acknowledge and to discuss those experiences of sexual violation that do occur.

Queering Unwanted Sexual Attention

Dominant discursive constructions of sexual violence depict this violence as occurring almost solely within heteronormative contexts. As I noted in the introductory chapter, the notion that same-sex attracted or gender-diverse people could also experience sexual violence has often been excluded from dominant accounts. Yet there is a burgeoning body of research and theory illustrating that same-sex attracted and gender-diverse people experience sexual violence and that queer sexuality and gender performances shape these experiences in particular ways. Talking about unwanted sexual attention in venues also presents an avenue for performing queer sexuality or gender identity in the same way that it provided an avenue for 'doing' masculinity/femininity.

The LGBTIQ young people in this research disclosed and discussed unwanted sexual attention as occurring in much broader relationship contexts than dominant accounts of sexual violence typically allow for. This adds to the growing body of evidence that suggests that, while sexual violence as a form of women's gender-based oppression is certainly a significant component of this violence, it is not sufficient to account for sexual violence in all its forms. LGBTIQ young people reported experiencing unwanted sexual attention across a range of venue types and relationship contexts. This included instances of unwanted sexual attention occurring in gay and lesbian venues and being perpetrated by individuals identified as members of the LGBTIQ communities. For instance, interview participant Clementine shared her experience of being groped by a stranger, whom she identified as a lesbian woman, in a venue that was hosting a gay and lesbian night. A number of LGBTIQ survey respondents also reported experiencing unwanted sexual attention in LGBTIQ-specific venues, as the following excerpts illustrate:

> Queer venues and nights often feel just as uncomfortable for me as straight ones. Women engage in objectification of other women. I generally feel more unsafe around men, especially packs of straight men, but I have felt threatened by all kinds of people - queer women, straight women, gay men, straight men and all those in between. Mostly I think it's about people not giving you space. I want respect, not attention. (Survey participant, queer woman)
>
> Drunk or drugged out queens …[who] try and grope me after me saying no (twice). (Survey participant, gay male)

LGBTIQ participants often experienced or observed unwanted sexual attention across a broad range of venue 'types', and not just within queer venues. Indeed, it is important to note that there was no evidence to suggest that unwanted sexual attention was a common occurrence within queer venues, or that it was more likely to occur within these spaces in comparison to 'straight' venues. Alex, who worked as a DJ in both gay and straight venues, indicated that he had witnessed such behaviour happening fairly equally in both types of venues and had personally experienced unwanted sexual attention from both gay men and heterosexual women. A number of same-sex attracted women indicated that they had experienced unwanted sexual attention from heterosexual men. While this often occurred as a form of heterosexist violence or harassment (as the ensuing discussion explores), in other instances this presumably occurred as part of the 'usual' harassment of women by men in heteronormative venues. It is not always possible for queer women to distinguish between these types of violence and harassment (Mason 1993). LGBTIQ young adults experienced unwanted sexual attention across a range of social and sexual contexts and in a range of different perpetrator/victim configurations. This reflects the findings of existing research on LGBTIQ people's experiences of sexual violence (Braun et al. 2009; Leonard et al. 2008; Mason 1993).

It was apparent from the comments made by participants who identified as LGBTIQ that heterosexist violence and abuse could be an issue for them when using licensed venues. 'Heterosexist violence' is being used here as an umbrella term to cover both homophobic and transphobic abuse and other forms of violence and discrimination targeted towards same-sex attracted, sex and gender-diverse people because of their gender identity, sex, or sexual orientation.[3] A number of individuals drew links between the occurrence of unwanted sexual attention and heterosexist violence. That is, unwanted sexual attention and sexual violence were employed as, or intersected with, heterosexist violence. There was consequently a blurring of sexual, physical and heterosexist violence apparent in these experiences, although these categories of violence are often conceptualised as distinct from one another (with a few exceptions; for instance, Leonard et al. (2008) examined their participants' experiences of heterosexist sexual violence, while Tomsen and Markwell recognise that violence against gay, lesbian, and transsexual individuals 'are not wholly distinct in form from other forms of masculine violence' (2009: 19)). This further adds to the complexity of what unwanted sexual attention 'is' and how it operates.

LGBTIQ young people mentioned heterosexist violence and abuse as a factor influencing their general safety when in venues, and licensed venues have been identified elsewhere as a key site of the homophobic abuse experienced by gay and lesbian people (NSW Attorney General's Department 2003). One survey participant, for example, discussed the following experiences of heterosexist harassment:

> As someone who identifies as lesbian, I particularly feel conscious when in a pub with lots of loud hetero males. It is almost impossible for me and my lesbian/gay male friends to be in this environment without some form of unwanted attention - usually indirect, but still. (Survey participant, lesbian woman)

Several individuals also experienced unwanted sexual attention and sexual violence overtly as a form of heterosexist violence. These incidents were discussed almost exclusively by female-identified participants and suggest that experiences of unwanted sexual attention are shaped by the intersections of both gender identity and sexuality (and likely myriad other factors) (see also Tomsen and Mason 2001). Clementine discussed her transgender partner's frequent experiences of transphobic violence, which included verbal and physical abuse, and sexualised violence. Her partner had a recurrent experience of having heterosexual men use the following method in an attempt to determine her sex/gender identity:

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[3] This definition is based on Leonard et al.'s description of heterosexism and heterosexist violence (2008: 4).

> **Clementine**: To give you a sort of typical experience, and it's always with groups of men, they'll be curious as to whether she's male or female. And apparently one of the ways you can ascertain that is to pretend to trip and grab onto her breasts.

Such behaviour clearly has a sexual element to it and could be considered both sexual and heterosexist violence. In this instance it is not possible to distinguish between, or compartmentalise, these two categories of violence. The use of violence and abuse as a way of policing bodies that are not immediately readable as man/woman in venue spaces has also been documented elsewhere (Browne 2004). Clementine also recounted her experience(s) of being sexually harassed by heterosexual men at venues hosting lesbian nights:

> **Clementine**: I would never be cracked onto by a woman, but I would attract every single straight man in the room without fail… If you're at a lesbian venue and there's a group … of straight men … you have to be constantly aware of where they are in the room, whether one of them is approaching you, who they're approaching.

The presence of heterosexual men has the potential to profoundly impact on the ability of same-sex attracted women to feel safe and relaxed in venues that are trying to provide safe and inclusive spaces to socialise in. The highly threatening nature of the unwanted advances from men (and, indeed, simply having men present in this space) is apparent in Clementine's narrative, as they result in her being constantly on guard and hyper-vigilant in a space that was, by her own account, supposed to be safe. Instances of heterosexual men making sexual advances towards the women in these venues can be seen as a form of heterosexism, as the actions of the men can be read as being based on the assumption that lesbian women engage in same-sex interaction for the pleasure of men, or that lesbian women can be turned 'straight'—all they need is the 'right man'. Further, as Tomsen and Mason (2001: 3) note, by 'heterosexualising a woman who is known to be lesbian, the perpetrator is also able to temporarily feminise her', consequently reinforcing heteronormativity. This form of harassment is clearly sexual in nature, and thus heterosexist harassment and unwanted sexual attention can be seen as intersecting in this experience.

An intersex and queer survey participant also reported experiencing heterosexist sexual harassment:

> Straight people use sexual attention and threats of sexual violence as a way to harass queer people sometimes and that's very upsetting and scary. (Survey participant, intersex queer)

Such comments illustrate that sexual harassment and violence can be used intentionally and overtly as a form of heterosexist violence. In all these examples, the actions of men prevent same-sex attracted, sex, and gender-diverse women from being able to safely utilise queer spaces free from the threat of heterosexist violence or abuse. This is particularly problematic given the reliance of many of the LGBTIQ young people on these venues as a safe space to socialise and to engage in sexual interaction (and this is elaborated on in Chap. 4). For Clementine, queer venues represented:

> Somewhere where I can … sit on my partner's lap and kiss her openly and I don't have to worry that anyone's looking, and I don't have to worry that some … dickhead guy over in the corner is going to be somewhat offended by that and come over and tell me that I should really be dating him.

The presence of heterosexual men can in some circumstances restrict the ability of these women to freely use the venues to openly socialise, interact, and explore their personal or sexual identity as same-sex attracted women without the threat of heterosexist harassment, abuse, or violence. Of course, that is not to suggest that *all* heterosexual men engage in homophobic or heterosexist abuse. However, as a number of LGBTIQ people noted, the uncertainty as to how an unknown man in a venue will react to same-sex sexual interaction is enough to curtail their sexual behaviour. Hollander (2001: 87) labels this phenomenon 'perceived dangerousness'. That is, 'even if men do not actually behave aggressively … they are seen by others as having the capacity to do so' (Hollander 2001: 87). That Clementine locates lesbian venues as one of the *only* public/semi-public spaces she can engage in open sexual interaction with her partner highlights the continued impact of heterosexism on the lives of LGBTIQ individuals (see also Corteen 2004). It indicates the ongoing need for LGBTIQ-specific venue spaces and for 'straight' venues to take steps to create safe and welcoming spaces for all patrons regardless of their sexuality or gender identity.

However, it should be acknowledged here that the highly sexualised nature of many LGBTIQ-friendly licensed venues might also have a part to play in the occurrence of unwanted sexual attention and sexual violence. For instance, Braun et al. (2009) note that many of the social outlets for young gay men attempting to establish their sexual identity are highly sexual in nature (such as gay clubs and pubs). Sex may subsequently 'become a means of accessing gay male communities', leaving younger gay men 'vulnerable to manipulation and exploitation' by older members of the community (Braun et al. 2009: 356). One gay male participant also suggested that younger gay men could be particularly vulnerable to unwanted sexual attention:

> **Alex**: Young gay men might also be dealing with … mental health issues … so because they're dealing with those mental health issues they might be craving intimacy, so they're … easier to prey on. You know, get them drunk and they'll be a little bit more malleable. (FG2)

LGTBIQ venues may therefore function in a paradoxical manner, where they present both a space where consensual sexual activity can be engaged in safely, as well as a space that leaves some young LGBTIQ people vulnerable to unwanted sexual experiences—though such a paradox can arguably be observed in 'straight' venues as well. The difficulty young LGBTIQ adults can face in 'coming out', and in being able to safely initiate sexual/

romantic interactions, may compound the vulnerability of (some) young LGBTIQ adults to unwanted experiences, although it should be stressed that no participants directly discussed having such experiences.

The Impacts of Unwanted Sexual Attention

The discussion of my LGBTIQ participants' experiences has also begun to illustrate the potential harms or impacts of unwanted sexual attention. For some LGBTIQ participants, for example, unwanted sexual attention impacted on their ability to safely access and use queer spaces, or to inhabit heteronormative spaces safe from the threat of heterosexist violence or abuse. Unwanted sexual attention could also have a range of other impacts on victims/recipients. However, much like the question of what unwanted sexual attention 'is', the impacts and harms of unwanted sexual attention are also complex and context dependent, as later chapters will further unpack. Nonetheless, it is important to begin to illustrate the impacts and harm that can be caused by experiencing unwanted sexual attention, even (and perhaps especially) in its more 'minor' incarnations.

It is vital to note from the outset that experiencing unwanted sexual attention does not always result in harm or prolonged negative impacts. For the young women who took part in the survey, for example, the majority indicated that unwanted sexual attention only *sometimes* impacted on their sense of safety in venues. This suggests that unwanted sexual attention impacts on safety in certain contexts, circumstances, or incarnations, but not others. It may also indicate that 'safety' is not an adequate concept to capture the harms of unwanted sexual attention. Unwanted sexual attention can have a range of negative consequences without necessarily influencing how 'safe' someone feels in a venue. For example, Noni said in relation to one experience of unwanted sexual attention:

> I never … felt unsafe … [or] that he was … predatory or anything. He was just very persistent and I just felt really uncomfortable (Noni, FG4)

Indeed, the notion that unwanted sexual attention could make you feel *uncomfortable*, was one of the more commonly observed impacts of this behaviour—though, as Noni points out, this did not necessarily equate to feeling unsafe. Nonetheless, such experiences contribute towards a sense of uneasiness and wariness, of not being able to just 'exist' within a venue without being impeded upon. Such experiences may limit the ability of those on the receiving end of unwanted sexual attention to fully participate in the venue community. Noble argues that feelings of comfort (which is itself complex and multidimensional) contribute towards a sense of what Giddens refers to as 'ontological security', which 'is fundamental to the fashioning of identity, relationship and belonging …[and] in the sense of safety, security and independence frequently associated with feeling "at home"' (Noble 2005: 113). Thus, unwanted sexual attention disrupts a sense of belonging within the venue community and destabilises the sense of identity gained through relating to others within a venue (and Chap. 3 develops these ideas further). It shatters the sense of trust and of being 'looked out for' by others in that community.

One participant, Clementine, reported feeling angry as opposed to unsafe or violated, in response to unwanted sexual attention 'because… I'm just trying to go about my business… I didn't ask to have this experience tonight and… Who the fuck do you think you are?' For most participants, unwanted sexual attention did not stop them from going out to venues, although it did influence or limit the particular venues that (mostly) young women chose to go to and the ways in which they were able to use venue spaces:

> If I thought it were less pervasive, I might go to a greater variety of different places, and I might feel more inclined to dance (Survey participant, heterosexual woman).

However, for a smaller number of young adults unwanted sexual attention impacted on them to the point where they no longer felt able to inhabit venue spaces. For example, one survey participant said that she was 'sick of it, I don't go out anymore' (Survey participant, bisexual woman), while another said it was 'the PRIMARY reason I dislike going out. I can't stand it' (Survey participant, bisexual male). This was more pronounced for participants who experienced forms of unwanted sexual attention or sexual violence that fell into the category of what might be considered more 'extreme' of 'severe' forms of this violence. One participant, Anne, was violently assaulted in a venue toilet by her ex-partner, who had a history of controlling and abusive behaviour. For Anne, the effects of this assault were profound. She experienced memory loss and significant physical injury in the aftermath of the assault, and post-traumatic stress disorder, which was triggered by being in or near licensed venues. Anne said that:

> For about probably … three years after that… I just didn't go out anywhere. I just … stayed home because I was just so frightened.

Anne's experience highlights the embodied, corporeal nature of unwanted sexual attention and sexual violence. It has (or can have) very 'real', physical and emotional impacts on, in and through bodies. Sexual violence cannot only be understood discursively. However, Anne's experience also matched (some) aspects of 'real rape', notably that her experience involved the use of extreme physical force and violence. It is important to consider to what extent this also influenced the impacts of the assault, or the ways in which she understood her experience. For instance, was Anne more able to label and identify her experience as constituting sexual violence because it more closely aligned with dominant understanding of what 'counts' as sexual violence?

Brianna, who was sexually assaulted in what she described as a 'dive' bar, avoided venues similar to the one she was assaulted in but otherwise continued to go out to pubs and clubs. In the aftermath of their assaults, Brianna and another participant Dana both reported distrusting men. Similarly, Clementine conveyed her general wariness of men in bars as a result of cumulative experiences of unwanted sexual attention and harassment across a range of different contexts. Her comments highlight the importance of taking into account the 'everyday' encounters with sexual harassment and other 'minor' violations in the lives of women. While it may be tempting to dismiss these experiences as insignificant events on their own, their collective (as well as discrete) impact can be quite profound (see also Kelly, L. 2012). However, Clementine observed that her wariness and hyper-vigilance in venues would 'wax and wane' over time and was often interspersed with more 'relaxed' periods. Thus, the impacts of unwanted sexual attention are fluid and dynamic, shifting temporally and across contexts.

Other young adults noted the diversity of ways in which a person might respond to experiencing unwanted sexual attention and the context-dependent nature of this response—that is, there was not one universal or consistent response to having experienced unwanted sexual attention. As some participants noted:

> Different people handle it I think in different ways. There's different extremes, there's the extreme where … it's just a minor annoyance and maybe it just means that you have to move to a different part of the venue, all the way through to, you know, not being able to go out because you feel as though you're going to be targeted. (Alex, FG2)
>
> I know myself I can get quite anxious in unknown social situations so if I get myself into a situation like that and I'm already not comfortable that's just like killed my night … so I'll go home … but it might be that I'm in a really good mood and quite happy and not worried and then it might not bother me at all. (Haley, FG3)

For Haley, the extent to which she was impacted by unwanted sexual attention depended on her emotional or affective state on that particular night. Her comments imply that the same experience could impact on her quite differently in different emotional or affective contexts. Whether unwanted sexual attention is a mere 'minor annoyance' or encountered as a more serious harm is shaped at least in part by the pre-given emotional and affective state of the individual and the sense of belonging (or comfort) they experience within a venue (see Chap. 3).

A number of participants acknowledged that the impacts of unwanted sexual attention were likely to be context dependent and that they occurred along a continuum ranging from virtually no impact to very traumatising:

> I guess it would depend on … what sort of level … the action was at. Just … general feeling of being really uncomfortable and then sort of forgetting about it … and maybe it becoming a funny story to tell people about this guy that wouldn't go away. Or … if it gets much more serious then that's … obviously traumatising. (Noni, FG4)

Noni reinforces dominant understandings of sexual violence and trauma here, (re)producing hierarchies of seriousness. Sexual violence is constructed in a linear manner, with 'more serious' forms of violence automatically (or 'obviously') resulting in trauma. However, it is unclear what constitutes 'more serious' forms of unwanted sexual attention in Noni's comments. Indeed, there is an implied shared understanding that we all hold the same notions of harm and seriousness here. It is not clear, however, that these hierarchies of seriousness and harm reflect the actual lived experiences of victims.

A number of the young people I spoke to highlighted the sometimes contradictory or ambivalent impacts of receiving unwanted sexual attention. In part, this was related to the sexual nature of some venues, where seeking out or engaging in sexual interaction could be a desired part of a night out (and Chap. 4 looks at this in more detail). Unwanted attention could be experienced simultaneously as a violation or harm, while also being flattering or reaffirming of sexual attractiveness. One participant, Edwin, talked about experiencing unwanted attention after losing a large amount of weight, which he contributed to him being viewed as a sexual being by women for the first time:

> I've only just started to experience this and it's really weird … part of it was the fact that… I'm a guy, I can't believe, like, this chick just came up and grabbed my arse, what the hell's going on?… I have to admit, a little bit of it was kind of like, oh yeah, this is cool, ok I'm attractive, I feel good about this. But the vast majority of it was just like how dare she violate my personal space like that, what the hell just happened? (Edwin, FG6)

Edwin's comments capture the emotional and affective complexity of experiencing unwanted sexual attention (at least in some circumstances) and the ways in which unwanted sexual attention could occupy ambiguous or dual spaces in its impacts upon people. It is not necessarily a case of unwanted sexual attention being either 'harmful' or 'not harmful'. The question of gender and hegemonic gendered performance also rears its head here. Edwin expresses a sense of shock or disbelief that a woman has sexually violated him ('I'm a guy, I can't believe'), subverting the 'usual' gendered dynamics of sexual violence. Edwin also makes sense of his experience through the trope of men always 'wanting' sexual attention ('this is cool… I'm attractive'–though this may of course also reflect the sense of sexual attractiveness that Edwin experienced): however, he simultaneously challenges and resists this particular construction of hegemonic masculinity by locating his experience as a violation of his body and space.

Discursive Constructions of Unwanted Sexual Attention

While the previous discussion explored young adults' first-hand experiences of unwanted sexual attention and the impacts these may have, I now turn to ask, how do young adults' understand and discuss unwanted sexual attention? In what ways is this concept constructed by and through young people's discussions? Which discursive positions do young adults draw on in making sense of unwanted sexual attention? Such discussions are important to consider, as the ways in which young adults understand unwanted sexual attention works to actively shape and create the 'realities' of this behaviour. It may shape how young adults understand their own experiences and how they react and respond to those around them. These discussions are actively producing the category of unwanted sexual attention as much as they reflect any 'reality' of young people's perceptions or understandings of this phenomenon.

Participants' definitions of unwanted sexual attention generally focused on the idea that it could include *any* type of behaviour, ranging from what might be considered 'minor', non-physical behaviours such as staring and verbal comments, to unwanted physical contact such as groping, and more 'severe' forms of sexual violence such as sexual assault and rape:

> **Florence**: Really anything from … lots of conversation that's not wanted … all the way to … the extreme, I think. (FG1)
>
> **Benjamin**: It's all … situation dependent, but … unwanted contact or even unwanted attention that's prolonged beyond the point that … it's been made clear that it's unwanted ... it's attention as much as physical contact. (FG2)

Although, as Benjamin's comment intimates, for some people what constituted unwanted sexual attention was dependent upon the context in which the behaviour took place, the situated nature of unwanted sexual attention is vitally important, and I return to this concept throughout this book. Definitions articulated by the participants were generally very broad and were largely consistent with the scope of behaviours in Kelly's (1988) continuum of sexual violence and with the first-hand experiences of participants. Other behaviours discussed by young people as being unwanted sexual attention included touching, having another patron purposefully dancing too close, having someone making comments about their clothing and appearance, or having someone invade their personal space more generally. Importantly, participants also thought that unwanted sexual attention was a common occurrence in licensed venues. Indeed, it was at times constructed as a 'normal' or unavoidable aspect of a night out, with 80% (n=186) of the 232 survey participants indicating that they believed unwanted sexual attention to be a common occurrence.

However, definitions of unwanted sexual attention were also contested and varied:

> I think including 'staring' in this category is unfounded… Of course staring goes on in licensed venues, that's kind of the point and as long as not coupled with following or stalking, is both harmless and avoidable. (Survey participant, gay male)

Yet for many others staring was considered as a form of unwanted sexual attention:

> **Haley**: If there's a group of guys that look a bit dodgy and they're looking at you and they're clearly talking about you, I think that's really uncomfortable.
>
> **Kim**: Yeah, and I think it's more the group thing rather than just seeing one guy checking you out across the bar or something.
>
> **Ingrid**: It's the three standing together, all staring. (FG4)

There was variation in terms of what counted as unwanted sexual attention. What was wanted attention for one person in one context could be unwanted for another in a different context. It follows from this that there is a need to allow for a degree of fluidity in definitions of unwanted sexual attention and for a firm understanding of the importance of the context in which the behaviour occurs. For Haley, Kim, and Ingrid, it was not just staring on its own that constituted unwanted sexual attention, but the combination of a number of men staring and clearly talking about them that made an experience unwanted. The need to take into account the context of behaviour, as well as individual differences in perceptions of what constitutes 'harmful' behaviour, has also been identified in the literature on street harassment (Fairchild 2010; Katz et al. 1996; Kissling 1991; Yagil et al. 2006). While there has only been limited research considering people's constructions of what constitutes rape or sexual violence, these findings are largely consistent with this small body of research. For example, Chasteen found that women do not define or understand rape in the same way, and she suggested that the 'varying life experiences and social positions of women clearly influence their understandings of sexual assault' (2001: 136).

Such comments also raise some important issues and complexities such as how we distinguish between the wanted and unwanted in a social context where sexual interaction is often normative and desired behaviour. The remarks from the male survey participant (noted above) indicate that social context and understandings of why people go to licensed venues (and what they desire on any particular night) can fundamentally influence perceptions of unwanted sexual attention. So if the purpose of going to venues is to 'see and be seen', then certain behaviours such as staring might be difficult to comprehend as being unwanted or problematic, though for other individuals in different contexts these behaviours could be highly unsettling. For instance, in Haley's experience discussed above there was likely a significant power imbalance between her and the three men, and it is difficult to interpret their actions as being part of any kind of 'genuine' sexual advance. This raises the challenge of developing accounts of unwanted sexual attention that are able to simultaneously acknowledge the potential for the same behaviour to be *both* wanted or unwanted, desired and pleasurable, or undesired and harmful (or, indeed, to shift between these states, or to inhabit the interstitial spaces between wanted and unwanted).

Although the young people in this research viewed unwanted sexual attention as consisting of a broad range of behaviours *theoretically*, these broad and inclusive definitions did not necessarily reflect the types of encounters that they would personally find problematic. Further, there was not necessarily a consensus with regards to the types of unwanted sexual attention they would find problematic: young adults may experience the various forms of unwanted sexual attention in different ways. For instance, while some young adults found verbal comments more threatening than touching, for others the opposite was true. Again, this indicates a need to allow for a degree of fluidity in understandings and definitions of what unwanted sexual attention is—not all types of behaviours will be unwanted, harmful, or threatening to all individuals at all times. This fluidity and subjectivity also resists the creation of linear hierarchies of the unwanted. It does not make sense, for example, to position physical touching as *always* more harmful or 'serious' than verbal comments or staring in *all* contexts. As Fairchild notes in relation to street harassment, whether something is interpreted as harassment comes down to 'individual perception … there are a multitude of potential individual and situational variables that can influence' this perception (2010: 193). Yet, as we shall see, these individual perceptions are also shaped by dominant discursive accounts of sexual harm and seriousness. Though there is fluidity and variation in young people's understandings, this is not unbounded.

This also goes some way in explaining why the majority of survey respondents said unwanted sexual attention only 'sometimes' impacts on their perceptions of safety when using clubs and pubs (as noted earlier), as whether an individual's safety is impacted on will depend on the form of unwanted sexual attention, the particular context within which it occurs, and individual perceptions of harm and seriousness. Gender was also significantly associated with perceptions of safety, with female-identified participants considerably more likely to say that unwanted sexual attention impacts on their safety than their male counterparts. Likewise, just because one individual experiences a certain form of behaviour as wanted, flattering, or welcome does not mean it will be seen this way by *all* individuals (see also, Fairchild 2010; Katz et al. 1996; Kissling 1991; Yagil et al. 2006). Thus, what 'counts' as unwanted sexual attention is, to some extent, dependent on the subjective and contextual experience or perception of the individual subject to that behaviour:

> **Elise**: Where do you draw the line? Different people have different lines, right? So somebody might think oh giggling, flirting… I'm of the mind that flirting should not mean anything… But then … if someone touches me that's where I sort of say like [makes a click click sound] nah nah, that's not yours. No touchy, go back to kindergarten, like keep your hands to yourself. (FG1)

Despite acknowledging that individuals draw different 'lines' around acceptable versus unwanted behaviour, it is also apparent in Elise's comments that she expects others to understand that touching is not okay. Her reference to kindergarten implies that knowing not to touch others is a basic and shared social rule mastered from a young age. The lines around unwanted sexual attention are simultaneously produced as subjective and objective, as known and unknowable.

While participants thought that unwanted sexual attention was a common occurrence in clubs and pubs, many individuals commented that they believed most of the unwanted sexual attention that happened would be in the less 'serious' end of the spectrum. As a queer male survey respondent commented, 'I feel that a lot of unwanted sexual attention is either fairly minor or covert'. Some young adults, particularly gay males, contested whether the occurrence of such behaviour was such a 'big deal', and a few people suggested it was something they could easily handle:

> I really don't think the topic is an issue. We are all adults so if someone was to approach me with unwanted sexual attention I would just tell them to fuck off. (Survey participant, gay male)

However, it should be noted here that men (albeit, usually heterosexual men) have been consistently identified as viewing sexually harassing behaviour, such as that occurring in the workplace or on the street, as less serious than women (Fairchild 2010; Laniya 2005). That men generally do not experience unwanted sexual attention and sexual harassment in a systematic and insidious way in many (if not *all*) aspects of their lives is likely to influence how unwanted sexual attention in venues is perceived and interpreted. The dismissal of unwanted sexual attention as something they can 'handle' can also be viewed as a performance of hegemonic masculinity. Similarly, several heterosexual female survey respondents indicated that much of the unwanted sexual attention they had received resided in the 'lower' end of the continuum:

> Most of it is harmless, just really annoying (boys trying to dance with you when you told them to F@*K off, staring at you making you uncomfortable). It can ruin your night by making you extremely uncomfortable and annoyed though. (Survey participant, heterosexual woman)
>
> I've experienced this a lot, but not every time I go out, and most of the time it is relatively minor and harmless. (Survey participant, heterosexual woman)

It is interesting to note here that even though the women describe such experiences as relatively 'harmless', they are not necessarily described in neutral terms (Fileborn 2012b). For the first individual quoted, these 'harmless' experiences were also 'annoying' and made her feel 'uncomfortable'. Such comments point to a downplaying of the harm caused by more 'minor' forms of unwanted sexual attention. A tendency to downplay the harm of various forms of sexual violence has been documented elsewhere, most notably in the work of Kelly and Radford (1990). It may be that participants were reluctant to fully, or openly, articulate the harm of these 'minor' experiences, as a result of the belief that they would not be believed or taken seriously (Kelly and Radford 1990). One reading of these participants' comments, then, is that dominant discursive productions of sexual violence (as physically violent, involving extreme force/coercion, as involving penetrative acts, and so forth) shapes the possibilities for how these seemingly 'minor' encounters can be interpreted or understood. It is particularly notable that it was the more commonly encountered forms of unwanted sexual attention that were routinely dismissed by (some) participants as being 'minor' or less serious. Such productions of unwanted sexual attention work to silence or obscure the more everyday and insidious forms of sexualised harm experienced particularly (though not exclusively) by women. Further, as DeGue and DiLillo assert, even if no immediate or lasting harm is endured as a result of unwanted sexual attention, 'such acts, by their very nature, constitute a violation of an individual's right to make unfettered decisions about the circumstances in which she or he engages in sexual activity' (2005: 518). At the very least, unwanted sexual attention can function to limit an individual's sexual and physical autonomy, even in the absence of 'additional' harm.

Others have argued that even seemingly 'complimentary' forms of harassing behaviour serve 'to remind women of their status as women… [and] of their vulnerability to these and other violations' (Kissling 1991: 455; see also Crouch 2009; Laniya 2005; Macmillan et al. 2000; Tuerkeimer 1997). However, it is not clear that such arguments apply in their entirety to unwanted sexual attention occurring in clubs and pubs. Firstly, sexual interaction can be normative behaviour in licensed venues, albeit often contested and resisted, and desired by young people. If *some* young adults attend venues at least *some* of the time with the desire to engage in sexual activity, it is not clear that all unwanted sexual attention or advances that occur in clubs and pubs can be interpreted as a form of gender-based oppression—though this may be a feature of a great deal of the unwanted sexual attention that occurs. That is, there must be some space to account for sexual desire in conceptualisations of unwanted sexual attention, although not at the expense of acknowledging the potential of unwanted sexual attention to be used to harass, intimidate or oppress, or to have these impacts on recipients. Secondly, it is unclear how arguments around gender-based oppression and vulnerability apply in instances of same-sex or female-to-male unwanted sexual attention. While, as Laniya (2005: 100) argues, 'the power dynamics, the implications of the experience, and the psychic harms that results are radically different' when women harass men, this nonetheless does not allow for an understanding of men's experiences of unwanted sexual attention, other than to dismiss them as 'not harmful' or unimportant. Thus, while women's gender-based oppression forms a significant component of unwanted sexual attention, a focus on this alone is insufficient to account for the varied and complex contexts in which unwanted sexual attention occurs.

Unwanted Sexual Attention and Perceptions of Harm

If understandings of 'what counts' as unwanted sexual attention are, to some extent, subjective a question arises as to what shapes these understandings—that is, in what contexts or circumstances is a particular action more likely to be experienced or interpreted as ‘unwanted’? The subjective nature of what types of behaviour young adults experienced as being unwanted was closely related to their concept of harm. Participants discussed the difference between something being unwanted but acceptable (for example, often within the context of people trying to ‘pick up’, an often acceptable and normal behaviour in venues), and something being unwanted *and* harmful or problematic. Where this line was varied for each person, although it was often related to the level of physicality of the behaviour, or instances where the individual felt that they had made their lack of consent or lack of interest clear (see also Kavanaugh 2013):

Noni: There definitely is a difference for me between … unwanted because I’m not interested or that’s not what I came here for and actually unwanted because I feel uncomfortable and, ah, maybe not so much go so far as to say unsafe, but definitely uncomfortable. (FG4)

Elise: If it’s just a guy and, yeah, he starts going a little bit too far and you say actually, no… I’ve got a partner or I’m not interested … and they just leave you alone. Like, ok, you could say that’s unwanted sexual attention, but… I’m not going to be scarred from that … it’s just when they start to be … persistent or something. So it’s like the initial unwanted thing…and then there’s been a clear no and then, like, going on despite the no that’s when it’s a problem. (FG1)

There appears to be some downplaying of harm in Noni’s comments. In this case she goes on to say that her night was made ‘less fun’ and ‘uncomfortable’ as a result of unwanted sexual advances. There is a level of acceptance that some unwanted behaviours should be accommodated on a night out, provided the level of harm caused does not extend to her feeling ‘uncomfortable’. The downplaying of harm may also serve a useful social function for these women. While the negative aspect of such behaviours should not be ignored, if every unwanted experience was interpreted as being highly harmful or threatening, it may result in these women being further restricted in their use of venue spaces (for example, simply not going to venues out of fear, and so forth). In this respect, the downplaying of harm is a form of resistance: a challenge to the gendered power dynamics that could potentially otherwise exclude women from these spaces entirely. Further, it is quite possible that the women do not interpret or experience these encounters as problematic, and do not feel harmed by them in any way.

Interestingly, unwanted sexual attention is being conceptualised at an individual level by participants as occurring according to a hierarchy(s) of behaviour. That is, there appears to be a clear ordering of behaviours according to how harmful they are perceived as being:

> **Benjamin**: I think it's sort of a spectrum issue. Unwanted doesn't necessarily mean that it's really bad and it's a problem or anything. (FG2)

However, while each individual appears to have constructed their own personal hierarchy of unwanted sexual attention, there was a degree of variation and subjectivity in terms of what this hierarchy 'looks' like between participants, as we saw with the earlier discussion on staring as a form of unwanted sexual attention. A hierarchical model of conceptualising unwanted sexual attention is unlikely to capture this variation. Given that what counts as 'unwanted' is shaped by a range of contextual, place, and bodily factors, it may be more productive to think of these individual hierarchies of harm as being constantly produced and re-produced depending on the particular assemblage of factors in play.

Perceptions of harm could depend not only upon the perceived seriousness (or physicality) of the behaviour, but also on whether an incident was discrete or prolonged:

> **Haley**: I think it's got to do with actual hurt … if a guy came up to me and was dancing behind me and, I don't know, rubbing against me or something like, I'd be annoyed but I'd just go away or do something to get rid of him… But I wouldn't say that I would let that totally ruin my night, but … if he kept going and going and going and going and going … or if I was assaulted or something. (FG3)

Haley's comments indicate that 'serious' unwanted sexual attention has multiple meanings, or may refer to vastly different forms of behaviour. While the level of physicality of the behaviour is one factor that influences perceived seriousness, persistence with behaviour that if engaged in once would not be considered problematic can also transform the perceived seriousness of the event. She also implies that there is a level of choice or control over how one responds to unwanted sexual attention, with it being left to the victim/recipient to decide whether they 'let that totally ruin' their night. Further, respondents often alluded to 'serious' unwanted sexual attention and sexual violence. It was apparent in many participants' narratives that they distinguished between 'minor' and 'serious' forms of unwanted sexual attention, where 'serious' forms of this behaviour were depicted as universally harmful in comparison to the more subjective harms of 'minor' unwanted sexual attention:

> **Cameron**: Being groped by someone and they won't stop and you try to get away and they continue, that would be problematic for most people I imagine. But something as simple as a, a pass, or a slap, or an attempted kiss, or something like that … would depend on the person I think and their reaction to it is what's harmful there. (FG5)

These more 'serious' forms of unwanted sexual attention fall more closely in line with stereotypical notions of sexual violence and are therefore more readily accepted as universally harmful. For less 'serious' forms of unwanted sexual attention, the 'harm' of this behaviour is, Cameron implies, produced through the subjective reaction of the individual *('their reaction to it is what's harmful there')*. Such views may give rise to victim-blaming attitudes or the dismissal of harmful experiences as a mere 'overreaction' on behalf of the victim. However, given that many individuals (and particularly survey respondents) did not explicitly state what they thought constituted 'severe' or serious unwanted sexual attention, this is not necessarily clear. Many young people had their own frame of reference as to what constituted harmful or not harmful forms of unwanted sexual attention (that is, they had constructed their own hierarchy(s) of unwanted sexual attention). It may also be that participants are projecting their own perceptions of serious or harmful unwanted sexual attention onto others, and consequently assume that their own hierarchy of harm is universally shared.

The line between 'just unwanted' and 'unwanted and harmful' also varied depending on the social context and the type of venue that people were in:

Alex: It can happen anywhere … a cocktail bar can have it happen but it becomes unwanted maybe a lot earlier, whereas a dance floor it becomes unwanted a little bit later, and at a sauna[4] it becomes unwanted when it might actually be physical. (FG2)

That is, what 'counted' as unwanted sexual attention was dependent upon the venue context, and the normative forms of interaction within that venue. For Alex, this was strongly linked to the physicality and sexual explicitness of normative venue behaviour. For instance, in sex on premises venues Alex had a much higher threshold (at least according to his own hierarchy of seriousness) for when sexual attention shifted to being unwanted—although knowing which behaviours or forms of interactions are likely to be tolerated also requires a firm understanding of venue community norms, and assumes that others in the venue share these norms. However, others saw unwanted sexual attention as happening in certain types of venues, particularly venues with highly sexual cultures or venues that provided spaces for dancing, and this point will be developed more fully in Chap. 4.

Whether certain forms of behaviour constituted unwanted sexual attention or not was also dependent on people's reasons for having gone out to a venue that night:

Noni: If you're not interested in that … type of interaction you … want to be able to just be like 'look … you're not doing anything particularly wrong but we're just not interested'.
Mary: …and you're actually stopping us from being able to communicate with each other, which is why we're here. (FG4)

This would tend to suggest that individual understandings and experiences of the unwanted are likely to shift and change depending on what the individual desires on that particular night (or, indeed, how their desires ebb and flow as the night unfolds). It is interesting to note that no male participants discussed having women approach them to talk as being an issue when they were in licensed venues (although, that is not to say this does not happen or is never an issue for men). There was a clear gender imbalance in terms of who is approached in licensed venues and who does the approaching (and this would be consistent with Grazian 2007). In particular, female respondents suggested that groups of women without men were more likely to be approached by men in clubs and bars, and some women felt that they were viewed as 'open game' if they were in a venue without a male companion (see also Grazian 2007, 2009). The role of sex scripts and gender norms in unwanted sexual attention will be explored more fully in Chap. 4.

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[4] Alex uses the term 'sauna' to refer to sex on premises venues for men who have sex with men.

Venue Responses and Responsibility for Unwanted Sexual Attention

Perceptions of harm and seriousness also influenced young adults' discussions on how venues should respond to unwanted sexual attention, what forms of unwanted sexual attention venues should respond to, and who should be responsible for responding to unwanted sexual attention. Some individuals saw the 'blurriness' or ambiguity of some forms of unwanted sexual attention as mitigating venue responsibility to respond to or 'deal with' these incidents:

> It would also be difficult sometimes to differentiate between unwanted attention and wanted attention. Unless an actual complaint is made, then it is likely to go unnoticed. The responsibility lies not only with the venue, but with the customers attending the venue. (Survey participant, heterosexual woman)

There was a clear hierarchy of unwanted sexual attention apparent in participants' views on which forms of unwanted sexual attention warranted a response from venues. Some young people believed that for less 'severe' or serious forms of unwanted sexual attention, the onus to respond to (or, indeed, prevent) these behaviours lay with the victim/potential victim:

> **Elise**: Licensed venues know that it probably happens, but they also know that it's usually not extreme and … people can fend for themselves. (FG1)

Conversely, more 'serious' forms of unwanted sexual attention were seen as more worthy of response from the venue, and the venue was deemed to have greater responsibility towards patrons experiencing 'severe' forms of this behaviour. Additionally, many people commented that venues already took 'severe' forms of sexual violence seriously, and responded in an appropriate manner:

> If a person was inappropriately touched, however, and the perpetrator had been visibly loud and obnoxious, it's likely that they would be removed from the premises if requested. (Survey participant, heterosexual woman)
>
> Difficult to police it, especially 'less severe' cases e.g., looks and comments … severe cases are generally dealt with well, e.g., unwanted touching would lead to that person being removed from venue. (Survey participant, heterosexual woman)

However, considering that there was great variation, subjectivity, and debate around what types of behaviour were harmful or constituted serious unwanted attention, it is unclear whose definition of 'serious' or 'harmful' should be privileged here (and in which contexts). For instance, should perceptions of harm or seriousness be based upon the assessment of the bar staff? Should the perception of the victim always be privileged? Or, should harm depend solely on the physicality of the behaviour involved? In the comments from the first survey respondent it is apparent that there are a range of conditions that must be met before unwanted sexual attention would be responded to. In this instance, there must be a physical element to the behaviour *and* anti-social/disruptive behaviour from the perpetrator *and* a request from the victim. This sets a considerably high threshold for responding to unwanted sexual attention, and greatly limits the range of experiences that are deemed worthy of responding to.

The perceived seriousness of an incident also influenced victims' decisions to report an incident to staff:

> I don't think that there would be anyone I would tell at a licensed venue if I was receiving unwanted attention, unless it was really serious. (Survey participant, heterosexual woman)

An individual's construction of a hierarchy of seriousness appears to mediate decisions to disclose or report an incident of unwanted sexual attention. It is worth reiterating, however, that these hierarchies differed between individuals, limiting the applicability of a linear conceptualisation of unwanted sexual attention. It has been well established in the literature on victim/survivors' decisions to report their experiences that their perception of the seriousness of the sexual violence influences their likelihood to report (Lievore 2003, 2005). Victim/survivors who feel their experience was not serious enough are often reluctant to report or disclose, and it would seem that this is also the case for unwanted sexual attention. Reporting and disclosure is more likely for victim/survivors whose experience closely aligns with a 'stereotypical' rape (for example, cases where the perpetrator is a stranger, or the victim received physical injuries during the assault) (Lievore 2005; Ullman and Filipas 2001). It may be that the most common forms of unwanted sexual attention do not resemble this archetype of sexual violence closely enough to be deemed worthy of reporting.

Some participants indicated that they did not report incidents of unwanted sexual attention or sexual violence to venue staff as part of their strategy for 'dealing with' the incident, and minimising the impact the unwanted sexual attention had on them:

> **Clementine**: Not reporting … to the venue or to the police … was all about containing the incident… I don't want it to be something that goes on and on and on … and because what happened to me was relatively minor I can say that.

To some extent the decision to not report was deliberately utilised as a coping strategy, and as a mechanism for mitigating and limiting the potential harm of the unwanted sexual attention. In Clementine's case reporting the incident may have prolonged and amplified the harm or negative impact of the experience (perhaps even beyond that of the initial harm of the unwanted sexual attention itself), and prevented her from moving on. The decision to report or not is a point at which victims of unwanted sexual attention or sexual violence are able to reclaim a sense of agency or autonomy: that is, the unwanted sexual attention/sexual assault removes the victim's agency and autonomy over their body and personal space, so being able to exercise choice allows this sense of agency and autonomy to begin to be regained.

However, it is apparent in Clementine's comments that the decision not to report was based on the perception that it was not 'serious' enough, and that there would be little benefit gained from reporting. Given that victim/survivors' encounters with the criminal justice system are often highly negative in nature, if not retraumatising, and that the vast majority of sexual assault complaints are gradually filtered out of the system (see Lievore 2003, 2005), Clementine's perceptions are not inaccurate. There is a clear tension here between the agency of not reporting as a form of control, and the internalisation of dominant, discursive accounts of sexual violence which position experiences such as Clementine's as 'not serious' enough to report. The extent to which this represents the enactment of control versus a silencing of sexual harm is difficult to determine. While I do not wish to deny victims the potential to act in an agentic manner, it is difficult to view such decisions as only being a matter of regaining control in the face of deeply ingrained notions of 'what counts' as sexual violence which exclude and downplay these 'minor' experiences. Thus, such decisions can only be viewed as being solely about regaining control when the ability to report (if desired) becomes an equally viable option.

Some individuals contested the notion that venues respond well to 'serious' forms of unwanted sexual attention or sexual violence, while others suggested that the type of response, and adequacy of that response, was dependent upon the attitude and culture of the individual venue:

> It's usually not responded to at all at a lower level, and even at a higher level, it's usually up to the victim to make a vocal complaint/objection before they step in. (Survey participant, heterosexual woman)

There was also a hierarchy apparent between sexual and physical violence, with physical violence (generally that occurring between men) frequently viewed as more 'serious' and more worthy of (or more likely to receive) venue intervention than instances of unwanted sexual attention:

> Unless a patron is demonstrating broadly anti-social behaviour or physical assault it would be difficult for staff to intervene appropriately. (Survey participant, gay male)
>
> Unless someone is being overtly violent and physically harming someone very obviously, no one will respond or take my claims of being uncomfortable and threatened seriously. Sexual assault and unwanted attention isn't taken seriously as harm. (Survey participant, queer woman)

Physical violence has been conceptualised as 'serious' harm worthy of police and government action, and this is reinforced through these participants' comments. Physical violence is constructed as sitting at the pinnacle of hierarchies of seriousness. Returning to Clementine's decision not to report her experience of unwanted sexual attention, it was clear from her comments that the fact that her experience did not involve physical violence influenced her decision not to involve venue staff or police:

> **Clementine**: Although, technically it was an indecent assault … and sadly I kind of bought into the I wasn't physically hurt in some way, so… I've called the police before when my partner's been beaten up … when … there's been … violence at licensed venues, but not, not for that.

There is a downplaying of harm and a hesitance to seek assistance for forms of unwanted sexual attention that does not readily fall into dominant constructions of violence. Given that much physical violence occurs between men (particularly within the context of the night-time economy—Briscoe and Donnelly 2001; Graham and Wells 2003; Homel et al. 1992), there is also a privileging here of particular forms of male harm/victimisation–notably that experienced by men enacting hegemonic masculine displays (it is, for example, unlikely that homophobic violence against the denigrated masculinity of (some) gay men would garner the same level of attention)—above the sexual victimisation that tends to be experienced by women in clubs and pubs.

There is a tension apparent throughout this discussion in terms of the range of behaviours that young adults viewed as constituting unwanted sexual attention (which was broad, inclusive, and largely consistent with Kelly's continuum of sexual violence model), and the types of unwanted sexual attention that are worthy of a venue's attention. However, it may also be that comments around the perceived seriousness of unwanted sexual attention and the likelihood of venues to respond are based on personal observations or experiences of venue responses, or their perception of how venue staff will respond. Thus, while club-goers do indeed view a range of behaviours as being unwanted sexual attention, there is also recognition that many other individuals in the community may only recognise more 'serious' or stereotypical forms of sexual violence as being worthy of response. This in turn may influence victims' decisions to report incidents of unwanted sexual attention.

Conclusion

So, what can be said so far in response to the question of what unwanted sexual attention 'is'. It is clear from young people's experiences that unwanted sexual attention in pubs and clubs includes an infinitely broad range of behaviours, which, by and large, align with Kelly's continuum of sexual violence. It is also apparent that, although the majority of young people's experiences fit within the dominant notion of sexual violence as perpetrated by men against women, unwanted sexual attention occurs within a diverse range of contexts beyond this. Most notably, it can also intersect or co-occur with, or be a form of, heterosexist violence. Gender and gender-based oppression alone is unable to fully account for the diverse range of experiences explored here. However, as I have stressed throughout, this does not mean that gender is irrelevant to our understanding of what unwanted sexual attention is. Indeed, it is a highly gendered phenomenon both in the way that it is predominantly perpetrated by men against women, but also in that young people's discussions of unwanted sexual attention are used as an avenue for doing or accomplishing gender. Likewise, how young adults experience unwanted sexual attention is shaped by gender, and gendered ways of being and knowing the world (amongst other factors).

Although unwanted sexual attention could include a seemingly endless range of behaviours or encounters, it is produced and shaped in particular ways, and not all forms of unwanted sexual attention are experienced or discussed in the same way. In particular, young adults' discussions of unwanted sexual attention were clearly shaped by dominant discourses of sexual violence, and actively (re)produced these discursive positions. Most notably, unwanted sexual attention was (re)produced in a hierarchical manner, ordered by understandings of harm and seriousness. These discursive constructions result in particular kinds of unwanted sexual attention being perceived as 'legitimate', while other forms (such as more 'minor' intrusions or those perpetrated against men) were discounted as being (potentially) sexually harmful experiences. This suggests that the ways in which young adults discuss and understand this phenomenon may have very real implications for whose experiences are recognised and responded to.

Finally, experiences of unwanted sexual attention, and understandings of what 'counts' as unwanted varied across contexts, and depending upon individual perceptions of harm and seriousness. This suggests that unwanted sexual attention is not a stable, fixed phenomenon. Instead, it is contextually situated and produced. However, unwanted sexual attention can also involve very real corporeal and psychic harm, as the experience of Anne (and others) demonstrated. Thus, while the contextually specific nature and discursive production of unwanted sexual attention is clearly important, these co-occur with and are informed by embodied, physical experiences.

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3

Community and Belonging

Young adults' experiences and perceptions of unwanted sexual attention appear to be intimately connected to the context in which they occur. More specifically, the extent to which young people feel a sense of community and belonging within a venue is often (though not always) a pivotal factor influencing their experiences and perceptions of unwanted sexual attention. Licensed venues can vary dramatically in terms of their culture, who attends and for what purpose, the normative attitudes and behaviours of a venue, and so on. Young adults are thus likely to have differing embodied, affective, and emotional experiences within pubs and clubs.

How is it that young adults may come to feel a sense of community and belonging in some venues but not others? What factors might shape who feels welcome in a venue and who does not? Licensed venues have been discussed extensively as a core site of identity formation and performance and as a space for consolidating group identities. This body of work is helpful in considering how and why young people may come to experience a sense of belonging (or not) within a particular venue, and I explore this in the first part of this chapter.

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In turn, this raises questions in relation to unwanted sexual attention. For instance, is an individual's experience of unwanted sexual attention shaped by the type of venue they are in, and the ways in which they relate and respond to that unique social and cultural milieu? As I have intimated, this sense of community and belonging is often a significant contextual factor that shapes young adults' experiences or perceptions of unwanted sexual attention as well as their general sense of safety and well-being. The ways in which young people in this study discussed unwanted sexual attention within certain venue spaces was often used as a form of identity performance and assertion of group belonging as much as it reflected any 'reality' of the locations, experiences, and harms of this behaviour. In this chapter I draw out in more detail the role these contextual factors play in shaping young people's safety and their perceptions and experiences of unwanted sexual attention in pubs and clubs.

A Sense of Community

A sense of community and belonging in venues was fundamental to many young people's sense of safety and well-being and to their perceptions and experiences of unwanted sexual attention when using clubs and pubs. The young people in this study predominantly used the term 'community' to connote the notion that venue patrons and staff express a sense of care and concern towards each other, or are 'looking out' for one another. Whether an individual felt they 'belonged' in a venue derived from whether they viewed the other patrons as being 'like them', and if the young person understood the social and cultural mores of a particular venue space. These two concepts have been separated for the purposes of this discussion because although a sense of belonging and community were often interlinked it was also clear in participants' narratives that they did not always require a sense of belonging in order to feel they were being 'looked out' for, and vice versa.

It is helpful to consider this concept of 'community' in more depth. What, precisely, is community? Specifically, what is meant by the use of this somewhat nebulous term within the context of licensed venues? Community has been conceptualised in diverse ways within the existing literature (see, for example, Cohen 1985; Delanty 2010; Jewkes and Murcott 1996). Two overarching themes within this divergent body of work are the notions of community as *spatially* bound, and community as *relationally* bound (Delanty 2010; Jewkes and Murcott 1996; McMillan and Chavis 1986). These two archetypical constructs of community are of particular relevance to licensed venue communities.

Early work on communities often defined a community in spatial or geographic terms—that is, it was held that a community is formed by a group of individuals living in geographical proximity to one another (see, for example, McMillan and Chavis 1986). Of course, such communities can occur across different geographic scales: a suburban street, a town, or a country can all be considered 'communities', despite their vastly different reach. In many respects, this is a highly simplistic account of what constitutes a community. However, this notion of communities as geographical or spatially bound is of some relevance to licensed venue communities.

More commonly, communities have been conceptualised relationally. A sense of community may be produced through the perceived similarity or shared experience of community members and/or their perceived differences in relation to some particular 'other'. McMillan and Chavis (1986) present a definition of 'a sense of communities' that, they argue, provides a useful framework for understanding both relational and geographical communities. They identify four elements that make up a sense of community (1986: 9): membership—'the feeling of belonging or of sharing a sense of personal relatedness'; influence—'a sense of mattering, of making a difference to a group and of the group mattering to its members'; integration and fulfilment of needs—'that members' needs will be met by the resources received through their membership in the group'; and, shared emotional connection, which refers to 'the commitment and belief that members have shared and will share history, common places, time together, and similar experiences'.

Complementing these four elements is the notion of the boundary, which is central to understanding relational communities. As McMillan and Chavis put it, 'there are people who belong and people who do not belong' (1986: 9; see also Cohen 1985; Moran and Skeggs 2004). While McMilan and Chavis propose that boundaries are essential for emotional safety and intimacy, it will become clear throughout this chapter that the boundary is also an essential element of identity construction and performance (see Cohen 1985). However, these boundaries are not impermeable or fixed in place. Rather, community boundaries are constantly in flux, contested, formed, and re-formed (Moran and Skeggs 2004). Cohen (1985: 12) highlights the multiplicity, and context-dependent nature of boundaries, with 'the manner in which they are marked depend[ing] entirely upon the specific community in question'.

Some boundaries, or components of some boundaries, are constructed symbolically (Cohen 1985). The symbolic construction of boundaries refers to 'what the boundary means to people, or, more precisely, about the meanings they give to it' (Cohen 1985: 12). Communities can draw on a plethora of practices to communicate or perform belonging. For instance, sartorial choices, language, and consumption practices can all be used 'to create social distance between members and nonmembers' (McMillan and Chavis 1986: 11). Community belonging is constructed in *relation* to the other. Yet each individual brings their own understanding or imbued meaning to these symbolic markers: they both express meaning and 'give us the capacity to make meaning' (Cohen 1985: 15). Thus, it should not be assumed that the symbols drawn on by members of a community imply shared understanding and assignment of meaning, or even that the same individual attaches the same meaning to a symbol across different contexts (Cohen 1985). Rather, as Cohen argues, the same symbols may be drawn on to express different beliefs, understandings, or facets of identity, despite giving the appearance of uniformity.

In the context of licensed venues, boundaries can also be physical. Being able to permeate the boundary of a venue community requires quite literal physical access to the venue space. Access that, as we shall see, is not readily available to all young people at all times (or which may change across the course of an evening; those who become extremely intoxicated or engage in behaviour that contravenes venue norms may find themselves rapidly ejected from the physical venue community). Indeed, venue communities are, at least in some respects, formed because of the spatial proximity of patrons. They exist because of the loose assemblage of groups of strangers (who perhaps otherwise would not associate or socialise with one another) within a particular location. Yet venue communities are not *only* formed through this spatial proximity. As I illustrate in the ensuing discussion, venues are also important cultural sites, and sites of identity construction/performance and establishment of group belonging. They are relational spaces, and while in theory 'anyone' may go to a particular venue, the reality is much more complex than this. Venue communities are not necessarily constructed of *any* groups of strangers who by happenstance have found themselves in the same location.

A multiplicity of communities exists both within particular venues and within certain types of venues, rather than there being a singular, coherent venue community. These communities are highly volatile, shifting and changing across the course of a night as patrons come and go (Griffin 2008; Johnson and Samdahl 2005). In this sense, venue communities bear many of the hallmarks of postmodern communities (Delanty 2010). Of course, certain venues (as we shall see) are more or less desirable to certain sub-cultural groups in the first place, so this flux in community and belonging is not an unbounded one either.

The Politics of Belonging in Licensed Venues

Adolescents and young adults are typically viewed within sociological theory as being in a state of 'transition' from youth to adulthood (Chatterton and Hollands 2002; Hollands 2002; Northcote 2006). This transition is, supposedly, a time of exploration and identity formation. According to Northcote (2006), licensed venues can provide an important space for this transition and period of adult identity construction to occur (see also Chatterton and Hollands 2002; Hollands 2002). Licensed venues can provide a space or 'stage' for experimentation or 'trying out' various identities, due to the relative fluidity and relaxation of (some) social boundaries in (some) licensed venue settings (Chatterton and Hollands 2002; Hadfield 2006; Hobbs et al. 2003; Hunt et al. 2010; Jaimangal-Jones et al. 2010; Northcote 2006).

According to this reading of nightlife spaces, 'the city offers abundant resources for experimentation and play and opens up liminal … social spaces' (Chatterton and Hollands 2002: 98). For instance, Pini (cited in Hunt et al. 2010: 22) argues in relation to the rave scene that 'the dance floor is a space for young women to explore boundaries of "appropriate" behaviour', facilitated by the consumption of drugs. Such boundary pushing is, however, not without consequences or limitations for young women. Nonetheless, licensed venues can provide a setting for challenging, testing and exploring personal identity, gendered roles/expectations, as well as more general social rules or norms (for example, through drug consumption, dress, dancing, and so forth) (see also Jaimangal-Jones et al. 2010).

Licensed venues can also function as a space to assert identity and belonging within certain sub-cultural groups (Hobbs et al. 2003; Hunt et al. 2010; Jaimangal-Jones et al. 2010: 255). By 'identifying with the crowd, clubbers confirm their identity' (Hunt et al. 2010: 21), and develop a sense of belonging and place within a particular, desired sub-cultural group. Identity formation and group membership in licensed spaces often centres on consumption practices (Chatterton and Hollands 2002; Hunt et al. 2010). Hobbs et al. suggest that 'the power of consumerism to create and modify self-identity is increasingly apparent in evolving youth cultures' (2003: 20), and that this cultural consumerism dominates the night-time economy. These consumption practices also create 'hierarchically segmented consumption groupings and spaces in cities, which are highly structured around drinking circuits or areas, each with their own set of codes, dress styles, language and tastes' (Chatterton and Hollands 2003: 84). Consumption practices may thus regulate and limit which venue spaces are accessible to young people, and the ways in which spaces can be used. They restrain and shape the boundaries of identity performance as much as they function as a means of 'doing' identity.

In saying this, it is important to keep in mind that there are significant cultural differences between commercial and niche venues (Anderson et al. 2009; Hunt et al. 2010; Lindsay 2006). These differences are likely to influence both the type of consumption required as well as the importance placed on consumption within a specific 'subscene'. As Hunt et al. (2010: 34) suggest, each clubbing scene/subscene or culture 'has its own norms and group behaviours, how individuals act … will vary by what scene they are involved in'. Successful identification and acceptance in a scene is, of course, highly dependent on economic, cultural, and social capital and the 'ability to consume regularly and knowledgeably' (Hobbs et al. 2003: 23). Alternatively, licensed venues may attempt to attract or capture a specific type of crowd or sub-cultural group through the use of particular cultural signifiers (see, for example, Lugosi 2009). However, attempts to draw a specific type of crowd are not always successful and may even inadvertently discourage members of the desired sub-cultural groups from using the venue. Alternative readings of certain environmental cues or signifiers may disrupt attempts to create spaces that are 'inclusive' of certain groups or cultural practices.

Much post-structuralist sociological research and theory on young adults, including literature on the night-time economy, presents young adults' identification with a specific sub-cultural group as something they are able to 'pick and choose', seamlessly shifting from one group to another (Chatterton and Hollands 2002: 98; Hollands 2002). Such research rejects ideas around young adults assuming a fixed social and cultural identity. For instance, Hutton (2006: 18) argues that (certain) club cultures permit young women to 'explore and slip into alternative identities … even if it is only for the weekend'.

However, others have countered this point arguing that a range of structural factors still operate to restrain the choices that young people can make, and in some cases these factors serve to exclude certain young people from the night-time economy entirely (Chatterton and Hollands 2002; Hollands 2002; Grazian 2009). Indeed, participants in Hollands' (2002: 163) study encountered 'no such difficulty in identifying different nightlife spaces inhabited by different nightlife groupings'. Accordingly, access to and use of licensed spaces is more compartmentalised and segregated according to certain social-structural factors than some post-structuralist accounts would suggest. A variety of factors, such as ethnicity (Buford-May and Chaplin 2008; Grazian 2009), class, or socio-economic status (Chatterton and Hollands 2002; Hollands 2002), sexual orientation (Hutton 2006; Lindsay 2006), gender (Browne 2004; Lindsay 2006; Grazian 2009), and the commercial nature of (some) licensed venues (Hollands 2002; Hutton 2006; Lindsay 2006), continue to shape and restrain young adults' access to licensed venues. This can limit the social spaces available to partake in identity performance and the types of identity young people are able to perform within licensed venues.

Venues can enact a range of strategies to shape the boundaries of who belongs within their space. For instance, many venues have established dress codes that function to limit who can gain access to venues, and that influence who feels comfortable within in a certain venue once entry has been gained. Security staff play a key gate-keeping role in determining who is 'suitable' to patronise a specific venue. A host of legislative and other policy initiatives also regulate venues, most infamously in a Victorian context through the recent 2am lockout initiative (Hadfield and Measham 2009; Miller et al. 2012; Palmer and Warren 2014; Zajdow 2011).[1] These gate-keeping, regulatory, and surveillance mechanisms, as well as the promotion of commercial interests, all indicate that licensed venues are a heavily controlled and structured space.

Once entry to a venue has been gained, patrons often police the boundaries of belonging, particularly around the 'appropriate' expression of gender and sexuality. For instance, Browne (2004) documents the policing of gender in women's bathrooms, whereby women who disrupt or disturb the 'presumed naturalness of the man-masculinity/women-femininity binary … may find themselves subject to abusive comments, exclusions and physical violence' (2004: 332). In this example, those who transgress the prescribed gender or sex norms of a venue may find themselves ostracised by other patrons. Similarly, Hutton's (2006) work illustrates that women engaging in same-sex sexual interaction in clubs can face heterosexist responses from other club patrons, particularly if their gender performance is not suitably 'feminine' enough (Hutton 2006).

The potential for heterosexist responses from other venue patrons has serious implications for the ways in which LGBTIQ people can use and access venues, as Chap. 2 began to illustrate. LGBTIQ individuals may take steps to disguise their sexual orientation or gender identity and 'pass' as heterosexual. Indeed, as Chatterton and Hollands (2003: 149) observe, 'gay men and lesbians generally only really experience dominant mainstream spaces as "invisible gays"'. However, pubs and clubs can also play a positive role in LGBTIQ communities by providing a space for same-sex attracted individuals to explore their sexual identity, to connect with the LGBTIQ communities, to engage in sexual interaction, or to search for a short-term or long-term partner (Gruskin et al. 2006; Parks 1999). Thus, it is vitally important to consider the specific venue context at hand. Licensed venues consist of culturally diverse spaces, and not all individuals will experience all venues as welcoming or spaces of belonging at all times. Rather, as Moran and Skeggs remind us, safety (of which belonging is a key component) is 'always a matter of location: of being in and out of place' (2004: 6).

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[1] The 2am lockout strategy was introduced in Victoria in response to moral panics over the levels of drunkenness and physical violence in the Melbourne CBD. Under the 2am lockout, venues were prohibited from letting patrons enter after 2am (Burgess 2008). This was ostensibly in order to prevent large numbers of drunken youth wandering the city looking for new venues to go to, and fighting with each other in the process. It also aimed to curb binge drinking (Burgess 2008). The lockout strategy was later abandoned, as physical assaults increased during its 3-month trial period (Rennie 2008). Similar strategies were trialed in Queensland (Palk et al. 2010).

Where Do I Belong? Cultural Capital and the Production of Belonging

How do young people come to experience a sense of belonging within a particular venue space? What interactions or processes of recognition occur between patrons, the symbolic cultural markers, and social interactions within a space to produce feelings of belonging/non-belonging, or comfort/discomfort (or some state in between)? Bourdieu's work on 'the politics of taste' provides a useful starting point here by offering 'a framework for understanding the ways in which aesthetics, consumption, and lifestyle are all part of the struggle for social distinction' (Rooke 2007: 240). Bourdieu views human practice and taste in consumable goods (such as attending a licensed venue) as being shaped by individual 'habitus', access to capital, and the rules of the 'field' (Bourdieu 1984: 95).

Habitus, according to Bourdieu, is defined by two capacities: 'the capacity to produce classifiable practices and works, and the capacity to differentiate and appreciate these practices and products (taste)' (1984: 166). The capacity to 'differentiate and appreciate' social and cultural goods is tied to learned bodily practices. As Rooke explains, 'it is found in bodily disposition and deportment, hence learned behaviour and the cultural reproduction of distinction are rendered natural, inherent, and therefore legitimate' (2007: 240). Lawler (2004: 111) describes habitus as 'a "second sense", "practical sense" or "second nature" that equips social actors with a practical "know-how"'. It manifests itself through corporeal presentation, embodied practices and speech acts (Lawler 2004: 111). Yet one's habitus does not strictly determine outcome. Lawler describes it as 'generative' rather than determining, as 'the dynamic character of the social world' prevents habitus from being reproduced 'perfectly' (2004: 112).

This suggests that, first and foremost, developing a sense of belonging in (or even accessing) certain licensed venues is likely to be tied to the learned (though seemingly natural) ability to 'differentiate and appreciate' the specific cultural milieu of specific 'types' of venue. Thus, specific genres of licensed venues can be 'understood as cultural milieus, or what Bourdieu describes as fields, where a field specific … habitus is performed and interpellated and reiterated' (Rooke 2007: 240). Additionally, a sense of belonging in, and being able to access, clubs and pubs is likely to rely on access to relevant social, economic, and cultural capital (access which is, again, mediated by one's habitus).

The type of venue that young people identify with and feel a sense of belonging in will be shaped by their habitus. For example, we may see class-based differences in the use of and access to venues, and in terms of which venues are seen as desirable spaces to inhabit. A sense of belonging relies on young people being able to understand and enact the desired or dominant bodily performances in different venue spaces, or 'cultural fields'. Young people must also possess the requisite cultural, social and economic capital to be able to wear the right clothing, know the right people, and, of course, afford to get in to a desired venue. In this way, young people may self-select which venues they attend, and their habitus is likely to subtly influence which venues they find appealing. It may also influence how formal and informal social controls operating within venues are used. So, for example, those lacking the relevant cultural capital/competence to adhere to the correct dress code of a venue may be more likely to be excluded from entry.

Community, Friendship and Safety

How do these concepts of community and belonging play a role in perceptions of safety and unwanted sexual attention? In the remainder of this chapter, I will explore the role that these concepts played in shaping participants' discussions and experiences of safety and of unwanted sexual attention. Clubs and pubs are often portrayed as 'risky' or 'dangerous' spaces, particularly in relation to physical violence and alcohol-related harms. Yet it is not necessarily clear that young adults feel unsafe or 'at risk' when accessing venues. Indeed, the young people in this study predominantly indicated that they either 'usually' or 'always' felt safe in the venues that they usually go to (see Table 3.1). Perceptions of safety were also, and unsurprisingly, gendered. Male-identified participants were more likely to 'always' feel safe, while female-identified participants were more likely to report that they 'usually' feel safe in venues (refer to Fileborn 2015a, for a more detailed exploration of the interplay of gender and safety in venues).

Taken at face value, this suggests that feeling unsafe is not a major issue for young people when attending licensed venues (see also Brands and Schwanen 2014; Miller et al. 2012). However, as we will see, feeling 'safe' in clubs and pubs is considerably more complex than this. It will become apparent in the ensuing discussion that, while many people did indeed generally feel safe using venues, feeling safe was not necessarily a 'natural' or pre-given state of being. Rather, young people felt safe as a result of the often seemingly natural choices that they made about which venues to attend, or the strategies they employed throughout the course of a night. Safety was actively achieved or produced by participants (see Fileborn 2015b). What it means to feel or be safe is closely linked to place and identity (Brands and Schwanen 2014; Corteen 2002; Lees and Baxter 2011; Moore and Breeze 2012). This also suggests that what needs to occur to feel safe is likely to shift across different temporal, geographic, and cultural contexts. Corteen argues that 'the concept of safety, in terms of what it means, to whom and in what context, is … inextricably complicated' (2002: 266), and this encapsulates the findings of the research in regards to safety in licensed venues.

The connection between friendship and safety was a central theme to arise from the survey and focus group data. Young adults used

Table 3.1 How safe did participants feel in the venues they usually go to? All survey participants

Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never	Total
29.3 %, *n* = 68	62.9 %, *n* = 146	6 %, *n* = 14	0.9 %, *n* = 2	*N* = 230

clubs and pubs primarily as a social space to spend time with their friends. Conversely, much smaller (though not insignificant) numbers of young people said that they used venues to meet new people or to ‘pick up’—with men and LGBTIQ individuals more likely to say they use venues for this purpose. This suggests that friendship is central to a certain kind of night out, and clubs and pubs are functioning for the most part as a social site for interaction with pre-formed friendship groups, rather than as a space to initiate new social relationships (see also Fileborn 2012b). However, given that the overwhelming majority of participants indicated more than one reason for going out, and sometimes provided seemingly contradictory reasons for going out, such as spending time with friends *and* meeting new people, there are likely to be a range of contextual factors that influence what young people decide to do on any given night.

Whatever the explicit reason for going out, being with friends played a strong role in promoting a sense of safety in a venue (see also Corteen 2002; Miller et al. 2012). Friendship groups can themselves be understood as a micro-community within the broader venue community, and one that was privileged by young people. Thus, there are multiple communities within venues at any given time, and not all of these communities are given the same weight or level of importance as others. For example, the following comments from survey participants typified responses to the question of what made them feel safe on a night out:

> Being in a group of friends, going to a place where I know a lot of people there. (Survey participant, heterosexual woman)
>
> Presence of good friends willing to keep an eye on each other. (Survey participant, bisexual woman)

Conversely, young adults often associated being separated from friends, or going out alone, with feeling unsafe in venues. For instance, a bisexual female survey participant said that she feels unsafe ‘if I can’t find my friends’. Club-goers generally avoided going out to venues alone (with a few exceptions). While this was partially because venues were utilised as a social space, it was also clear that friends were seen to act as a ‘safety net’:

> **Elise**: Being with people that you know is … your, like, net … I don't really go out alone … I don't know that many people that go out alone. (FG1)

There was a belief that friends would look out for you, and intervene if anything problematic or threatening occurred (see also, Brooks 2011; Graham et al. 2010; Hutton 2006; Northcote 2006). For focus group participant Laura, it was important to have a sober friend with her who was there 'to observe, to make sure nothing goes wrong'. The ability of friends to provide a safety net was also contingent on them having an understanding of someone's 'normal' or usual behaviour, as well as their desires when going out that night. Of course, the belief that being with friends contributes towards safety is based on the assumption that one's friends are, firstly, willing and able to engage in this supervision, and, secondly, that one's friends are not the *source* of problematic or threatening behaviours (Brooks 2011). Valentine (1989: 387) argues that this process of informal social control is more effective where 'people have strong social and family ties', and this supports the notion that friends are likely to provide this 'safety net'.

For many young people it was clear that, as one bisexual female survey participant commented, '*a sense of a community* which will look out for one another' (my emphasis) was integral to their sense of safety. That is, participants perceived they were safe because there was an atmosphere of assumed mutual care and respect between patrons. Being with friends, as discussed above, was a core component of this. For many LGBTIQ young adults, there was a sense of community created in LGBTIQ venues through the (assumed) shared experience of homophobia and intolerance encountered in other spaces. This was viewed as making LGBTIQ spaces more friendly and welcoming, by not perpetuating the discrimination faced elsewhere by these groups:

> **Laura**: It's just a more, more friendly, more open-minded sort of vibe in there, and you can get away with being a lot more eccentric. (FG7)

That is, a *relational* sense of community is generated through the assumed shared experiences of young LGBTIQ people. Similarly, Clementine reported finding gay and lesbian venues to be safer spaces where she was less likely to encounter harassment or aggressive behaviour. In this instance, a sense of community resulted from the exclusion many LGBTIQ youth faced in other social spaces, which strengthened the sense of group cohesion felt in LGBTIQ venues by these individuals (see also Gruskin et al. 2006; Lugosi 2009; Parks 1999). Here, a sense of community relates as much to the perception that other patrons will not engage in harmful behaviour as to the perception that others are actively looking out for you. However, some LGBTIQ participants did experience various forms of harmful and aggressive behaviour in LGBTIQ venues, and others experienced queer venues as sites of exclusion. I return to these tensions later in the chapter.

Interestingly, for some individuals feeling 'safe' on account of the belief that 'someone' (whether friends or staff) was looking out for you contributed towards them engaging in 'riskier' behaviours:

> **Alex**: If you're with people that you sort of trust to say something if something's not working, or not happening, or shouldn't be happening, then I guess I'm more likely to feel safe and therefore consume more, which possibly puts me further at risk. (FG2)

There was something of a 'safety paradox' apparent here, with the perception of safety generated through a sense of community actually placing young people potentially 'at risk' of something negative happening. That is, *feeling* safe in a venue did not always equate to actually *being* safe within a venue. For instance, friends and other known people are often a source of danger or threat, particularly in the case of sexual violence, despite those individuals also playing the role of carer or guardian (ABS 2006; Day 2001; Hollander 2001; Valentine 1989).[2] In this case, being with friends and 'feeling' safe does not necessarily mean the threat of danger, or physical/emotional harm, has been removed. Alex's comments further illuminate the fluid and context-dependent nature of 'safety' in venues: a sense of community can be productive of both safety and danger or risk as the night evolves. Jayne et al. (2010) draw attention to the use of alcohol, for example, as a strategy *for* safety and 'adult play' within particular contexts. For instance, the consumption of alcohol can facilitate a sense of group belonging and social ease. Yet, as the night, intoxication level, and social context progress, alcohol consumption has the potential to present a form of risk—with a prime example in the context of this research being that highly intoxicated individuals in licensed venues may become the targets of sexual predators (refer to Chap. 5 for more on alcohol and unwanted sexual attention).

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[2] Likewise, Hollander (2001) documents a similar paradox, drawing our attention to the fact that men tend to report feeling safe in public spaces despite actually being at higher risk of encountering (physical) violence than women.

A sense of community was also derived from being in a venue where participants perceived that staff had a sense of care and responsibility towards patrons. Respondents made comments indicating that they felt safer in venues where they believed staff were concerned about the safety of their patrons:

> When there is a safer-spaces policy in a venue when it is a queer night. (Survey participant, lesbian/queer woman)
>
> When the bar staff seem to care about their venue and patrons rather than trying to just look cool. (Survey participant, heterosexual male)

While for the lesbian/queer survey participant this sense of staff 'caring' about patrons was linked to having identifiable policies around safety, in many other cases it was unclear exactly what having staff care about patrons' wellbeing and safety actually involved in practice. Nonetheless, these comments illustrate the premium placed on a sense of community in producing a sense of safety, at least by some participants. Having venue staff 'looking out for you' arguably fulfils a number of McMillan and Chavis (1986) components of community, in particular a sense of mattering to the community. However, for many other young people, venue staff, and particularly security staff, diminished their sense of safety in a venue:

> Security guards are rude and often useless. (Survey participant, heterosexual male)
>
> Sleazy bouncers (actually most bouncers seem dodgy, actually, I don't even like going to places with bouncers). (Survey participant, heterosexual woman)

Spaces where participants did not feel they were being 'looked out' for by security and staff were often associated with feeling unsafe. In some instances this was the result of security staff having actively engaged in behaviour that negated someone's safety, including perpetrating unwanted sexual attention. Others indicated that they viewed security staff as being there to protect the interests of the venue, and not the well-being of patrons (see also Tomkins 2005). Consequently, for these individuals having security staff present did little to enhance their sense of community and, subsequently, safety. Indeed, the need for bouncers at venues was seen by some young adults as signifying a lack of community amongst patrons. Having bouncers present indicated that the patrons in a venue (or trying to enter the venue) might be inclined to act in an anti-social or violent manner, negating the sense of community in the venue.

Further, as Matshinhe (2009) articulates, bouncers function as a form of social control in venues. Bouncers engage in a means of corporeal presentation that 'symbolically threatens patrons and stimulates fear in them' (2009: 129; see also Monaghan 2002: 413). As such, bouncers may represent to patrons the limitations or boundaries of the hedonism and fun of venues (Monaghan 2002: 412). They may at times be positioned as oppositional to the venue's community, rather than representing a form of community protection. The role of bouncers as the gatekeepers of venues, determining which bodies are 'suitable' to gain entry to a venue, places bouncers in a position where they can mould the contours of the venue community (Hobbs et al. 2003: 120; Monaghan 2002; Moran and Skeggs 2004). That is, bouncers can play a significant role in setting the boundaries for who belongs (or who *can* belong) in a venue space at any given time.

However, venue staff are not the sole creators of a sense of community. As I illustrated earlier in this chapter, patrons play a key role as gatekeepers to a venue's community. Other patrons, according to Matshinhe (2009: 129), 'monitor each other's behaviour and disapprove of each other's taking things too far'. This suggests that venue communities are in fact in a constant state of flux and contestation. Patrons are continually in a state of establishing (or performing) their role as community members, with a failure to do so likely to result in exclusion from the community (Hadfield and Measham 2009; Lugosi 2009). Social exclusion from a venue's community could occur through subtle means, for example by simply being ignored by those around you, or through more overt measures, such as verbal comments and confrontation.

As noted above, venue staff and security were also identified as being the perpetrators of unwanted sexual attention or as encouraging the occurrence, of unwanted sexual attention (see also, Watson 2000). Venue staff can thus actively create an environment where unwanted sexual attention is acceptable, normal behaviour, greatly diminishing any sense of care and community within the venue. It was also difficult for young adults to 'do anything' about unwanted sexual attention from staff other than leave the venue. However, there was also great variation in the perceived attitudes of staff and security across different venue types: some venues were seen to respond extremely well to unwanted sexual attention, while others responded extremely poorly (see also Kavanaugh and Anderson 2009). Further, one survey participant suggested that some venues may purposefully not create a 'safe', community-focused space based on the perceived needs or desires of their clientele.[3] It is, of course, important to remember that not all young adults seek the same experience when they go out at night. Young people are a diverse group, and will have different understandings of what it means to feel safe or unsafe, or to feel a sense of community. Any attempts to develop 'safe' venue spaces need to be multifaceted, and targeted towards the particular needs of the clientele that patronise a specific venue. It may not be possible to create a venue space that is experienced as safe and welcoming by all patrons at all times.

Belonging, Culture, and the 'Other'

For participants in this study, feeling as though they belonged in a venue, and that they understood and related to the culture of a venue and its patrons was fundamental to their sense of safety, well-being and how unwanted sexual attention was understood and experienced. Understanding the culture of a venue, and the 'rules of the game', was key to promoting feelings of safety. That is, understanding and relating to other patrons, but also being aware of the relevant behavioural, social, sartorial, and attitudinal norms allowed club-goers to feel that they 'belonged' in a venue (and to be recognised by other patrons as belonging in that space—Northcote 2006; Rooke 2007), and was often directly implicated in feeling safe. A sense of belonging, and of relating to a specific venue culture, was often so ingrained that some young people struggled to clearly articulate what these concepts entailed. As one young woman said about what makes her feel safe on a night out:

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[3] In this instance, this participant was referring to niche subcultural groups, such as S and M venues.

> It's instinctive and I cannot explain the exact reasons. But if [I] try to analyse my own behaviours, it's usually in places where the venue is pleasant ...the crowd has a good balance of guys and girls, groups of people rather than singles drinking at the bar. (Survey participant, heterosexual woman)

A sense of belonging was also derived from the perception that other people in a venue were of a similar social and cultural background to themselves:

> **Edwin:** I think it's probably the class of people that you're around … *even subconsciously* I think we all go to venues where we're very much like the people that are there … I think it's just that I stay away from places that … I wouldn't enjoy. (FG6, my emphasis)

Edwin's comment suggests that young people acquire cultural knowledge about venues that allows them to select places where other patrons are of a similar social and cultural group to oneself. That is, young adults develop what Rooke refers to as a 'field-specific' habitus that allows them to function successfully as social actors within their preferred venue space (2007: 240). However, it is also clear from Edwin's observations that young adults' broader social and cultural backgrounds influence the type of venue that they gravitate towards. For example, Edwin's reference to having a 'social basis' on which to connect indicates that being able to 'belong' in a venue extends beyond developing the requisite venue-specific habitus.

Parks (1999: 137–138) describes cultural knowledge as being 'transmitted across generations by learning'. While the learning or acquirement of knowledge of venue cultures is not necessarily generational, it is nonetheless a learned process (Hadfield and Measham 2009). This learning is a subtle process, occurring over time such that young people acquire (seemingly) 'ingrained' knowledge of venue culture that allows them to make these 'natural' choices about where to go, and how to act once they are within the desired venue space. However, for other young people who have not acquired such knowledge (either because of their age, lack of exposure to, or involvement in, the night-time economy, or lack of social and cultural capital), it may be more difficult to actively choose venues in a way that consistently fosters feelings of belonging and, subsequently, safety. For instance, focus group participant Noni expressed her frustration at her lack of the relevant cultural knowledge that would allow her to locate venues in Melbourne where other people were 'like' her.

However, while perceptions of community and belonging contributed towards feelings of safety, many participants also stated that they valued personal space and not having to interact with other patrons in a venue.[4] The premium placed on these factors suggests that a sense of community, and a perception that you are 'like' other patrons, is to some extent 'imagined' to adapt Benedict Anderson's concept. That is, such perceptions are based on young people's projected ideas about what the other patrons in a venue are like, as opposed to being based on social interaction. Indeed, Anderson characterises communities as being imagined on the basis that 'members … will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (1991: 15; see also Volkan 2009). For instance, one heterosexual male survey respondent commented that 'friendly, but not intrusive, strangers' contributed towards him feeling safe in venues. Another heterosexual female survey participant felt safe in venues where other patrons were 'minding their own business and interacting politely and just trying to enjoy themselves without affecting the enjoyment of others'. Lugosi labels this sense of belonging and collective identity as the 'myth of commonality' (2009: 406). There are in fact 'sharp enactments of group boundaries and exclusion' (Lugosi 2009: 406) in clubs and pubs, with these boundaries being enacted in this case through a reluctance or refusal to socially interact with other patrons.

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[4] These themes around personal space and control will be developed in Chap. 6.

That said, young people may rely on a range of symbolic cues, such as clothing and bodily presentation, to determine if a person is 'like' them in lieu of more direct forms of interaction. Rooke (2007), for example, identified bodily performance and presentation as being fundamental to belonging and to demonstrating cultural competence within a specific club or pub (see also Arvanitidou and Gasouka 2011; Jaimangal-Jones et al. 2010; Northcote 2006: 8–9). Thus, a sense of belonging may be created through similarity in the presentation of self, or in the use of a venue to engage in specific sub-cultural activities (such as to see a band play a specific genre of music, or to participate in a particular style of dancing). If this is the case, then direct interpersonal interaction with other patrons may be unnecessary to create a sense of belonging. However, as we saw earlier, the assumption that other community members interpret or value these symbolic cues in a similar way is a fraught one at best.

Relatedly, inhabiting a venue space where club-goers interpreted these symbolic cues to mean that other patrons were not 'like' them was often associated with feeling unsafe or, at the very least, uncomfortable or out of place in a venue. The sense that others are like or not like them is, according to McMillan and Chavis (1986: 9), essential to defining a sense of belonging and community as it forms the social boundaries of a group (see also Cohen 1985; Dalal 2009). Focus group participant Florence suggested that feeling out of place in a venue would affect her psychological, as opposed to physical, safety, as she would feel uncomfortable but not necessarily physically threatened in any way. This draws attention to the multi-faceted nature of safety as a state of being. It is not sufficient to conceptualise safety as relating only to *physical* well-being, or the presence/absence of physical harm. Perceptions of safety are also mediated by a range of emotional or affective states. Any efforts to improve patron safety in pubs and clubs should take into account the need to enhance feelings of well-being and belonging as much as they focus on efforts to reduce physical and sexual violence.

'Us Versus Them': Negotiating Belonging in Venues

A lack of belonging was often expressed through an 'us versus them' dynamic, or an 'othering' of people who participants thought were not like them (McMillan and Chavis 1986: 10). For example, a number of survey respondents commented that being around a crowd that they would not 'usually' socialise with would make them feel unsafe, and a fear of the unknown has been identified more generally as influencing perceptions of safety in public spaces (Day et al. 2003). The othering of venue patrons was commonly achieved through the employment of derogatory language or labels:

> If there are dickheads around, I wouldn't feel safe. Being in a group, and going to venues that attract nice and friendly people is the key! (Survey participant, heterosexual male)
>
> Drunk bogans and I'm not just saying that to be funny. Most of my friends are into the indie scene so we're a little left of centre I guess and when I come across the clubbing crowd and the likes that's when I feel most ill at ease. (Survey participant, heterosexual male)

The implication here is that the participants themselves are not 'creepy', 'bogans', or 'dickheads', though it is not necessarily clear from these comments exactly what characteristics the labels refer to (although 'bogan' is undoubtedly a class-related insult in Australia, with this term typically reserved for those from a lower socio-economic background). This suggests that young adults are using what they assume to be implicitly understood or shared language in distancing themselves from other club patrons and constructing the boundaries of community belonging (that is, the language of 'us'). Participants are operationalising such language to construct their own identity as much as they seek to define the other. Volkan (2009: 4) argues that we use others to establish our own identity 'by focusing on our undesirable differences from others and for owning feelings of envy and jealousy'. Subsequently, we also define our identity based on our (perceived) *desirable* differences from undesirable others (Dalal 2009; Singer 2009: 36).

For other individuals, the process of othering was related to more tangible qualities or attitudes:

> When I feel like there is the presence of sexism, racism, heterosexism, queerphobia, any sort of fuckheadry when people are being antagonistic. (Survey participant, queer woman)
>
> People who go to the venues with the intention of gay bashing or causing trouble based on sexuality. (Survey participant, lesbian woman)

In such instances, a lack of belonging is quite explicitly demonstrated through the use of abusive or violent behaviour to exclude LGBTIQ people from a particular venue. These comments also reaffirm why many LGBTIQ young people value queer venues, and why they present these as spaces of community and belonging based on shared gender or sexual identity(s). Yet such comments also function as a form of identity performance and boundary setting (Fileborn 2015b; Moran and Skeggs 2004). That is, they actively work to construct queer communities as 'safe', and they work to form boundaries of belonging as 'a practice of *exclusion*, of that which is a threat to good order: straights' (Moran and Skeggs 2004: 62).

However, as Rooke (2007) demonstrates in her examination of newly 'out' lesbian and bisexual women's use of lesbian venues, merely identifying as LGBTIQ is by itself not enough to guarantee a sense of belonging in an LGBTIQ-specific venue. Rather, one must also be able to competently perform the requisite bodily practices (for example, styles of dress, speech, and interaction) in order to belong, and to be recognised as belonging, in an LGBTIQ space (Rooke 2007). Additionally, not all LGBTIQ venue users felt threatened by, or linked their sense of safety more specifically to, heterosexist abuse or to their identity as LGBTIQ:

> **Alex:** I've been brought up with this very clear distinction between gay men and straight men, sort of the 'us and them' mentality … and they don't like us.
>
> **Benjamin:** I don't have the same experience. I don't feel more or less safe based on gender, sexuality. (FG2)

Alex and Benjamin's exchange illustrates that the experience (or perceived threat) of heterosexism is not a universal one amongst members of the LGBTIQ community, although it was certainly a common theme amongst this group of participants. Benjamin's comments may also be related to his particular performance of masculinity. Benjamin asserted consistently throughout the focus group that he was never fearful when utilising the city at night. Thus, it may be that Benjamin does not associate his sense of safety with his gender or sexual orientation because he does not (openly) associate *anything* with his sense of safety; feeling safe was a purportedly constant state of being for him. His remarks are largely consistent with previous research investigating men's fear of crime and fear in public spaces, which identifies men as downplaying or denying fear as a means of performing (hegemonic) masculinity (Day 2001; Mehta and Bondi 1999; Sandberg and Tollefsen 2010; Sutton and Farrall 2005). Benjamin's comments also draw attention to the fact that there exists a range of factors related to personal identity, learned knowledge of a space, and so on, that mediate the emotional experiences an individual has in a particular space. Sexual orientation is not the only factor of relevance here. Indeed, it is likely that the salient factors influencing emotional responses, such as fear, vary according to the specific spatial and social context.

Young adults also reported experiencing violence and abuse from people who were 'like them', and some participants did not experience venues that were targeted towards them as welcoming. Being 'like' other patrons does not automatically equate to being safe (although it may have made participants *feel* safe). Those whom we perceive to be 'like' us, or who are close to us, can also be a site of threat or harm. For example, as discussed earlier, the sense of shared identity in LGBTIQ venues often contributed towards the perception of safety in these venues. However, LGBTIQ venues can function as a site of exclusion for some LGBTIQ individuals (for instance, because they are unable to adequately perform recognisable embodiments of 'being' LGBTIQ). Exclusion functions to 'deflate the promises of affinity, validation, common understanding, and *belonging*' that these venues purport to offer (Rooke 2007: 248, my emphasis). The perception of LGBTIQ venues as being safe was also contested by the experiences of one queer female survey respondent, who said she frequently encountered aggressive and sexually unwanted behaviour in queer venue spaces. LGBTIQ spaces were not always welcoming towards all members of these communities, with lesbian and bisexual women in particular feeling excluded from venue spaces that were often targeted towards gay males (see also Chatterton and Hollands 2003; Moran and

Skeggs 2004). Further, young people may relate to a range of factors within a venue's culture and environment, and being LGBTIQ friendly is not always the most salient feature of a venue:

> **Benjamin**: I'd probably feel less welcome in a gay venue … it's not so much about sexuality as about culture and what kind of group and people you hang out with and stuff. (FG2)

In this instance Benjamin appears not to relate to the culture of gay and lesbian venues, instead placing more emphasis on other (unnamed) cultural aspects of his social group outside of their sexuality, and this decreases his sense of belonging within these spaces. Similarly, Lugosi's (2009) study of gay and lesbian venue spaces found that not all gay and lesbian participants related to the cultural signifiers used in these venues (such as displaying the rainbow flag), which tended to discourage those individuals from accessing these spaces. Alternative readings of certain environmental cues or signifiers can disrupt attempts to create spaces that are 'inclusive' of certain groups or cultural practices.

The Social Distancing of Venues and Unwanted Sexual Attention

How did a sense of community and belonging, or lack thereof, influence how young adults experienced or perceived unwanted sexual attention? Young adults' perceptions of unwanted sexual attention changed quite notably depending upon how they related to and understood a venue's culture. Many of the young people in this project thought that unwanted sexual attention would occur in venues that they did not tend to go to. As Mary said, unwanted sexual attention would not happen in the venues 'where I spend my time now'. Unwanted sexual attention, as Tyner observes of the locations of violence, 'is something that happens to someone else, someplace else; not us, and certainly not here' (2012: 2). Such claims work to produce or construct the groups and spaces young people identify with as 'safe'. Some young people would make such claims even when they conflicted with their personal experiences of unwanted sexual attention. This appeared to be functioning as something of a coping mechanism, to allow these individuals to believe that they were safe in the venues they frequented. For example, one focus group participant discussed the types of venues within which unwanted sexual attention would occur, in the following manner:

> **Noni**: I was going to say nightclubs I guess … it's more where … it's later in the night, you've probably been drinking more, there's … more people and it's … dancing and that sort of thing. Whereas … I would be really surprised if it happened at … the local pub. (FG4)

While Noni believes that unwanted sexual attention would be unlikely to occur in a pub, she later goes on to recount a first-hand experience of encountering unwanted sexual attention in a pub:

> **Noni**: I was at … the local pub that we always go to with … friends and there was a guy who … kept asking me to dance and it's not really a dancing place … he was just like 'oh, I really want to dance with you.' And I was just like 'oh, I've got a boyfriend' … it was more just really uncomfortable and actually … I was quite embarrassed and felt bad for the guy because he was really persistent. (FG4)

There is a clear disjuncture here between where Noni perceives unwanted sexual attention takes place and where her actual experiences reside. It may also be the case that young people experience or interpret unwanted sexual attention differently depending on the venue setting it takes place in (that is, as noted in Chap. 2, context matters when it comes to young adults' experiences of unwanted sexual attention). If a young person feels comfortable and safe in a pub setting, then any experiences of unwanted sexual attention they receive in a pub may be interpreted as less threatening because of this. The combination of a sense of community and a feeling of belonging reduce the perceived threat and/or harm of unwanted sexual attention. Further, the presence of protective factors such as a partner or a large group of friends may also reduce the perceived threat of an unwanted advance. This is assuming, of course, that the unwanted attention is perpetrated by a stranger. It is less clear how unwanted sexual attention from a friend or other 'known' person may be received in such a setting.

Conversely, venues that an individual does not generally associate with, or feel comfortable in, may be more readily associated with unwanted sexual attention (or with more *harmful* forms of unwanted sexual attention). Royal (2011: 409) contends that 'preconceived notions play a role in how individuals perceive a threat'. Thus, objects, places or people 'about whom people have negative feelings about … are seen as larger risks than those with which they affiliate positive feelings' (Royal 2011: 409). As such, an individual's preconceived notions of a particular venue, or type of venue, are likely to influence how they perceive unwanted sexual attention within that space. If an individual does not use a certain style of venue, such as nightclubs, on a regular basis they have less of a vested interest in constructing that space as safe, and are thus more able to identify and openly discuss harmful occurrences within those spaces without challenging or disrupting their own sense of identity and belonging within a particular venue space.

In some instances, the ways in which young people related to a particular venue and its culture shaped the ways in which they understood and represented their experiences of unwanted attention and sexual violence. A number of interviewees made comments indicating that they did not relate to the culture of the venue they had been assaulted in:

> **Brianna**: It was a bit more of a sports bar as well … I'm much more comfortable in an Irish bar where it's live music and it's [a] workers crowd, whereas this is much more shady characters.
>
> **Dana**: There's a really kind of tense, testosterone filled, sleazy, disgusting vibe.

Here, these women position the venues they were assaulted in as either disconnected from their 'usual' experiences, or as not being places that they would otherwise 'choose' to inhabit. Distancing themselves from the venues may also serve a useful social function for victim/survivors. The site of their sexual assault is distanced, and the spaces and social groups they 'usually' associate with can continue to be viewed as safe. As Pain (1991) documents, women's fear of sexual violation directly impacts on their use of public spaces (see also, Stanko 1990; Valentine 1989). The process of distancing themselves from the spaces where unwanted sexual attention occurs can be viewed as a mechanism used by these young women for actively resisting this impingement on their access to, and use of, clubs and pubs.

Brianna's experiences of sexual violence in pubs and clubs provide a particularly striking example of the role that a sense of belonging can play in mediating how victim/survivors make sense of the role of venue culture in facilitating sexual violence. Brianna shared two experiences of sexual violence that involved a licensed venue setting. Her perceptions of the venue's responsibility for what happened to her varied dramatically based upon how she related to each venue's culture. In her first experience of sexual violence, referred to in the comments above, Brianna saw the culture of the venue (which she did not relate to) as facilitating her assault, particularly through the venue's attitudes towards sexual interaction and service of alcohol (which are addressed more fully in Chap. 4 and 5 respectively). However, alcohol also played a significant role in Brianna's second experience of sexual violence, with the venue she was in also appearing to tolerate extreme intoxication:

> **Brianna**: I went on a date with this guy and I still to this day don't really know if I was date raped, I can't remember what happened and it didn't seem like a lot of alcohol that I'd drunk and it was one of those kind of blind dates, and someone again I was not particularly interested in but you kind of run along with it to be polite, and then before you know it you're drinking too much alcohol to kind of really get yourself out of the situation.

In this instance, however, Brianna related to the venue culture in a more positive way, and downplayed the role that the venue setting played in facilitating the sexual assault:

> **Brianna**: It was … a really nice restaurant. It was quite fancy so … I can't really say that it was the venue's fault.

The inconsistency that is apparent here makes it to some extent difficult to fully account for the role that venue culture might be playing in facilitating sexual violence. That is, how club-goers discuss venue culture and the role that it plays depends heavily on how they relate to and understand that venue's culture. It is not clear whether such accounts inform us of the role that venue culture is playing, or about the individual's particular view or understanding of that venue culture (or, probably, both).

In contrast to Brianna and Dana, Clementine experienced unwanted sexual attention in a venue setting that she did feel a sense of belonging within. In Clementine's narrative she makes a number of comments that serve to set apart the night that she was assaulted as 'different' or 'other' to what 'usually' happens in this venue (or, more specifically, to what 'usually' happens in venues hosting gay and lesbian nights, as opposed to the physical venue space itself). For example, Clementine and her partner had attended the venue together, and prior to going to the venue they had discussed whether they would attend, as 'it's not really our scene to go there together'. The other patrons in the venue were also depicted by Clementine as 'different' from what one would usually encounter at a gay and lesbian night:

> **Clementine**: There was … quite a unusual mix of men and women. So it was sort of half-half, which you don't usually see in gay venues there's usually predominantly … one sex or the other at those venues.

On this particular night, the venue was hosting a Halloween-themed costume party. The use of costumes symbolise a 'different' environment from usual, in the sense that Halloween costumes are not what might be considered standard attire in clubs and pubs. Costumes may allow individuals to assume a different identity or personality (Joseph 1986: 184), and they facilitate a sense of anonymity: for example, through the use of grotesque masks or face make-up/painting, making it difficult to recognise individuals (Levinson et al. 1992; Mueller et al. 2007). The use of costume 'signal[s] a departure from conventional interaction', and a 'suspension of the usual norms' (Joseph 1986: 183) of a social space (see also Mueller et al. 2007). The venue culture is consequently transformed into a carnivalesque and hedonistic environment or, at least, even more so than usual (Joseph 1986: 183). Together, these factors allow Clementine to construct this particular night as 'other' and outside the realm of her usual venue experience.

Clementine's 'othering' of the venue that night is particularly significant as it was also clear throughout her narrative that she viewed gay and lesbian-friendly venues as one of the only safe spaces for her and her partner to openly engage in sexual interaction and affectionate behaviour in public, and that she valued them highly as a social space. Thus, the process of 'othering' the venue on the night of her assault allows Clementine to maintain her perception of, and to actively produce, these venues as a 'safe' space for her. A similar process is at play in Brianna's reconfiguring of the role of the 'classy' venue in one of her assaults.

More broadly, and as highlighted in the previous chapter, LGBTIQ young people reported experiencing unwanted sexual attention in a range of venue types and contexts. This included instances of unwanted sexual attention occurring in gay and lesbian venues, and being perpetrated by individuals identified as members of the LGBTIQ communities. Such experiences challenge and disrupt the idea that gay and lesbian spaces are always safe and inclusive. Interestingly, gay and lesbian-specific venues were often discussed as being safe and inclusive despite the occurrence of unwanted sexual attention in these venues. Safety, in this context, appears to refer to the ability to freely express one's gender identity or sexual orientation, rather than the absence of sexual or physical harm. Queer venues represent 'a site of cultural resistance where one can overcome, though never ignore, the fear of heterosexism and homophobia' (Myslik 1996: 168). It is apparent here that there are multiple conceptualisations of safety in operation on a night out, though these undoubtedly also intersect and shade in and out of one another. This suggests it is more productive to consider the *safeties* of young people on a night out in striving to create safer spaces (see Fox and Ore 2010).

While participants did not directly articulate the reasons for this, it is possible that these clubs and pubs were spoken of positively in an effort to avoid drawing negative attention to what was otherwise a highly valued social space, as well as avoiding drawing negative attention to LGBTIQ communities more generally (Girschick 2002; Ristock 2002; Todahl et al. 2009; Vickers 1996). As Vickers (1996, para 31) notes in relation to gay and lesbian intimate partner violence, disclosing these experiences of violence 'is tantamount to adding to the already substantial arsenal of weapons employed by homophobes to oppress lesbian women and gay men'. The ongoing impact of such homophobia may also act as a barrier to disclosing, or acknowledging the extent of harm caused by unwanted sexual attention in LGBTIQ clubs and pubs.

Perpetration and the 'Other'

Discussions around where unwanted sexual attention occurred and who it was perpetrated by were often used by young people to establish their own identity and the social groups they did or did not belong to, as much as they reflected any 'reality' of the patterns of where unwanted sexual attention takes place and who perpetrates it. That is, young people's discussions of unwanted sexual attention were also used as an avenue for identity performance, and as a form of boundary work. For example, focus group participant Cameron distanced himself from a working class socio-economic group in his comments on who perpetrates unwanted sexual attention. Cameron identified himself as having grown up in a 'working class' area, and used this to establish himself as knowledgeable on this particular demographic group on account of his insider status. This was particularly apparent in his (unfounded) assertion that 'the statistics reflect that the people who have been perpetrating these things are generally from a lower socio-economic background'. However, Cameron also identified himself as being involved in tertiary education, and it was clear that he did not strongly identify with the area he grew up in, presenting himself as having transcended his social background. In this way he uses his belief that people from lower socio-economic groups are the perpetrators of unwanted sexual attention to further 'other' them and distance himself from them. Such an othering of perpetrators also occurred in relation to the 'ethnic other':

> Culture plays a major part in it occurring. I'm not being racist but … it seems that SOME ethnic groups … seem to have somewhat different attitudes to women than what I would call respectful. (Survey participant, heterosexual male, 25)

Dalal (2009: 74) notes that 'members of "us" groups project unwanted aspects of themselves into "them" groups … [who] come to be experienced as embodying the negative aspects that have been projected onto and into them' (see also Cohen 1985). As Schruijer et al. (1994) observe, we also tend to attribute the harmful behaviours of out-group members (or the other) to some internal factor or inherent flaw in that individual. In comparison, those who are 'like' us are seen to act out of the influence of circumstantial and external factors. As a result, we tend to be more tolerant of the harmful behaviours that our in-group members do engage in, while harmful behaviour from an 'other' tends to reinforce their status as 'other' or different from 'us' (Ruscher et al. 1997).

Viewing perpetrators as an ethnic or classed 'other' functions to reinforce participants' personal identity and belonging in an 'us' group. Here, the responsibility for unwanted sexual attention occurring is shifted onto undesirable others. However, given that known persons overwhelmingly perpetrate against victim/survivors of sexual violence, the othering of perpetrators reflects only a limited reality of perpetration. Who is othered, and in what circumstances, is likely to depend on a range of contextual factors. As Dalal (2009) suggests, who constitutes 'us' and 'them' is not necessarily clear-cut, nor are these groups mutually exclusive. Rather, individuals 'are always both similar *and* different at the same time' (Dalal 2009: 75, original emphasis). Who is positioned as the 'other' relates to which social and cultural factors are particularly salient to the individual, and within the particular venue setting. Group boundaries are constantly in the process of being (re)formed and contested, with claims regarding perpetration of unwanted sexual attention representing one way in which these boundaries are (re)iterated and (re)established.

Gendered performance and identity were also relevant in influencing how group boundaries and identity were performed. Particular iterations of masculine performance were linked to perpetration:

> It'd be nice to see guys be more respectful of girls, and rather than trying to get laid every single time, try and make a friend instead. (Survey participant, heterosexual male)

Implicit in this individual's comment is the notion that he *is* respectful to women, and able to engage with women outside of a sexually motivated interaction. Thus, the participant positions perpetrators as 'other' to himself through their oppositional performances of masculinity. Indeed, there is some established relationship between hyper-masculinity (and particularly hostile masculinity) and sexual violence (Abbey et al. 2011; Anderson and Anderson 2008; Malamuth et al. 1996), so this positioning of certain men as threatening is not unwarranted. Nonetheless, these comments also function to produce or perform this participant's own masculine identity as much as they reflect the 'reality' of unwanted sexual attention. Likewise, men who engage in hostile masculine performances are not necessarily the sole perpetrators of sexual violence (though they are disproportionately so). As such, these comments work to occlude certain 'types' of perpetrator identities.

The 'Othering' of Victims

A sense of community and belonging mediated whom young adults viewed as being the likely victims or recipients of unwanted sexual attention. Again, there was an 'othering' of the perceived victims or recipients of unwanted sexual attention. That is, respondents identified (and constructed) the victims of unwanted sexual attention as individuals who were in some way socially or culturally distant from them. The social distance between young people and the othered victim also gave rise to victim-blaming attitudes, and a reconfiguring of unwanted sexual attention into wanted attention:

> **Haley**: I've got a couple of friends who, you know, like to dress a little bit provocatively and draw that kind of attention, and I find that really uncomfortable. I think if that was me I'd be like, nup. (FG3)
>
> **Elise**: … the places where girls would experience it the girls are, like, cool with it…
>
> **Florence**: They agree with it.
>
> **Elise**: Truly unwanted, truly unwanted, I don't think.
>
> **Florence**: … I guess there's like unwanted, and then there's unwanted from you. (FG1)

There is a perception here that clothing, or choosing to inhabit certain types of venues, can be used as a proxy for signifying sexual desire and consent (on account of the women being 'cool with it') (Kavanaugh 2013;

Workman and Freeburg 1999). As Lindsay argues, stereotypes around sex and sexual assault still promote the view that 'women who are drunk or dressed in a "sexually provocative manner" are … promiscuous and sexually "easy"' (2006: 32; see also Grazian 2009). Elise and Florence's exchange implies that going to venues in search of sexual encounters negates a woman's potential status as victim in some circumstances; wanting *some* sexual attention or interaction is equated with having to tolerate unwanted sexual attention as well. Yet, as Snow and colleagues state, women 'are seldom open to any and all overtures' when using clubs and pubs (1991: 428). Further, drawing on the work of Peterson and Muehlenhard (2007: 72), wanting sexual interaction or attention is conflated here with consenting to sexual interaction. Ultimately, a dichotomised view of sex as consensual and wanting, or non-consensual and not wanting, does not adequately take into account the complexity of sexual interaction.

It is also notable that none of these participants used venues to engage in sexual activity, and they generally did not attend the venues where they thought unwanted sexual attention would be common. Thus, the victims of unwanted sexual attention are being constructed as 'other' here, as the participants position victims as socially distant from themselves, suggesting that this form of victim-blaming may also be playing an important role in constructing the boundaries of venue communities, and in determining who belongs.

As McMillan and Chavis (1986) argue, communities dictate a certain level of conformity (although, not necessarily absolute conformity), from members. These women may subsequently be excluded or denied access to a venue's community on the basis of their failure to conform to dominant norms of 'appropriate' dress. They are marked as being *out of place* on account of their 'inappropriate' sartorial choices. Indeed, the work of Moran and Skeggs (2004: 69) draws attention to the centrality of the body as a boundary, and as 'the means for generating experiences of entitlement [or lack thereof] to social spaces through distinction'. Consequently, even if they inhabit the same physical space, the 'provocatively' dressed woman (in this instance) is in a subordinate position of belonging within the venue community. This indicates that there are various states of community and belonging within venues, with certain individuals or types of identity expression valued above others (see also Rooke 2007). What is unclear from this discussion is whether or not the 'promiscuous' woman's lower status of belonging is static, or whether it is contingent on unwanted sexual attention occurring. That is, do victims only become othered *after* an incident of unwanted sexual attention?

Finally, the positioning of the victims of unwanted sexual attention as 'other' reflects a 'belief in a just world' schema, whereby women are victimised because they have acted 'inappropriately', and are getting 'what they deserve' (Fileborn 2012b; Kleinke and Meyer 1990; Weiss 2010). Adherence to this belief provides the individual with a sense of control, as they feel they can avoid being subjected to unwanted attention if they restrain from engaging in these 'inappropriate' behaviours (Bohner et al. 2009; Brooks 2011; Peterson and Muehlenhard 2007; Ryan 2011). By locating victimisation (or the potential to be victimised) with those who are not 'like' them, young people (and particularly young women) are able to distance themselves from any perceived threat of unwanted sexual attention.

Community and Venue Responses to Unwanted Sexual Attention

A sense of community and belonging in venues shaped the decisions of young people to report their experiences, and shaped the types of responses they deemed appropriate from venues. A number of comments indicated that young people were reluctant to report or complain about unwanted sexual attention in venues where they felt there was a lack of community. It was also apparent that having official policies aimed at promoting patron safety was not always sufficient to generate a sense of community. A number of individuals noted that there was often a mismatch between official policy and the lived experience of being in a venue:

> I have not been to a venue that actively promotes the idea that unwanted staring and touching is NOT OKAY. Often the bouncers themselves make me feel uncomfortable, so I don't really trust in them to respect me if I feel unsafe around someone. I went to one queer party that actually had a safer spaces policy on the night, but even there I experienced unwanted touching, staring and feeling objectified. (Survey participant, queer woman)

The comments from this individual point to the potential for using 'house rules' or codes of conduct to create a culture that does not tolerate unwanted sexual attention. However, 'house rules' will be insufficient if they are not enforced in practice. Further, the presence of such rules is likely to be ineffective if patrons lack faith that security or other staff will respond to complaints in an appropriate manner. Indeed, some people had first-hand experiences of simply being told to leave the venue if they were experiencing unwanted sexual attention: experiencing unwanted sexual attention can thus result in expulsion from a venue's community, with the victim produced as 'other' and as not belonging within the venue. Such responses demonstrate indifference towards the experience of victims, and condone the actions of perpetrators by failing to take action against them. One respondent contrasted this type of response to previous encounters in bars where she experienced a greater sense of community:

> I used to regularly go to [a] bar where the bar tenders knew me and my friends, he would tell guys to back off - but most places don't seem to have friendly regular staff anymore. (Survey participant, heterosexual woman)

A number of individuals also felt that how venues responded to unwanted sexual attention was dependent upon who contributed more to the venue financially:

> I've been reluctant to make a complaint because I feel that it won't be dealt with if the offender has spent more money in the venue than I have, or is otherwise a more 'valued customer'. (Survey participant, heterosexual woman)

In such instances financial imperatives were seen to outweigh a sense of care towards the well-being of patrons. Whether staff members extend care to a patron is, at least in some venues, conditional, and related to the financial worth of that individual. That said, these comments were always made in relation to participants' perceptions of how bar staff would respond, as opposed to being based on first-hand experiences.

Bouncers interviewed by Hobbs et al. (2003: 121) were keenly aware of the financial imperatives of venues, noting that 'the commercial sustainability of "protected" premises can become compromised by the "safety–first" attitude of overly anxious doorstaff' (2003: 121). These findings support young adults' views that bouncers' willingness to intervene or provide assistance was influenced by patrons' financial contributions to the venue. It also highlights the difficult business environment in which security and staff must respond to instances of unwanted sexual attention. While it is in no way my intention to support or condone these decision-making processes in relation to responding to unwanted sexual attention, it is nonetheless important to recognise the financial pressures and competitive nature of the venue industry (Hobbs et al. 2003; Zajdow 2011: 81). This constitutes the backdrop against which decisions to respond to unwanted sexual attention are made, and a financially competitive environment means that venue management and staff are unlikely to consider suggestions for better responding to unwanted sexual attention that fail to take into account their need to remain financially viable.

In contrast, focus group participant Dylan, reflecting on his experiences working in licensed venues, believed that responding well to unwanted sexual attention could actually be financially beneficial for venues as it encouraged women to use the venue, which in turn was seen to make the venue a more attractive and desirable place to go (see also Tomkins 2005). While financial motivation should certainly not be the only reason for preventing or responding well to unwanted sexual attention, the concern for profit is not necessarily entirely negative in this regard. Creating a sense of community through the extension of care towards patrons in relation to unwanted sexual attention holds the potential to be mutually beneficial to both the venue and to patrons.

Bystander Intervention

The notion of a sense of community in a venue came through strongly in suggestions for preventing unwanted sexual attention. In particular, many young people raised bystander intervention as a possible preventative action. Moira Carmody refers to an ethical bystander as an 'individual whose behaviours intervene in ways that impact on "the event" and its outcomes positively. They take some action, but they are mindful of caring for themselves, as well as the impact on the other person' (Carmody 2009b: 126; see also McMahon and Dick 2011).

In relation to club and pub settings, bar staff, security, friends and fellow patrons all have the potential to act as ethical bystanders, either before, during, or after an occurrence of unwanted sexual attention. Given that bystander intervention requires an active concern for the well-being of patrons on behalf of the bystander, this type of intervention holds the potential to increase feelings of community by actively embodying the process of having someone 'looking out' for you. In particular, bystander intervention fulfils McMillan and Chavis' (1986: 9) 'a sense of mattering' criterion by instilling a sense of community, as the following comments illustrate:

> **Brianna**: It could just take simply asking … 'are you doing ok? Do you know these guys? Do you need to get home?' … in my situation where the behaviour … was very public, then that would have been … the chance for them to say something and to take a bit of responsibility for the fact that what was happening to me wasn't consensual.

Venue staff, friends and other patrons were all identified as potential bystanders who could intervene in instances of unwanted sexual attention. It is apparent in Brianna's comments that under a bystander approach the perceived responsibility for unwanted sexual attention is viewed quite broadly: it is not just the victim/recipient or perpetrator/initiator who are responsible for preventing or responding to unwanted sexual attention. Rather, venue staff and the broader venue community are seen to have a responsibility towards patrons who may be experiencing unwanted sexual attention (see also Banyard et al. 2004, 2007; Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al. 2011).

Such an approach to prevention/intervention avoids placing a heavy onus on the victim/recipient, instead diffusing responsibility across the venue community. However, as noted in Chap. 2, participants debated the level of responsibility that venues have towards their patrons. Not all individuals felt that venues had a responsibility to intervene in unwanted sexual attention. Nor was there consensus as to *what* venues should be required to do in intervening. Nonetheless, given that in this instance acting as an ethical bystander would have involved the venue staff not assuming that the sexual interaction that was occurring was consensual, and by interacting with patrons in a respectful manner, this does not seem to be an unreasonable burden for venues to bear.

However, some individuals questioned the practicality of bystander approaches to prevention:

> **Haley**: I don't know how many of my friends would go up to someone they didn't know and say I think you're being taken advantage of … or are you ok? (FG3)

While most (if not all) young adults expressed that they would look out for their immediate friendship group, bystander approaches to prevention may fall down where it comes to acting as a bystander to strangers (see Carmody 2009a—although some participants in Carmody's study were also ambivalent as to whether they would intervene with friends). This may relate to the fact that the overwhelming majority of participants attended clubs and pubs to spend time with friends, and generally did not want to interact with patrons outside of their friendship group. Thus, acting as a bystander to strangers goes against the broader social norms of venue culture, where interacting with people outside of your group is often considered transgressive behaviour (Lindsay 2006). Indeed, Carmody notes that her respondents were often reluctant to act as ethical bystanders to strangers on account of not wanting to intervene in 'other people's business' (2009a: 131). Acting as a bystander could thus potentially place the intervener outside of the venue community, as lacking an appreciation of the venue's norms required to belong.

Even within friendship groups, Graham et al. (2014) suggest that it is 'higher status' group members who are most likely to be protected from unwanted sexual advances by their peers. Thus, even within a peer group different levels of community and belonging exist, and it cannot be assumed that all members of a social group will be protected to the same extent by bystander intervention. This poses some considerable limitations to the use of bystander intervention as a preventative action.

This further reinforces the notion that the sense of community felt by young adults in venues may in some circumstances be 'imagined'. That is, there is a sense of community in the absence of any real interaction with other patrons. The idea of a sense of community being 'imagined' was particularly apparent in the reluctance of people to act as bystanders to the victims/recipients of unwanted sexual attention. While a sense of community was largely engendered by the perception that other patrons were 'looking out' for you, it was not clear that young adults would *actually* intervene or provide assistance to other patrons if it was needed. The extent to which a sense of community is an 'imagined' one may also vary greatly between different venues, and different social contexts (that is, *who* is in a particular venue on any given night).

Broader bystander intervention literature posits that individuals are more likely to act as bystanders in instances where there is greater group cohesion (Banyard et al. 2004: 67), and where they feel a greater sense of responsibility towards others (Shaffer et al. 1975). Thus, individuals may be more motivated to act as bystanders when unwanted sexual attention is occurring in venues where they feel a greater sense of community.

Carmody attributes the reluctance to intervene to assist strangers as 'reflective of the "diffusion of responsibility" approach or the belief that someone else will step in to help' (2009a: 127; see also Banyard et al. 2004; Haruda 1985). However, by encouraging young adults to act as ethical bystanders, all members of a community are given 'a specific role that they can identify with and adopt in preventing the community problem of sexual violence' (Carmody 2009a: 127; see also Banyard et al. 2007). As such, arming young people with the generic skills to act as ethical bystanders may assist in the prevention, intervention, and provision of assistance to victims of unwanted sexual attention in the specific social location of licensed venues.

A range of other issues may influence young adults' decisions to intervene in instances of unwanted sexual attention. As noted in the previous chapter, what young adults viewed as being unwanted sexual attention was quite variable and context dependent. Further, many respondents understood unwanted sexual attention as occurring within a heteronormative paradigm, so it is questionable as to whether unwanted sexual attention occurring between individuals of the same gender would be recognised. These issues may make it difficult for young adults to identify when someone else is actually experiencing unwanted sexual attention, and may contribute towards this reluctance to intervene (Banyard et al. 2004; Carmody 2009a; Haruda 1985).

Individual propensity to act as a bystander has also been linked to gender roles and performance. Men have been identified in bystander literature as less likely to intervene in instances of gender violence, as 'to take a public stand against violence would require men to subvert and challenge hegemonic notions of masculinity' (McMahon and Dick 2011: 5). That said, other masculine gender norms position men as heroic, chivalrous, and physically strong and capable (Lowe et al. 2012: 1805). These stereotypically masculine traits 'are assumed to facilitate the likelihood of male intervention' (Lowe et al. 2012: 1805). However, given that how individuals perform gender varies depending upon the venue setting they are in, it is likely that the willingness of men to intervene in unwanted sexual attention would differ greatly across venues. Given the level of contradiction in terms of how men 'should' react, responses to unwanted sexual attention may also depend on which model of masculinity is particularly salient in a specific venue setting.

Concluding Remarks

Experiencing a sense of community and belonging in a venue was, as this chapter has illustrated, often fundamental to shaping young adults' understandings and experiences of safety and unwanted sexual attention in licensed venues. Such findings suggest that an appreciation of context is vitally important in understanding both safety and unwanted sexual attention. Feeling a sense of community and belonging has a very real impact on the experiences of young people, and the extent to which they felt threatened or harmed by experiences of unwanted sexual attention. It is important to note, however, that the majority of the experiences discussed here were also identified as relatively 'minor' ones. It is less clear whether young people downplay the harm of what they perceive to be more 'serious' forms of unwanted sexual attention in the same way. At the same time, the enhanced sense of safety produced through perceived community and belonging may be a misleading and, at times, paradoxical one. Members of our communities are all too often the perpetrators of harmful actions, and the sense of trust generated through feeling part of a community may in fact enable some perpetrators to enact harm.

The ways in which young people discuss and construct unwanted sexual attention must also be viewed as a means of identity performance, and a mechanism for (re)asserting group boundaries and belonging.

While these discussions certainly provide some insight into the 'characteristics' of unwanted sexual attention (such as where it occurs, who perpetrates it and so forth), only a very particular or partial picture is created. Such discursive accounts may create barriers for victims in openly discussing and identifying experiences of unwanted sexual attention.

Community and belonging were also implicated in how young people viewed venue responsibility for unwanted sexual attention, as well as their own propensity to intervene in unwanted sexual attention. This has important implications for preventative efforts, which I address in the final chapter. Although 'venue culture' has been discussed here as being central to young people's sense of community and belonging, it is not yet clear what is meant by venue culture, or what the mechanisms of this relationship are.

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4

Sexual Culture and Consent

Why is it important to take the sexual culture and norms of venues into account when thinking about unwanted sexual attention? Nicola Gavey (2005) argues that the broader cultural norms regarding sex and, in particular, heterosexuality form what she terms the 'cultural scaffolding for rape' (2005: 2). These broader sexual norms permit a large degree of ambiguity between consensual and non-consensual sex which creates the possibility for non-consensual encounters to occur and can cause difficulty in determining what 'counts' as rape or not. Such scripts, Gavey argues, provide 'the discourses of sex and gender that produce forms of heterosex that set up the preconditions for rape—women's passive, acquiescing (a)sexuality and men's forthright, urgent pursuit of sexual "release"' (2005: 3). Norms of 'appropriate' gendered sexual performance are also (re)constituted through such scripts, though they are of course also contested and resisted.

However, these social norms are not static or immobile, and they have shifted over time and across different contexts. For example, the norms governing sex in the context of a long-term relationship may be quite different from those informing a casual hook-up. Such malleability is vitally important as it presents the possibility, if not inevitability, of change.

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As Gavey puts it, this malleability 'radically opens up the possibilities of what could be different' (2005: 82). This is a reassuring proposition in light of how current sexual norms may contribute towards unwanted or harmful sexual experiences, though generating radical change is a far from straightforward task. This begs the question as to what are the sexual norms within and across venues and in what ways might these form part of the 'scaffolding' that actively creates or contributes toward the possibility for unwanted sexual attention to occur, or that gives rise to a degree of ambiguity between the wanted and unwanted.

Venue-specific norms cannot be viewed as disconnected or separate from the broader cultural scaffolding identified by Gavey. To be sure, venues do generate their own specific norms regarding sexual interaction, but these are not formed organically, without any reference to or influence from broader norms and structures. If anything, the sexual culture of venues represents a microcosm and intensification of these higher-level scaffolds, a site where sexual performance is heightened and exaggerated through dress and corporeal presentation, sexualised dancing and so forth—though as the following discussion demonstrates, this varies greatly across venues. Yet licensed venues are also sites of hedonism and liminality; spaces to play and to transgress social norms. They are thus spaces where sexual expression may also be done differently from other sites or in other contexts.

Is This Desire? Sexual Expression in Clubs and Pubs

Nightclubs typically represent a highly sexualised space (Anderson et al. 2009; Grazian 2007; Lindsay 2006; Snow et al. 1991). Not only are public displays of (hetero) sexuality, (hetero) sexual interaction, and casual sexual encounters possible and normative within this space, they may even be actively encouraged by nightclub management who can often rely on the 'promise of eroticised interaction to recruit customers' (Grazian 2007: 221). Venues can employ standards of dress, choice of music, décor, and the appearance and behaviour of staff to create an overtly sexualised environment.

As Grazian notes, nightclubs are often utilised as 'direct sexual marketplaces' (2007: 221). That is, nightclubs are spaces that young people may attend for the purpose, and with the expectation, of engaging in sexual liaisons (Grazian 2007; Lindsay 2006; Northcote 2006). They provide an opportunity for sexual interaction that is, generally speaking, not available in other public social spaces, or, at the very least, is not normative in other public spaces. However, limitations exist as to who can freely engage in sexual interaction in licensed venues, particularly in relation to sexual orientation (Lindsay 2006).

Certainly, the occurrence of sexual activity in licensed venues is not inherently problematic. Spaces allowing for sexual exploration and establishment of sexual identity no doubt serve a useful function for young adults. However, if sexual interaction is pervasive in this environment (although this assumption will be challenged below), it must be questioned how much of it is consensual and actively sought after by both parties. It is also unclear how young people experience and interpret sexual interactions in licensed space and how sexual consent is successfully negotiated in this space, especially given the often fleeting nature of these interactions. There appears to be an assumption in the current body of research that such sexual behaviour occurs (see, for example, Grazian 2007, 2009; Northcote 2006). Yet little work has been done to explore these sexual liaisons (or, indeed, to establish that they happen in the first place) in any depth.

The notion that licensed venues function as a sexual marketplace has been contested and resisted by young adults, and particularly young women, in different types of club space. Contrary to the sexual marketplace ideology, some authors (Hunt et al. 2010; Lindsay 2006) have contended that sexual interaction is in fact culturally passé within certain club cultures, and this has been particularly well documented within rave culture in the United States and United Kingdom. Hegemonic gender roles and sexual atmosphere vary greatly between different genres of venues. In particular, there is a noted divide between sexual interaction in 'mainstream' and 'niche' venues. Lindsay characterises commercial venues as aiming 'to attract a mainstream clientele and … more varied crowds' (2006: 43). In contrast, niche venues 'aim for either a stylish, artistic, or alternative aesthetic' and include a wide range of venue types, such as 'inner city bars and lounges' (2006: 40). Commercial or mainstream venues are typified by a more rigid adherence to traditional feminine/masculine performances.

Overt (hetero)sexual interactions are typically more normative and commonplace occurrences within commercial venues. In contrast, overt sexual interaction in niche venues often constitutes inappropriate or non-normative behaviour (Lindsay 2006; Hutton 2006). However, this does not mean that niche venues are somehow asexual or non-gendered spaces. Instead, Hutton (2006) notes, overt displays of sexuality and hyper-gendered performances are replaced with more subtle forms of sexual interaction and gendered performance. Such findings support the notion that the culture of a venue may influence the ways in which gender is performed, and specific types of venues may promote or value certain expressions of gender over others.

These studies highlight that there are a complex array of factors influencing sexual interaction in licensed spaces: the prescribed gender and sexuality norms encouraged by venues; the acceptance of, and adherence to, these norms by patrons; and the architectural and spatial design of venues. Licensed venue culture is far from homogeneous in relation to gender, sexuality and sexual norms, with certain genres of venues or events providing varying degrees of freedom from rigidly enforced social norms, and spaces to experiment or express alternate identities (Hutton 2006; Lindsay 2006).

Hutton (2006: 9) views club cultures as 'fluid, unstable and fragmented and often defy[ing] definition', suggesting that there is almost endless possibility for patrons in terms of how they construct and perform their gendered identity(s). Yet Hutton also contends that the cultural differences between underground/niche venues and mainstream venues 'have implications for the experiences of women clubbers who attend in terms of safety, attitude and identity construction' (2006: 9), indicating that the culture of venues may work to shape and constrain identity construction and expression to varying degrees and with varying effect.

For venues where sexual interaction is normative and acceptable, its occurrence appears to be intimately linked to gender performance, and particularly the performance of a sexually aggressive hegemonic masculinity. Conversely, dominant feminine gender performance centres on the denial of sexual interaction or desire in licensed spaces. Clearly, there is a direct relationship here with the cultural scaffolding discussed by Gavey where men are the pursuers, and women are the gatekeepers of sex. Research on sexual interaction in licensed venues indicates that women do not attend licensed premises for the specific purpose of engaging in sexual interaction (Hollands 1995 cited in Chatterton and Hollands 2003; Northcote 2006). Young women's reluctance to admit to engaging (or wanting to engage) in sexual interaction can also be viewed as an enactment of 'traditional' femininity as much as it reflects women's actual desires or actions in licensed venues. Young women may be hesitant to admit to engaging in, or desiring, sexual interaction given the tendency for women to be negatively judged or policed for engaging in 'promiscuous' behaviour.

David Grazian's 2007 study highlights that young men, however, do attend licensed premises with a view to 'pick up' (that is, to engage in some form of fleeting sexual encounter with) women. However, Grazian challenges the sexual success and prowess of young men in licensed venues, arguing that it is in fact rare for young men to succeed in their sexual pursuits. Grazian explores the practice of what is termed 'girl hunting'. That is, a performative ritual/practice whereby 'adolescent heterosexual men aggressively seek out female sexual partners in nightclubs, bars and other public arenas' (Grazian 2007: 222)—though it is acknowledged that the 'girl hunt' is 'one among many types of social orientation toward the city at night' (2007: 226). Yet many women are highly resistant to, and frequently challenge or subvert, sexual advances in licensed venues. This may occur, for instance, through the employment of 'cooling out' strategies (Snow et al. 1991). Consequently, the girl hunt has a somewhat low success rate.

Instead, Grazian suggests, the 'girl hunt' functions as a collective, homosocial performance amongst male peers. It is an act used to assert or reinforce their hegemonic masculinity, with sexual prowess representing a particularly valued aspect of masculinity within club space (Grazian 2007: 223). Engaging in (or at least keeping up the appearance of) the 'girl hunt' consequently reinforces the individual's place in their male friendship group, and reaffirms group masculinity and identity. This type of masculine performance also, according to Grazian, encourages young men to 'suppress empathy for females targeted by the girl hunt' (2007: 237) as a necessity for group solidarity.

In relation to the occurrence of unwanted sexual attention, Grazian's study has great explanatory power (although it is less clear how Grazian's work might apply to unwanted sexual attention occurring amongst LGBTIQ communities). Here we have a situation where men utilise sexual 'prowess' to assert and reaffirm their masculinity, male peer-group solidarity and membership, and control and power over both women and public space. This, coupled with a requisite lack of empathy for the female target and her own desires (though she is not completely passive in these encounters), indicates that the potential for unwanted sexual attention occurring is high. Importantly, Grazian notes that this sexually aggressive masculine performance is but one of many potential roles for men to perform in contemporary urban night spaces, suggesting that men are able to reject this type of masculine role in at least some licensed venue contexts, or that it is a less valued expression of masculinity in other venues.

The literature discussed briefly here presents a number of key implications for an exploration of *unwanted* sexual attention in venues. Firstly, it highlights that there is considerable diversity within and differences between venues with regards to the extent overt sexual interaction is tolerated, the *types* of sexual interaction that are tolerated, and the types of bodies that are able to openly engage in sexual interaction. How, then, do young adults experience the unwanted in venues with differing norms regarding the acceptability of sexual interaction? Does the venue culture in this regard also shape young people's understandings of what 'counts' as unwanted, or of the types of behaviours that will be 'tolerated' or accepted by young adults?

It is also apparent here that gendered performances shift across different types of venues: young adults 'do' masculinity and femininity differently in different types of venue spaces. In some venues, as we saw in Grazian's research, the dominant performances centre on aggressive sexual displays or posturing as a form of homosocial bonding. Again, this might suggest that how and where unwanted sexual attention occurs, and how young adults experience it, might shift depending upon the dominant gendered performance within a venue. Yet venue cultures are also dynamic and fluid, and can be liable to shift and change across the course of an evening. Likewise, young people may contest or subvert the dominant performances within a venue. Notably, the possibility of having an overt dalliance in venues is shaped by sexual orientation. At least within mainstream venues, overt same-sex sexual interaction remains frowned on. How might this shape the experiences of LGBTIQ young adults?

'Hooking Up': Participants Use of Venues for Sexual Interaction

The following discussion considers how young adults used licensed venues for sexual interaction, and their perceptions of the sexual culture of venues. As the previous chapter established in more general terms, the ways in which young people related to and engaged with the sexual culture of venues also shaped how they experienced or understood unwanted sexual attention. I consider here how the sexual culture of venues formed part of the 'scaffolding' supporting unwanted sexual attention.

The terms 'hooking up' and 'picking up' are used interchangeably here to refer broadly 'to some form of sexual activity without the expectation of a consequent relationship between the parties' (Kelly 2012a: 28; see also Kalish and Kimmel 2011: 140–141 for a broader overview and critique of definitions of 'hooking up'). For most of the young people in this project, 'hooking up' was not a central reason for going out to pubs and clubs:

> **Florence**: I've got a partner so … I'm not seeking new friends, or friendships, or relationships or anything. (FG1)

That is not to say, however, that young adults do not engage in sexual interaction, but that sexual interaction itself is not necessarily a motivating factor for attending licensed venues (thus, if sexual interaction does occur, it is a peripheral and unintended or unplanned experience). As will become apparent throughout this discussion, statements such as Florence's are complicated and contradicted by young people's discussions of issues such as gender roles, what forms of sexual interaction are deemed 'appropriate', and by their actual behaviour (as opposed to intentions) when using venues. That said, approximately 24 % of survey respondents (*n* = 56) did indicate that they use venues for the purpose of sexual interaction. While it might not be a primary reason for attending licensed venues, the possibility of ‘hooking up’ was still a valuable aspect of the licensed venue experience for a significant minority of young people.

Some participants suggested that *other* people would use venues for the purpose of sexual interaction, even if it were not something they would do themselves. To an extent this was related to the fact that many participants indicated that they were in committed, monogamous relationships, and were therefore not in a position where they would want to ‘hook up’ for the night. Some individuals indicated that they supported their friends in their romantic/sexual endeavours, and this is likely to enhance the sense of community provided by, and importance placed on, spending time with friends in venues. Whether or not an individual used venues to try to ‘pick up’ was dependent on their desires for the night, their reasons for using pubs and clubs more generally, and their preferred style(s) of romantic/sexual interaction and courtship:

> **Clementine**: I will go and fully support other people in that endeavour, but … that sort of thing comes out of knowing someone to me and I don’t know how you can know somebody in a venue where you cannot hear them, where half the time you can barely see them, and they’re in a completely altered state from how they are usually.

Clementine’s comments suggest that the physical environment of licensed venues (for example, loud and dark), combined with the social and behavioural norms of venues (for example, drug and alcohol consumption) produce an environment that for some young adults may not be conducive to forming relationships or meeting like-minded individuals. However, this of course depends on the *type* of sexual interaction desired. The fact that someone is in an altered state of being from their ‘usual’ self is arguably of less relevance if what is sought is a one-off casual encounter, rather than a (potentially) longer-term relationship. Likewise, young people’s reasons or desires for going out are certainly not set in stone, and are liable to change across the course of a night out depending on the opportunities that arise or the events that unfold. While for Clementine venues were a space to consume alcohol, dance, and spend time socialising with friends, other individuals place a higher premium on venues as a sexual space.

Indeed, some young people were more open about their use of venues to engage in sexual interaction, and clearly asserted their right to use venues for this purpose:

> Part of the reason you go out is to flirt with guys so you want the freedom to be able to do that. (Survey participant, heterosexual female)
>
> As a single person, people should NOT be made to feel bad about attempting to pick someone up. (Survey participant, heterosexual female)

Young adults are a heterogeneous group, and as such their reasons and intentions for utilising pubs and clubs are complex, diverse and fluid. There are also ingrained social and gendered barriers to openly admitting to desiring or engaging in casual sexual encounters in clubs and pubs. Kalish and Kimmel remind us that 'men who hook up a lot are seen by their peers as studs; women who hook up a lot are seen as sluts who "give it up"' (2011: 142), although the second participant quoted above clearly challenges this discourse of female sexuality (see also Allen 2003). These enduring double standards in relation to casual sexual encounters are highly likely to have influenced young adults' narratives around 'picking up', hindering a more open discussion of sexual desire and experience.

It is perhaps quite telling that most of the young people who openly discussed going out and 'picking up' were anonymous survey respondents, while focus group and interview participants tended to acknowledge that *other* people desired sexual interaction. This was particularly the case for young women, illustrating that certain iterations of gendered performance can play a key role in structuring young adults' discussions on sex. For instance, only one young woman interview participant discussed using venues to 'pick up', while almost all men in the focus groups indicated that they had 'picked up' in venues. Where participants did admit to using venues for sexual or romantic purposes, their behaviour was often reframed as being 'appropriate' or 'respectable':

> **Elise:** I think that often times if it's a situation where friends will bring friends … that's a little bit more the kind of situation where it's like 'oh, I'll introduce you to so and so' and a pub or something is a great way of doing that. That's how I met my current partner, so I met him at a pub but it wasn't like a random 'hey, how's it goin'?' (FG1)

Elise had commented earlier in this discussion that she did not use venues for sexual interaction, yet her current romantic relationship was initiated in a venue environment. There is the implication here that certain types of sexual interaction are 'okay', or fall within the 'charmed circle' to use Rubin's (1992) terminology (meeting a potential partner in the context of social interaction with friends), while others are looked down upon (casual encounters with a stranger). The fact that this relationship was formed through a social gathering, rather than through an explicit attempt to 'pick up', also seems important to Elise's ability to differentiate between these two pathways for starting relationships. Indeed, Elise went on to assert that many young adults view 'hooking up' with strangers as being 'a bit tacky'. There is also a downplaying of desire occurring here (Tolman 2002), where meeting her partner became framed as a social, rather than sexual, encounter (Kalish and Kimmel 2011).

Bogle (2008: 103) notes that women may seek relationships from 'hook up' encounters as a means to protect their reputations. This sexual double standard contributes towards the hierarchy of sexual activity that is apparent in Elise's comments (Rubin 1992: 279). Because engaging in casual encounters often results in the 'slut shaming' of young women, Elise seeks to distance herself from such behaviour and instead frames her sexual activity in clubs and pubs in the more acceptable guise of a social event and monogamous heterosexual relationship.

In one focus group, participants explicitly acknowledged the gendered nature of discussions around sexual interaction and the possible disjuncture between perceptions of who goes out to 'pick up' and what actually happens in venues:

Florence: Well, I don't know if part of it is cultural … in terms of it's ok for men to do that, or if it's expected that men do that, and maybe it's a bit of both … I think it's kind of what guys do. Women would, I guess you can't be as open about it.

Elise: … I think it might just be a perception that it happens more. (FG1)

Florence's comments highlight the role that social expectations and gender roles play in influencing how young adults perceive and discuss sexual interaction in venues, and in particular that young women are less able to openly acknowledge their sexual desire. The extent to which they do 'pick up' or seek out sexual encounters in venues may be obscured by social and cultural norms that discourage women from openly discussing their sexual encounters and sexual desire (Allen 2003; Kalish and Kimmel 2011; Tolman 2002). Indeed, as young women are seeking out sex in 'an environment where women who [do so] … are stigmatised' (Kalish and Kimmel 2011: 142), young women may, according to Kalish and Kimmel, present 'hooking up' as a spontaneous rather than planned occurrence. Elise observed that it might just be a perception that women do not go out to 'pick up':

> But then … maybe girls just say that they don't do it, but they get all made up … You're hoping someone pays attention to you.

Young women's physical presentation is viewed as signifying their potential interest in sexual encounters, even if this is at odds with their expressed intentions or lack thereof. However, such an assumption is also fraught with danger, as it plays into the myth that women want sex even when they have explicitly communicated otherwise (Young 1998). This highlights the potential traps of dominant gendered discourses regarding sex, where women being unable to openly express or communicate their sexual desire contributes directly towards the occurrence of unwanted sexual attention by producing their refusals or expressed lack of interest as being potentially ambiguous or misleading.

Even for the men who did indicate they had used venues to 'pick up', such activity was often presented as a spontaneous and in many ways peripheral part of their night:

> **Frank**: I never go out thinking 'oh, I'm going to pick up' or … 'this is my goal for tonight'.
> **Edwin**: Yeah, I'll agree with that … I don't think it's ever like 'I am going to go pick up', it's more of a, like, 'I'll go out and see what happens'. (FG6)

While 'picking up' might not be an intention for the night, the reasons for using venue space or remaining in a venue evolve and shift over the course of a night. Club and pub space can be seen here as presenting the opportunity for unplanned occurrences and as a site for hedonistic and pleasure-seeking behaviour. In contrast to participants' responses in this study, Kalish and Kimmel contend that 'when men claim that the hook-up is spontaneous, they are referring not to whether or not the hook-up will take place, but with whom' (2011: 142). However, the narratives of men in this study around 'hooking up' challenge Kalish and Kimmel's argument, as 'picking up' was at times presented as being spontaneous on both counts. As Kalish and Kimmel's work was conducted with American college students, cultural differences may be at play here. Frank and Edwin's exchange also indicates a tendency to downplay involvement in this form of sexual interaction. For instance, open acknowledgement of a desire to 'pick up' may expose men to the risk of appearing desperate, predatory, 'creepy', or a range of other negative connotations. This stands in direct contrast to Bogle's (2008) research on 'hooking up' in American college campuses, where 'men were free to hook up as often as they had the opportunity to do so' (2008: 104) and were stigmatised only for failing to engage in sexual conquests. In contrast, male participants, like the women in this study, also faced barriers to openly expressing sexual desire, though they are nonetheless less restrained in admitting to engaging in sexual activity. 'Hooking up' may be acceptable as a spontaneous and unplanned interaction, but not as an actively sought after endeavour.

Sexuality and Identity Performance

Clubs and pubs can provide a stage for young people to reaffirm and perform their sexual identity. Venues provide a space to enact sexualised performances and to give sexual attention and to be recognised as a sexual being, without necessarily engaging in explicit sexual acts. As focus group participant Benjamin observed:

> **Benjamin**: A lot of people … who go to gay clubs to do gay dancing and meet gay people, even if it is in that whole attitude of taking shirts off and rubbing bodies and things, a lot of people involved there aren't actually looking for a sexual encounter, and so that can lead to confusion because they're participating

> in the performance and all the cues which are about sex, but a lot of people aren't actually wanting that outcome. (FG2)

Benjamin's observations demonstrate the ways in which venues are used to consolidate group membership and sexual identity (Chatterton and Hollands 2002; Hunt et al. 2010; Northcote 2006). Group membership and belonging can be viewed as an ongoing process or project and something that requires ongoing affirmation. It is something that one is always in the process of 'doing' or 'becoming', not a static state that once achieved remains invariable (Allen 2003: 216; Butler 1990; refer to Chap. 3). Establishing and maintaining group membership is based not only on being sexually desirable, but also being recognisable or 'passable' within the desired social group. For young LGBTIQ people, for example, being viewed as sexually desirable by other LGBTIQ people also indicates that their sexual or gender identity is readable by others (Rooke 2007). The individual actively constructs and performs their sexuality, with Rooke (2007: 244) suggesting that '*being* lesbian is constantly being produced and is constantly *becoming*' (original emphasis). By successfully flirting, assembling a sexualised outfit and so forth, the young person can successfully perform their sexual identity and has acquired the relevant social and cultural knowledge that enables them to do so. Young adults may be conflating, or simply unable to distinguish between, patrons who desire to perform or re-confirm their sexual identity and those who actually want to engage in physical sexual encounters. This further highlights the danger in assuming that patrons who are attired or acting in a sexualised manner are actively seeking or desiring sex (as seen in Elise's comments earlier), rather than seeking to re-affirm their sexual identity through sexualised performance and presentation of the self—though these are of course not mutually exclusive and are fluid states.

The sexual orientation of respondents influenced both the tendency to use pubs and clubs to pick up, and the value placed on these spaces for providing such an opportunity. For many LGBTIQ young people, queer-specific or friendly venues were seen as a particularly important sexual space. Often, they functioned as one of the only public/semi-public spaces available for these young people to openly engage in sexual behaviour and to look for short or long-term sexual or romantic partners.[1] Alex asserted that for him gay venues were ‘one of the few places you can go to meet new people’. Consequently, Alex placed great importance on these venues, seeing them as highly valuable social spaces. For others, the reliance on LGBTIQ venues as a sexual space was explicitly related to the threat of homophobia. Clementine expressed that ‘homosexuality is … very dangerous, socially’, highlighting the fraught nature of making a sexual advance on someone in a non-LGBTIQ specific space, which could result in homophobic abuse. In contrast, Clementine said she could more safely assume that in LGBTIQ-specific spaces most people in the venue identified as same-sex attracted. Venues of this kind were seen as being more sexual by virtue of the fact that they represented one of the few safe spaces that LGBTIQ people could make sexual advances or engage openly in sexual interaction.

Temporality and Geography of Sexual Interaction

While ‘hooking up’ might not have been a primary reason for going out, certainly some young adults do engage in sexual interaction in clubs and pubs. This raises a series of questions; such as, in which venues does sexual interaction take place, and does the venue setting itself plays a role in facilitating or influencing sexual encounters? While certain ‘types’ of licensed venue were discussed as being more likely to have sexual interaction occurring than others, within each venue sexual encounters were seen as more likely to happen within certain spaces and at certain times of the night. Sexual encounters were seen to occur within specific geographic, temporal, and cultural assemblages.

Many individuals were of the opinion that sexual interaction typically happened in venues referred to as ‘trashy’ or ‘meat markets’. The following discussion from a focus group with heterosexual women illustrates how ‘picking up’ was perceived as being dependent on a range of contextual factors:

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[1] This research was undertaken prior to the introduction, and explosion in popularity, of dating apps such as Grindr. The dating landscape, and the importance placed on pubs and clubs as a place to meet potential partners, has likely shifted dramatically in the meantime.

> **Gloria**: It depends on the age [of patrons] and the venue.
> **Kim**: Yeah, different types of venues seem to be more for that than others … nightclubs tend to be more of that sort of scene than… going to your local pub … they kind of have different … reasons for being there…
> **Researcher**: Yeah, why do you think it's more likely to happen in … certain types of nightclubs?
> **Ingrid**: Because they're darker.
> **Jenny**: Yeah, I was gonna say because they're darker…
> **Ingrid**: You look more attractive in the light.
> **Haley**: And people tend to go to those places more drunk too. (FG3)

Kim's comments highlight how club-goers saw different venues as having a distinct culture and as promoting particular types of interactions. However, it is unclear whether venues are actively creating these cultures, or if the activities that young people engage in are based on their own *perceptions* of the venue culture (likely, it is a complex interplay of both). It is also apparent in this discussion that the physical design and environment of venues influenced the type of behaviour that participants thought patrons would engage in. Venues where young people would go to 'pick up' were also commonly referred to as venues that provided spaces for dancing (see also Ronen 2010). Matshinhe (2009: 125) locates the dance floor as an emotionally charged space, where the possibility of 'no-strings-attached encounters add to the enjoyment' of this sub-locality of a venue. The assemblage of the cultural norms of a venue and the geographical design produce a space that is more conducive to sexual encounters occurring.

Sexual interaction was often viewed as occurring according to certain temporal patterns:

> **Dylan**: It's not likely to happen I guess at sort of 5 or 6 o'clock. Well, it is going to happen, but it's just less likely to happen … alcohol consumption will obviously play a factor in if it's going to happen or not as well, or how keen you are for it to happen.
> **Edwin**: … it usually starts off at a house party, you have pre-drinks, and then you usually go into a venue at about, sort of, 10–11 o'clock. And only after that time does that sort of thing occur, so to speak. (FG6)

The temporal nature of sexual interaction, and its relationship with intoxication, appeared to apply more to casual, one-off encounters. Given the general reluctance to admit to taking part in these fleeting sexual exchanges (and the sense that such interactions were of lesser value and somewhat embarrassing or shameful in comparison to other types of sexual encounters), alcohol consumption and intoxication are drawn on here in an effort to downplay or mitigate personal decisions to take part in casual sexual encounters (see also Kalish and Kimmel 2011). There are clear connections here with the social and cultural attitudes employed to excuse the actions of intoxicated perpetrators (discussed in Chap. 5), suggesting that the use of alcohol to excuse perpetration may be interlinked with the use of alcohol to excuse involvement in 'shameful' (but consensual) sexual encounters.

Yet, as has hopefully been clearly established by now, the culture of a venue is highly fluid and unstable. While venues with a dance floor were seen as more likely to have sexual encounters occurring, this could change dramatically from night to night:

> **Gloria**: I worked at a club a few years ago where people would just go up to each other and ask if they wanted to have sex and go to the bathroom, and they might have two or three, four or more partners in a night … in the same bar … they did two different sort of nights, there was a rave night on Friday night and Saturday night was a different thing it was more nightclubby, and it was the same bartenders and the same bouncers … it was purely the music and the crowd that changed and the attitude was just so completely different and people were there just specifically to get wasted and have sex. (FG3)

Here, there is a complex assemblage of the venue culture, composition of the crowd and patrons' reasons for attending and the role of cultural signifiers such as music that creates a highly sexualised atmosphere. The distinction between rave nights and more commercial dance spaces has been well documented within the literature on the night-time economy. Hunt, Moloney and Evans contend that 'the dance scene is foremost a *dance* scene—a place to hear dance music and move to the groove', in comparison to more commercial venues where music forms a backdrop to social, romantic and sexual interaction (2010: 42 and 36; see also, Hutton 2006). Further, open 'sexual displays or expectations are frowned upon' (Hunt et al. 2010: 173) in dance venues, and this is likely to contribute towards the difference in overt sexual interaction between the two nights.

While Gloria does not elaborate on how the music changes from night to night (or, more specifically, it is not clear what style of music is played on the Saturday nights), it seems that this played a significant role in influencing the cultural and behavioural norms of the venue each night. In addition, the venue staff were clearly permissive of sex taking place in the venue, and there were appropriate/private spaces for sexual interaction to occur. The dynamic nature of venue culture means that it may not be helpful to speak of any definitive culture, at least within some venue spaces: the atmosphere of a venue can be subject to significant change on any given night, despite the physical location and layout of the venue remaining constant.

Respondents complicated the idea that sexual interaction was more likely to happen in certain forms of venue space, via the assertion that sexual interaction can happen in *any* venue space. This suggests that the *perception* or claim that sexual interaction only happens in 'meat market' type venues is divorced from the reality of sexual interaction in other venues. The idea that sexual interaction occurs in specific venues may be the result of shared cultural (mis)conceptions about clubs and pubs. In the following exchange between two focus group participants, Benjamin challenges Alex's stereotypical view of venue spaces, exposing the cultural construction underpinning Alex's belief:

Alex: As for what kind of venues, I mean I suppose I see it more readily in the, the venues that have a reputation for being a little bit more trashy…

Benjamin: But even venues that aren't specifically like that do have … the possibility of encounters happening, and some people might go there for them to happen. So smaller venues which aren't so obviously about picking up … I've always got … the possibility of something happening no matter where I am … I don't think it's isolated to specific venues.

Alex: No, no, you can't rule it out just because you're in a, a venue that is considered, I guess, less trashy and more classy. It still happens. (FG2)

Another individual viewed the sexual culture of venues as something of a financial imperative for all clubs:

Laura: I don't really believe it does [differ between venue types], because these days we sort of have this club culture that, it endorses you going out and hooking up randomly, because that's how the clubs make money. (FG7)

According to Laura all venues actively create and promote a culture that fosters sexual interaction (or at least creates the illusion that 'hooking up' is possible, even if it does not eventuate), and she viewed this as being a primary attraction or reason for young adults to go to clubs and pubs. Interestingly, Laura's comments are at odds with other participants' responses regarding their reasons for going to venues, and their use of venues to 'pick up'. However, given that discussions around 'picking up' were mediated by gendered norms that prohibit free and open engagement in this behaviour, it is likely that a sexualised environment is still enticing to many young people when going out. Even if 'picking up' is not actively sought after, a sexual environment may signify other qualities of a venue that are desirable on a night out, such as the potential for unexpected pleasurable interactions and hedonistic behaviour to occur.

Sexual Culture of Venues and Unwanted Sexual Attention

Sexual venue culture forms part of the cultural 'scaffolding' that gives rise to the possibility of unwanted sexual attention occurring. It is not my intention here to demonise sexual venue culture or the consensual sexual encounters that do take place within venues, or to conflate consensual, wanted encounters with the unwanted. What takes place within venues is also informed by broader social norms around (hetero) sex, though these norms also shift and morph into venue-specific variations. They are not monolithic, and they do not necessarily even *directly* cause unwanted or non-consensual sexual encounters. Sexual norms do, however, provide a framework that can *enable* unwanted sexual attention to occur and provide an architectural frame within which young people make sense of their experiences and observations.

The sexual culture of venues and norms guiding sexual encounters seemingly played a role in facilitating unwanted sexual attention in a number of instances. Brianna's perpetrator sexually assaulted her quite openly in the venue they were in, in full view of other patrons and bar staff. In response to this, Brianna was reprimanded by the bar staff:

> **Brianna**: It was kind of that assumption that what I was doing … was consensual, and it could have looked consensual and obviously I was quite drunk … I have quite a clear memory of … being yelled at and … being shamed in a very public sort of way.

The culture of sexual interaction in venues resulted here in unwanted sexual attention being mis-read as consensual sexual interaction by venue staff and other patrons. Indeed, as Brianna noted, 'I'm sure they turn a blind eye all the time and just go "yeah, that's two consensual adults getting a bit frisky"'. Being reprimanded by the staff as a result of this assumption greatly increased the trauma of the assault for Brianna. The assumption that any/all sexual interaction that is occurring is consensual hinders bystander intervention, as there is presumably no need to interject to provide assistance of any kind in a consensual sexual encounter:

> **Brianna**: I didn't really feel like anyone had kind [of] gone 'hey, are you doing okay, you're with two strange guys' … I think they, they kind of assumed that I was being inappropriate before they really checked if I was ok.

Broader cultural attitudes towards unwanted sexual attention and sexual violence also played a role in how staff responded to unwanted sexual attention and whether or not the venue culture condoned this behaviour.

For instance, a number of women felt that staff or security would not take them seriously if they complained about unwanted sexual attention:

> If you are drinking then people do not … give you the same respect as if you were sober, therefore making a complaint at a licensed venue is unlikely to be taken seriously. (Survey participant, heterosexual woman)
>
> [I] have experienced and witnessed girls who are scared or uncomfortable with sexual attention being accused of 'asking for it'. (Survey participant, lesbian woman)

Staff and security appear to be drawing on a variety of myths and misconceptions about sexual violence and unwanted sexual attention in determining whether to take a complaint seriously (Schuller and Stewart 2000; Weiss 2010; Young 2007). It may also be the case that recipients of unwanted sexual attention are reluctant to report in instances where they are, for example, intoxicated or dressed 'provocatively' because they believe they will not be taken seriously (see Lievore 2003, 2005). Given that such misconceptions around sexual violence are relatively widely held, these perceptions are not necessarily misguided ones.

Interviewee Anne also saw the sexual atmosphere of the venue that she was in as contributing towards her assault:

> **Anne**: It definitely had the atmosphere of a nightclub where … you might be able to … get lucky ... and people always joke about … … who's going to hook up at the Christmas party … I think that it was a night that it was at a nightclub made it a lot worse … because I think that it meant that there weren't many boundaries around what would happen.

Anne's comments indicate that the manner in which young adults interpret or read venue culture influences their behaviour and expectations regarding the potential for a sexual encounter. In this case, the perception of the venue as a space where people would 'hook up' appears to have contributed towards the hedonistic and sexual atmosphere of the venue, where 'anything'–including sexual violence–could happen.

The notion that the sexual environment and culture of venues facilitates unwanted sexual attention was a common theme in participants' responses. A number of people felt that the styles of music played in venues contributed towards an atmosphere that promoted a certain model of sexual interaction: namely, one where women were seen as passive, sexually available objects and men the active pursuers of them:

> Venues should not play sexist and demeaning music in their venues that reflects the sexually aggressive behaviour their male patrons exhibit. (Survey participant, sexuality not disclosed, woman)

This participant's comments indicate that it is not just that some venues are promoting a sexual atmosphere that is problematic, but the *type* of sex roles (for example, based on male sexual dominance and aggressive sexual 'advances') that are encoded in (or read into) this music that may be contributing towards an atmosphere where unwanted sexual attention is normalised or facilitated. A bisexual male survey respondent indicated that even in highly sexualised gay venues 'people are respectful to you saying "no", or not interested'. This further highlights the idea that it is not just sexual cultures that are problematic, but sexual cultures that are devoid of respect, mutual desire and consent and that position sexual encounters as an act of dominance or aggression. As Gayle Rubin (1992: 110) argues, we should not view different types of sexual expression or identities as being inherently better or worse than others. Instead, our focus should be firmly placed on 'the way partners treat one another, the level of mutual consideration, the presence or absence of coercion and the quantity and quality of pleasures they provide'.

That said, venues with hyper-sexual cultures may create greater opportunity for unwanted sexual attention to occur, by providing the opportunity for perpetrators to exploit cultural norms such as the way that women dress in these venues, or engagement in sexualised dancing, to make unwanted advances or perpetrate unwanted sexual attention. However, many of the young adults who suggested that unwanted sexual attention would be more likely to occur in overtly sexual venues generally did not regularly use these venues (that is, as discussed in Chap. 3, the sites of unwanted sexual attention were distanced). As such, these claims around the sites of unwanted sexual attention are used as a form of identity performance and othering of harmful behaviour—the extent to which they reflect the actual distribution of unwanted sexual attention in venues is unclear and contested.

The idea that certain ‘types’ of venues are more likely to have unwanted sexual attention occurring is further complicated by the claim that unwanted sexual attention, much like consensual encounters, can in fact occur in *any* type of venue:

> **Laura**: The behaviour itself changes but the attitude of the behaviour doesn’t … so like if you go to a dance venue and someone starts grinding you up and you want them to stop so you push away but they keep coming that’s the same sort of attitude as if someone kept following you or trying to kiss you in a pub. (FG7)

Where young adults perceive unwanted sexual attention as happening is at times related to what they think ‘counts’ as unwanted sexual attention and what they think are harmful forms of unwanted sexual attention (see Chap. 2). So, for example, it may indeed be that unwanted sexual attention can happen in *any* type of venue, but that the forms of unwanted sexual attention that tend to happen in a ‘meat market’ venue are the forms more likely to be experienced as harmful by young people. For example, Hutton notes that while ‘overt harassing behaviour by men is not tolerated in some club spaces … this overt behaviour is replaced by more subtle covert forms of sexism’ (2006: 8), and her participants still ‘had to accept intimate touch that was sometimes unwanted’ (2006: 87). Thus, in this instance the claim that sexual harassment occurs less often in these venues sits uneasily with the observation that less ‘severe’ forms of unwanted sexual attention are still pervasive. This suggests that young adults perceive certain types of venues as being the site of where unwanted sexual attention occurs, but this does not necessarily reflect their first-hand experiences.

Unwanted sexual attention was discussed as having been normalised in certain types of clubs and pubs. As one survey participant observed, ‘it’s so common that it’s almost accepted or expected at these venues’ (survey participant, heterosexual woman) This further facilitated its occurrence, as patrons (particularly women) came to expect a certain level of unwanted sexual attention when they were in these venues and felt that there was little they could do in response. For some, the normalisation or expectation of unwanted sexual attention was related to their own use of venues to try to ‘pick up’ or ‘hook up’. These people felt that in order to be able to use venues themselves to engage in sexual encounters they had to accept that they would also be on the receiving end of such advances and that they may occasionally be unwanted:

> As most licensed venues are places where people go to ‘pick up’, I think you have to accept there will be occasions where you will be propositioned and it will be unwelcome. (Survey participant, bisexual woman)

There was a degree of blurring or ambiguity between unwanted sexual attention and the consensual sexual interaction that takes place in some venues. Participants, for example, often questioned at what point something shifted from being ‘harmless’ flirtation, or an acceptable attempt at initiating a sexual encounter, to being harassing, unwanted and inappropriate. Norms governing sexual encounters in venues give rise here to the inevitability of unwanted sexual attention: the unwanted is the price to pay for the privilege of being able to seek out and engage in consensual encounters.

Other young adults highlighted the difficulty in determining if something was unwanted or not when no physical activity had taken place. In the absence of physical contact the intent of the initiator was unclear:

> It might be difficult to (initially) tell the difference between wanted and unwanted attention if there is no physical occurrence. For example, if someone is staring or making comments, it may be complimentary rather than aggressive/unwanted and it may not be clear. (Survey participant, lesbian woman)

This suggests that the ‘wanted’ and ‘unwanted’ may occupy the same space, at least momentarily, until the ‘intent’ of the initiator/perpetrator becomes clear. However, this construction of unwanted attention privileges the intent of the initiating party above the lived experience of the recipient. This participant’s comments also reinforce a particular hierarchy of seriousness. Comments or advances that were made as part of a genuine attempt to 'pick up' or as a romantic advance were, even if unwanted, often seen as less serious than comments or actions that were viewed as coming from a place of intentional aggression or maliciousness. That is, 'serious' forms of unwanted sexual attention were not simply a misguided attempt at 'hooking up' for the night, or coming from a place of physical attraction. As Fairchild (2010: 196) notes, behaviours that are 'lower in coercion' tend to be 'more ambiguous in the intent of the harasser'. Thus, perceived intent also plays a role here, with less coercive and/or ambiguous advances generally being interpreted as romantic in intent and, therefore, as being less harmful. Similarly, Mitchell et al. (2009) found that knowing a perpetrator's motivation for rape influenced how participants viewed both the perpetrator and the victim. In scenarios where the perpetrator was motivated by violence rather than sex, Mitchell et al.'s participants were more likely to view the scenario as rape, more likely to respond more punitively towards the perpetrator and were less likely to blame the victim (2009: 1574; see also Angelone et al. 2012; Sizemore 2013). However, it is not clear that the intent of the perpetrator necessarily diminishes the impact unwanted sexual attention has on the victim.

Other respondents highlighted that unwanted sexual attention is not a static encounter. An initially undesired advance holds transformative potential:

> Unwanted sexual attention can be what is pleasurable in a venue - i.e., flirting - and can developed [sic] into wanted sexual attention. (Survey participant, bisexual male)
>
> Sometimes people go out for the night longing for sexual attention and sometimes they don't … Can unwanted and wanted be absolutely separated in the intoxication of a night out on the town? Where does pleasure come in to this? (Survey participant, bisexual male)

Certainly, pleasure is an important aspect of sexual interaction and a concept that is often absent from discourses on young people (particularly young women) and sex (Allen 2004; Beasley 2008; Carmody 2003, 2004, 2005; Gavey 2005). The question at stake here though is not where does pleasure enter into this, but whose pleasure are we privileging and at what cost? Again, there is the suggestion that unwanted and wanted sexual attention form inseparable components of sexual interaction. While these individuals rightly state that pleasure should be considered as an important component of sexual interaction, it is unclear from such comments how the recipient of 'unwanted' forms of attention may also experience pleasure. Cahill's (2009: 27) reconfiguration of sexual violence suggests that some more pertinent questions here are:

> 'How was her desire, or lack thereof, heard and respected? Was there space for her sexual agency? Was she, as a sexual subject, an active participant in the interaction, shaping it with her particular desires in an interaction with another sexual subject?'

We must consider whether the subjectivity and desires of the individual who receives unwanted attention are taken into account, or whether the person enacting the unwanted attention is instead projecting 'upon her being the reflection of his own desires, and nothing but those desires'—temporarily obliterating the victims' sexual subjectivity (Cahill 2009: 25).

Negotiating Consent in Venues

When discussing and distinguishing between wanted and unwanted sexual attention, it is vital to consider the concept of consent. Indeed, it is the presence or absence of consent that largely defines the 'unwanted'. Sexual interactions or behaviours that are otherwise perfectly normative and in many contexts welcome become proscribed with the absence of consent (although it is worth pointing out here that 'consensual' sexual encounters are not synonymous with 'ethical' sexual encounters—Gavey 2005).

How then is consent 'done' in venues, and in what ways might this be shaped by the culture and environment of the venue? The following section draws primarily on discussions that occurred within the focus groups conducted with young adults. These young people were asked to reflect upon how they negotiate consent in sexual encounters in licensed venues and on any difficulties or barriers to negotiating consent within venue settings. As the majority of focus group participants identified as cisgender, heterosexual men and women, the following discussion primarily reflects the negotiation of sexual consent in heterosexual encounters. How consent was 'done' in venues had important implications for the occurrence of unwanted sexual attention and the ways in which young adults understood unwanted sexual attention.

The negotiation of consent was discussed as a subtle, nuanced, and primarily physical affair. It centred on the mutual reciprocation of 'body language' and physical contact (see also: Burkett and Hamilton 2012; Hickman and Muehlenhard 1999; Powell 2008, 2010). Most young people dismissed the notion that consent was something that would be openly and explicitly discussed. The following exchange between Florence and Elise articulates the process of mutual reciprocation:

Florence: Like going along with it.

Elise: Yeah.

Florence: Is the kind of how you negotiate it … Yeah … it's about going along with it, I think.

Elise: Yeah, or reciprocating as well.

Florence: Reciprocating, yeah.

Elise: So if they, they, you know, touch you.

Florence: And you lean in.

Elise: It's just like anything in any venue, I mean if somebody did that anywhere, like in a movie theatre and you're on your first date he'd probably do that to you [yawning and stretching arms around his date] (laughs). Ah, yeah, so it's reciprocating.

Florence: Reciprocating and participating.

Elise: Participating and.

Florence: In the act.

Elise: Yeah, but I mean, different people have different … perceptions of what constitutes participating … if you don't do anything is that … negative or positive? (FG1)

The process of negotiating consent is portrayed here as mutual and active, with the individuals involved reflecting or mirroring the behaviour of the other to indicate consent. However, there is likely to also be an escalation of the sexual contact at some point during the interaction (for example, from subtle touching to kissing). It is unclear from this exchange how such escalation would occur, what would constitute a 'reasonable' level of escalation (Cowling 2004: 20), or who initiates it (although the initiation of consent and escalation of behaviour can also be a mutual, rather than uni-directional, affair (Beres 2007: 104)). Further, as Powell articulates, 'for young women there are a lot of unspoken, unarticulated pressures to engage in unwanted sex' (2008: 181), and these gendered, cultural pressures guiding sexual interactions are unacknowledged in participants' accounts of sexual consent here (see also, Beres 2007; Burkett and Hamilton 2012; Moore and Reynolds 2004; Powell 2010).

As Elise purports, individuals may hold different perceptions in terms of what active participation or reciprocation 'looks like' in such encounters (see also Cowling and Reynolds 2004: 4). This indicates that there is in fact a degree of ambiguity in the interpretation of these subtle and nuanced sexual cues, despite participants generally asserting that young adults were adept at deciphering consent signals (see also Hickman and Muehlenhard 1999):

> **Noni:** I mean maybe people do it, but I can't really imagine if you're dancing with someone and then there's actually a point where you go 'I'm going to do this, is this ok?' Or you say 'It's ok if you do this'. I just really can't imagine that actually happening … I would assume it would be more of a feeling out the reactions I guess of the other person.
>
> **Mary**: And something that we do without thinking about it I think. (FG4)

The process of seeking consent and knowing if a potential sexual partner is consenting is seen to be intuitive, ingrained knowledge. While Mary and Noni view young adults as capable of tuning in to these subtle signals, it is interesting that the first point of potential non-consent is, according to Noni, when physical contact occurs. This reinforces participants' views on what 'counts' as sexual interaction, with the implication here that non-physical interaction does not require consent (see also Burkett and Hamilton 2012).

Elise's earlier comments suggest that the way that consent is negotiated or ascertained within a club or pub setting is no different to how this process might occur in any other romantic or sexual situation. In this respect licensed venues were not seen as a unique sexual site. Yet the need to engage in bodily cues was also positioned within the physical environment of such venues:

> **Jenny**: I don't think it's something that you really negotiate too much… .
> **Haley**: I think, especially with places where you can't speak, it's about, sort of, the non-verbal cues. It might be, you know, a hand on the arm or something…
> **Gloria**: Yeah, like if someone moves away from you when you touch them, or something like that, it might imply that they really don't want to be touched and they're not consenting to it, so non-verbal. (FG3)

The physical environment of venues can be seen here to limit, shape and influence the ways in which sexual consent (or non-consent) can be communicated. It is also apparent in this conversation that consent is not 'formally' negotiated, the implication of this being that you intuitively 'just know' if someone is consenting. However, the unspoken understanding that someone is consenting (or not) is problematic in nature. Gloria's comment hints at the ambiguity inherent in physical methods of determining consent—for instance, that aversion to physical touch only 'might' imply non-consent (Cowling and Reynolds 2004: 4; Hickman and Muehlenhard 1999). Indeed, the subjective interpretation of non-verbal consent cues means that misinterpretation is an inevitable consequence of this process:

> **Haley** I think that goes back to sort of the body language and non-verbal cues and unless you can actually have a conversation and … discuss formally, which I don't think anyone does … it's up to interpretation. And some people interpret things one way and others interpret it the other … if it misaligns then that's not great, but if it aligns it's ok. (FG3)

Despite the pitfalls of a reliance on subtle, physical signals to identify consent being clearly expressed, Haley remains resistant to the use of direct verbal exchange to negotiate consent. Indeed, it has been broadly acknowledged in the literature on sexual consent and refusal that these processes rarely occur in an explicitly verbal way (that is, with a direct 'yes' or 'no'). As Powell notes, 'bodily communication … is arguably more typical of sexual encounters' (2008: 173). Likewise, others have noted that refusals of any kind seldom occur through a verbal 'no', and both men and women are able to pick up on the subtle, nuanced, and indirect ways that we do refusal, sexual or otherwise (Beres 2010; Calder 2004; Hansen et al. 2010; Humphreys 2004; Kitzinger and Frith 1999; O'Byrne et al. 2006; Powell 2010).

Perhaps a more pertinent question here is not why are young adults resistant to verbally negotiating consent, but rather why do 'misalignments' occur, and is there is a willing and/or culturally sanctioned misreading of consent cues occurring? For instance, Powell's research on young people's negotiation of consent found that men 'are subject to cultural rules which pressure them to engage in sex, particularly as "proof" of successful masculinity' (2008: 176). These cultural norms also encourage young men, according to Powell, to be 'unthinking, to be active/pursuant and in need of clear boundaries' (2008: 181). Thus, it may be that, at least in heterosexual encounters, cultural pressures contribute to consent cues being 'misread' or even deliberately ignored (Hickman and Muehlenhard 1999). Such 'misreadings' may be heightened in a cultural and social setting in which overt sexual interaction and performance is normative.

However, for some heterosexual young people the potential for 'misalignment', or having a degree of ambiguity in knowing if someone was consenting or not, was part of the inherent thrill and excitement of 'hooking up' with someone for the first time:

> **Dylan**: You could go to an extreme, you work out some sort of system so that you can make it clear if you want sexual attention from me, but I think that some of the best part about it all is the uncertainty of it. (FG6)

'Not knowing' if someone is sexually interested in you is itself 'sexy' for some young adults. Inherent within this is the potential for non-desire as an outcome. Non-desire becomes an inseparable component of sexual interaction—although it should be acknowledged here that Dylan's comments are made in respect to the process of verbal/non-physical interaction leading up to physical sexual encounters, and not in respect to physical sexual encounters. Similarly, participants in Humphrey's (2004: 220) research investigating how young adults negotiate (hetero)sexual encounters also indicated that 'not knowing' what was going to happen in a sexual encounter was part of the inherent excitement of sex. However, as discussed in Chap. 2, some individuals experienced these initial verbal interactions as a form of unwanted sexual attention. What was for the initiator of the interaction part of the 'thrill of the chase' was for some young people experienced in a negative and occasionally harmful way.

The Cultural Scripting of Consent and Unwanted Sexual Attention

What role did broader cultural norms and scripts around (hetero)sex, such as those identified by Gavey as forming the scaffolding for sexual violence, play in shaping how the young people in this study talked about consent? It was clear that these broader norms shaped the ways in which young adults approached consent in venues: as noted earlier, while venues are in some respects unique cultural sites, they are not disconnected or immune from outside influence. Young adults come to these venues with a range of pre-formed understandings and ideas regarding the rules of negotiating sexual encounters.

How young adults were seen to go about negotiating consent (and initiating sexual advances more generally) was for some people tied into stereotypical, gendered scripts around sexual interaction. For instance, normative assumptions around the role of alcohol, and a 'night out', in sex and seduction were apparent in comments made by female focus group participants. According to this script, having had drinks with someone, and agreeing to go with them to a private location signified a mutual understanding that sex was going to take place:

Florence: If you're going to take someone home you kind [of] know what you're taking them home for. (FG1)

The role of sex scripts was also apparent in respondents' discourses around the assumptions that young men make about women's perceived sexual desire:

> Many men assume if women attend these places and are dressed nicely, we're 'asking for' the attention. Which isn't the case, women might be there to have a good time with friends and we shouldn't have to put up with unwanted attention. (Survey participant, heterosexual woman)
>
> Women (and men) dress very provocatively, yet demand that they are not treated as sexual objects … If they don't want to be looked at then they shouldn't wear clothes split to the navel and arse… (Survey participant, heterosexual woman)

Flirting and 'provocative' dress are interpreted here as relative to sexual desire—although the comments from the first participant are clearly challenging such discourses. While these behaviours and sartorial choices may indeed be used in this way, it can also be the case that they are used as a means of 'doing' and reaffirming one's sexuality/sexual identity, and this does not necessarily coincide with sexual desire. Such comments also ignore the possibility that flirting and provocative dress can be cultural requirements of attending and/or 'fitting in' in some venues (Grazian 2009: 913; Monaghan 2002: 412; Parks et al. 1998: 711–712). Failure to dress in a sexualised manner may result in exclusion from a desired social space.[2] Consequently, sexualised dress becomes imperative in order to belong in (or even access) certain venues. Nonetheless, other participants argued that sartorial choices had the potential to fundamentally shift the culture or atmosphere of a particular venue, suggesting that clothing should not necessarily be viewed as irrelevant or benign in shaping venue culture or in signaling personal identity. However, the use of clothing to signal personal identity and to determine whether an individual belongs in a particular venue space is not particularly problematic in and of itself. At worse, an incorrect reading or misinterpretation of clothing may result in an individual being subtly excluded from, or denied access to, a venue space. The consequences of a 'misreading' of clothing in relation to sexual consent are considerably more dire.

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[2] And this was in fact a direct experience I had when undertaking observational activity as part of this study. On a cold, rainy Melbourne night a friend (who was also heavily pregnant at the time) and I joined the long queue to enter a commercial nightclub. Dressed in sensible winter coats and holding umbrellas, we clearly stood out from the other hopeful patrons in line, with the women dressed in short, tight dresses and impossibly high heels, the men in jeans and collared shirts. As we approached the front of the line, the bouncer looked us up and down and informed us we were not getting in.

Some young adults challenged these stereotypical sex scripts. For instance, in the first quote above the survey respondent clearly disputes the notion that women use clothing to signal sexual intent. Another participant challenged dominant narratives around sexual consent and alcohol:

> **Elise**: I'll accept a drink, like I said, from somebody cos' it's a free drink and, cool, and I feel complimented and that's fine. I think most people nowadays wouldn't sort of say oh, well that gives them license to whatever anymore. It maybe used to be like that but I don't think it is anymore. I think it's just sort of like the first step that a guy might do. (FG1)

Although Elise challenges the popular misconception that accepting a drink is indicative of consent, she simultaneously draws on the discursive construction of sexual advances as occurring along stereotypical, gendered lines: that is, where the man initiates the sexual advances, and the women either welcomes or rebuffs his approach (Beres 2007; Powell 2008). Her comment also highlights the different forms of desire that patrons may harbour when attending venues. In Elise's case, she desires and appreciates being seen as sexually attractive ('I feel complimented') and having this acknowledged in the form of a free drink, yet she does not desire physical sexual interaction. Elise's comments further illustrate the potential pitfalls of assuming that a certain style of dress or action signifies sexual consent. It may signal some sexual interest, but interest in what kind of sexual interaction is not immediately apparent and may range from wanting to feel 'complimented' through to desiring some form of sexual liaison.

Cultural 'rules' or scripts around how sexual encounters should occur could make it difficult to know if someone was giving unwanted sexual attention or not in a venue setting. For example, sexual scripts around female coyness and 'playing hard to get' were explicitly identified as a barrier to knowing if someone was interested in a sexual advance or not:

> **Edwin**: I think with that power balance that is currently there … it's difficult for guys to even know that they're giving the unwanted sexual attention, much less that, yeah, like when they should stop and all that sort of stuff.
>
> **Dylan**: Yeah, there's … a crossover between a girl pretending to be disinterested, you know, for the purposes of the game, and a girl being uncomfortable and so it makes it harder to work out. So sometimes … if I ever get that sort of impression I'm walking away, and then sometimes they're sort of like 'what the hell are you doing?' You're like well, I don't want to give you any unwanted sexual attention. (FG6)

Similarly, the cultural script that positions men as the initiators of sexual advances was seen by young men in particular as placing them in a situation where they would inevitably be the ones enacting unwanted sexual attention (although not necessarily 'harmful' or intentional forms of unwanted attention):

> **Frank**: I'd say guys primarily (laughs), and I think part of that has to do with the cultural expectation of the guys make the first move. (FG6)

Cultural scripts that promote male initiation of sex and female passivity and/or feigned lack of interest, in conjunction with a venue environment that is highly sexual, intersect to create an environment in which unwanted sexual advances are more readily able to occur.

Consent and Unwanted Sexual Attention

There was a clear disjuncture in narratives on consent in wanted versus unwanted sexual encounters. In particular, what was expected of a non-consenting individual in communicating their non-consent was often vastly different to how participants depicted the negotiation of consent in wanted sexual interactions. Past research has identified a similar disjuncture in relation to young heterosexual women's perceptions of how sexual consent is done—where consent is seen to be negotiated in a direct, verbal exchange—versus how they *actually* negotiate consent in consensual sexual encounters, where consent is indicated through the use of subtle, physical signals and cues (Burkett and Hamilton 2012: 821).

For one respondent, the expression of non-consent was seen as more 'obvious' to pick up on in comparison to the types of signals used to indicate positive consent:

> **Cameron**: I don't think you can pick up any particularly salient factor [for knowing if someone is consenting], but you'd obviously tell when consent was not given would be more accurate I think, I'm not sure. (FG5)
>
> **Cameron**: I think react negatively … say no, or back off, or look very upset or irritated and walk away, or, a variety of things would be a denial of consent I would say. (FG5)

Interestingly, while Cameron views the cues used to communicate positive consent as being so vague or subtle he is unable to clearly articulate what they are, a non-consenting individual would, according to Cameron, use clear and direct forms of verbal communication and body language to express their non-consent. That is, the non-consenter will actively convey their non-consent to the initiator. Such a view of consent becomes particularly problematic if an individual who is not consenting to a sexual act is unable to 'actively' communicate this (for instance, because they are incapacitated). Further, it is unclear how the actions of an individual who was not actively responding either way (positively or negatively) would be interpreted. The models of sexual consent expressed here frame sexual activity as something that you (to borrow the language of focus group participant Dylan) 'opt-out' of through the active communication of non-consent. This stands in contrast to the model of consent discussed earlier in the chapter that was based on mutual and active reciprocation of behaviour, in which consent was portrayed as an 'opt-in' process. This indicates that there is great diversity in terms of how young people 'do' consent (Carmody 2005), and that there is variety in terms of the signals an individual might look for, as well as in what they would expect a potential partner to do (or not do) to communicate consent (Hickman and Muehlenhard 1999).

For some young people, the moment when sexual attention became unwanted was dependent upon the clear verbal expression of a lack of consent, despite participants often dismissing the idea that you would openly discuss sexual consent with a potential partner:

> **Elise**: Yeah, and the girl hasn't said 'look, I really don't want to talk to you anymore' … They're trying to be polite … [the initiator doesn't] get the cues, so miscommunication and persistence and, yeah, social awkwardness. And, and that can come with having too much alcohol too. You're going to miss a lot more cues when you're drunk. (FG1)
>
> **Noni**: There's been times where I feel like it is unwanted on her behalf but … maybe she's not expressing that it is unwanted very well. (FG4)

Within these discussions, women were depicted as inept communicators who were simply not adequately or clearly conveying their lack of interest (Burkett and Hamilton 2012; Frith and Kitzinger 1999). The view of women as inept communicators has been a common theme in much research focusing on a sexual miscommunication model of sexual assault and rape (Frith and Kitzinger 1999). Such views play into stereotypes around women as the passive recipients of men's sexual advances (women were rarely depicted as the initiators of these encounters, but as the recipients who either gave their consent or not), framing women as the gatekeepers of men's sexuality (Allen 2004; Hickman and Muehlenhard 1999; Powell 2008, 2010). The active choice of the perpetrator to engage in unwanted sexual behaviour, as well as the broader gendered power relations that enable this, are obscured under this understanding of unwanted sexual attention (Cowling and Reynolds 2004; Frith and Kitzinger 1999). Elise's comments suggest that pressure to be 'polite' and maintain social etiquette restrains women from responding openly to unwanted advances (see also Fileborn 2012b). There may be a range of other reasons for women's use of a 'polite' refusal. For instance, women may fear the unwanted advance escalating into something 'more serious' and thus utilise politeness as a means to diffuse the encounter.

Some individuals did identify the discourse around consent, and the requirement for a verbal 'no', as problematic:

> **Alex**: Even saying that beyond no is when it becomes [a problem] is probably not quite accurate because before no it can also be unwanted. (FG2)

There are, of course, a wide range of reasons why an individual may not verbally express their non-consent (Hickman and Muehlenhard 1999; Powell 2008). As noted earlier, we in fact rarely express any type of refusal as a direct, explicit 'no'. The venue environment itself also poses a range of barriers to 'doing' refusal, or in making a refusal less likely to be 'heard'. Some young adults experienced unwanted sexual attention under circumstances that meant it was not possible (or there was no opportunity) to express their lack of consent/desire as a 'no'; for example, being groped by a stranger and having had no interaction with that person up until the point of physical contact. Further, some of the normative behaviours in licensed venue settings, such as the consumption of drugs and alcohol, may be used either intentionally or opportunistically by perpetrators of sexual violence/unwanted sexual attention so that an individual is simply unable to say no (see Chap. 5 for further detail).

The physical environment and culture of a venue can contribute towards the impaired communication (or deliberate misreading) of sexual consent and desire. Some young people responded that social and sexual interaction in clubs and pubs could be easily confused or conflated, and that it could at times be difficult to determine whether someone was making a sexual advance towards them. Focus group participant Elise raised this behavioural ambiguity in her response:

> **Elise**: It's really hard if they're not direct because then I'll just, you know if they start touching me or something there's like a clear 'Oh, I've got a partner' even if I don't. (FG1)

The ambiguous nature of these interactions could make it difficult for young adults to know how to respond or, indeed, to determine if the interaction was intended as sexual or not in the first place. If the intent of an approach is unclear (or if it is misinterpreted as being sexual/not sexual), it may prevent an individual from engaging in the relevant cues or body language used to communicate their desire/lack of desire. Conversely, a heterosexual female participant from another focus group recounted a night where she had rejected a man who was talking to her by informing him she had a partner. In turn, this individual informed her that he was gay, and not interested in her sexually. The potential for such social embarrassment (as this encounter was experienced) was often a significant factor in influencing how young people were able to respond in ambiguous situations, with most favouring 'subtle' strategies, such as casually mentioning their partner in conversation to indicate that they were not 'available'. Ambiguity in the intent of the pursuer (or potential pursuer) can become problematic in that a misreading of the encounter leads to the 'wrong' communicative signals being used.

Difficulty or confusion was seen to occur in the process of negotiating consent due to the issues of 'mismatched' expectations around sexual encounters, and the nature of consent as being fluid and dynamic:

> **Alex**: I know like I've been in situations where there has been body contact and touching … and then it doesn't lead to anything or that person sort of doesn't want it to go any further … and that can cause confusion because sometimes one person feels that that's sort of saying yes, let's go ahead, you know, I wanna do more….
>
> **Benjamin**: … attention can be wanted and then unwanted … if it becomes too excessive or prolonged or something. Someone might be enjoying someone's attention or conversation or whatever and then decide they've had enough, and that can often lead to … conflict of some sort. (FG2)

Alex implies that some young adults assume that consent to a certain level of sexual interaction indicates that they are consenting to further sexual activity (or to more 'serious' sexual activity). It is clear in Alex's comments that mismatches in sexual desire, or the type of sexual activity that is desired, can be problematic for young adults in clubs and pubs. How this arises is unclear, though it is possible that the reluctance to engage in open conversations around desire, or the holding of unspoken assumptions around what certain forms of sexual interaction signify, contribute to this 'misalignment'. Alex asserts that a mismatch in expectations may lead to 'confusion'; however, it is unclear precisely what this means, and in particular whether Alex is implying that it could be a causative factor in unwanted sexual attention or sexual assault occurring. It is also apparent in both Benjamin and Alex's comments that consent to one form of sexual activity may engender a sense of entitlement to further sexual activity in some individuals—'problems' or 'conflict' may subsequently arise when one party feels they have been 'led on' by the other (Jackson 1978). This is problematic given that consent and desire are also positioned as dynamic and fluid here. Thus, while an individual may be initially enjoying and consenting to a particular activity, they may change their mind and withdraw consent at any given moment for myriad reasons. The negotiation of consent can be viewed as an ongoing process of negotiation and re-negotiation, rather than a static agreement (Corteen 2004; Humphreys 2004; Moore and Reynolds 2004; Powell 2010).

A number of aspects of the club environment and culture were seen to contribute towards ambiguity in intent, and, consequently, in knowing if someone was actually consenting to a sexual encounter or not. Alcohol consumption and intoxication were raised by young adults as key barriers to negotiating consent. These barriers functioned in a number of different ways. For instance, the disinhibiting effects of alcohol may result in people engaging in behavioural cues that might 'usually' communicate interest in sexual activity. Engagement in these cues may occur regardless of whether they are *actually* interested in sex or not, further highlighting the limitations of using behavioural or physical cues as the *sole* indicator of sexual consent (see also Beres 2007). Intoxication can also impair decision-making and other cognitive functions (Abbey et al. 2001):

> **Elise**: You're usually both drunk, which doesn't help, right? It clouds your judgment, and some people it makes them a little bit more consenting, or appear consenting. (FG1)

However, as others have noted, individuals who have been drinking (particularly women) are often perceived as being more sexually promiscuous (Abbey and Harnish 1995). Thus, it is not necessarily that intoxicated individuals are acting in a way that makes them 'appear consenting', but rather that others interpret their actions as being more sexual than they actually are. Others responded that it would be a combination of factors such as intoxication, the physical environment of venues, and the venue culture that impaired the process of negotiating consent. Additional environmental factors were also identified as impairing the communication of consent:

> **Noni**: You might not always be able to hear people really well over, over music … I think that would also make it a bit more difficult as well. (FG4)

There is some tension here between the claim that loud music impairs verbal communication, and hence the ability to communicate consent, with earlier claims that the process of negotiating consent is a largely non-verbal one. While it was discussed earlier that the environment of venues influenced how consent is 'done', this was generally not seen as being problematic. Focus group participant Laura also elaborated on the role that the assemblage of alcohol, venue environment, and venue culture may play in hindering the negotiation of consent. These factors, in conjunction with the generally hectic environment of many venue spaces, mean that 'things can easily be miscommunicated, get confused, a no can mean a yes, a yes can mean a no, and both of those can mean a maybe'. Laura suggested that an individual may easily change their mind in the context of the venue environment, indicating that desire/non-desire or consent/non-consent are fluid states of being.

Indeed, the physical environment of venues can structure patrons' interactions and bodily communication in ways that mimic the non-verbal cues used in signalling sexual interaction. As a consequence, there may be a great deal of ambiguity in the 'signals' given off by patrons:

> **Mary**: The lines would be more blurry … in those venues not because the lines are in reality more blurry but because … the way people interact is different to us now. If we were in a bar we'd have to be

> closer together for one thing… people probably flirt more in those venues as well just because they're caught up in the night. (FG4)

Spatial arrangements, Grosz (1995: 108) notes, affect 'the way the subject sees others … the subject's understanding of, and alignment with space, different forms of lived spatiality… must have effects on the ways we live space and thus on our corporeal alignments, comportment, and orientations'. Here, the alignment of bodies in space (in conversation with the particular socio-cultural atmosphere) co-produces corporeal 'aligments, comportment, and orientations' which mimic (or are read as mimicking) sexual overtures and flirtations. The spatial arrangement of venues is an active constituent in the occurrence of, or potential for, sexual encounters and flirtations, but also the ways in which sexual consent is negotiated or assumed.

'Blurred Lines': Perpetrators and Consent

The perceived 'blurriness' or ambiguity of unwanted sexual attention (as established in Chap. 2) and the process of negotiating consent were often used to excuse or mitigate the behaviour of perpetrators. For instance, perpetration of unwanted sexual attention was often framed as being caused by an individual 'deficiency' or 'flaw', such as mental illness or a lack of social intelligence. That is, the perpetrator engaged in their behaviour because they were not able to pick up on the victim's cues of non-consent. This 'deficiency' was also seen to be enhanced by the consumption of alcohol, and other environmental and cultural factors in clubs and pubs (discussed earlier in the chapter), making it difficult to know if someone was consenting or not. In this respect unwanted sexual attention was framed as a 'misunderstanding', as opposed to an intentional act:

> **Elise**: They're desperate.
> **Florence**: Yeah, just don't understand social cues, I think.
> **Elise**: Socially awkward.
> **Florence**: … sometimes people they just want to pick up, and they give it a go and it doesn't work and then that's fine … but then if you persist or it becomes uncomfortable for the

> other person it's probably, my perception would be that they're socially awkward, like understanding, reading social situations kind of thing. (FG1)

Women in particular tended to engage in self-blame, and viewed themselves as at least partially responsible for the unwanted sexual attention occurring. This was apparent in comments made in which young women questioned whether they were clear or firm enough in communicating their lack of interest or consent—thus, their 'inadequate' communication was used to excuse perpetrator behaviour. Such comments sit in stark contrast to the discussions around consent covered earlier in the chapter. In particular, these comments contradict and challenge the notion that you 'just know' if someone is consenting, and that communication of consent through subtle and nuanced body language is always adequate. Framing unwanted sexual attention in this way excludes the possibility that the perpetrator was willfully misreading or ignoring their signals, and provides an avenue for perpetrators to deny or avoid taking responsibility for their problematic behaviour (Hickman and Muehlenhard 1999: 259). Hansen et al. (2010): 48) go so far as to contend that this view of coercive sexual behaviour as simply 'misguided' or as a form of miscommunication functions as a rape myth that 'promote[s], condone[s], and exculpate[s] coercive sexual behaviour'. To complicate matters further, this also assumes that behaviour can be readily categorised into 'wanted/unwanted', 'intentional'/'unintentional', which, as we have seen, is not necessarily the case—though such behavior arguably fails to take the victim's sexual subjectivity and desire into account.

The minimisation and excusing of perpetrators' 'misguided' behaviour was particularly acute for more 'minor' forms of unwanted sexual attention (such as verbal comments or unwanted touching). In contrast, more severe forms of unwanted sexual attention (such as behaviours that would meet legal definitions of sexual assault or rape) were seen as malicious and intentional. These 'serious' forms of unwanted sexual attention tended to be discussed as occurring as a result of an individual's mental health problems rather than social ineptitude:

> **Noni**: It would be interesting to find out, you know, if it is more of just a not understanding other appropriate ways to go about the same,

like you know, to talk to interact, or whether it's actually, you know, I'm being malicious and trying to…

Mary: Yeah, I mean obviously … I'm referring to the less offensive types … Um, the other ones [perpetrators of more 'serious' forms of unwanted sexual attention] then some kind of mental health issue. (FG4)

Certainly, psychological or personality traits may influence an individual's proclivity to engage in unwanted sexual harassment or sexually violent behaviours (Pina et al. 2009). However, what is missing in these accounts is acknowledgement of the active choices that perpetrators make in engaging in unwanted sexual attention, as well as recognition of the broader social and cultural environment that the behaviours take place in (Cowling and Reynolds 2004). Some individuals did recognise this, and drew clear links between broader social and cultural factors, and perpetration of unwanted sexual attention:

Ingrid: The Aussie male … like with the Cronulla riots and stuff … there's these blonde guys … ripping their shirts off … asserting their dominance or whatever, and I think that has a lot to do with it as well … I know … I've seen them… you're out in the beer garden … or having a cigarette, and you can hear them 'oh, I really feel like getting into a fight tonight'. And it's that kind of attitude … that they've got no concern for their own personal safety, and you know that they don't have concern for anyone else's … It might have a little bit to do with that if it's not physical dominance it's sexual dominance as well.

Haley: And sometimes the guys play off each other and make it a competition…

Kim: Yeah, they'll make a game out of it … they'll spot … the drunk one in the herd and.

Haley: Who's going to pick her up? (FG3)

In this discussion the process of 'picking up' is viewed as a homosocial masculine performance rather than as occurring out of any 'genuine' sexual attraction or interest in someone. Unwanted sexual attention (or sexual dominance, as Ingrid puts it) is strongly linked here to a certain style of masculinity that promotes aggression and domination over others. Rather than attributing perpetration to individual pathology, it is firmly located within broader gender norms and culturally sanctioned ways of 'doing' masculinity. That these men are 'competing' and 'playing off' one another suggests that the process of 'picking up' is functioning as a masculine performance as much as it is an attempt to have a sexual encounter. Grazian (2007: 22) describes the rituals of 'picking up' and sexually objectifying women (or 'girl hunting', as Grazian calls it) as being 'collective and homosocial *group* activities conducted in the company of men'. Thus, 'picking up' (or fighting or engaging in a range of other suitably (hyper)masculine pursuits) provides a means of proving and/or performing one's masculinity to male companions. The use of sexual objectification and domination of women as a vehicle for performing masculinity may contribute to the occurrence of unwanted sexual attention, particularly if the desire to 'do' this model of masculinity is greater than any concern towards the well-being, desire, or consent of the target. Given that the language associated with 'hooking up', such as 'herd' and 'meat market', is laden with animalistic references, the target/recipient of a sexual advance may be readily de-humanised or de-personalised, with her own sexual desires or lack thereof largely irrelevant to his course of action.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to explore the role that venue sexual culture plays in the occurrence of unwanted sexual attention. Venue sexual culture formed part of the contextual support structures that facilitated unwanted sexual attention occurring, mitigated or excused the behaviour of perpetrators, allowed unwanted sexual attention to be seen as an inevitable outcome of consensual sexual encounters, limited the responses of bystanders, and limited the decisions of victims to report their experiences. In short, venue sexual culture plays a substantial role in the 'scaffolding' of unwanted sexual attention. Venue culture is not, however, disconnected from broader cultural norms governing sexual encounters. A range of culturally sanctioned scripts around sex played out in participants' discussions of consent in venues. Indeed, venues are perhaps one of the key sites in which these broader sexual scripts are performed, with many of the factors assumed to indicate sexual consent, such as the consumption of alcohol or dressing in a sexually-appealing manner, being present within pubs and clubs. Additionally, venue cultures are not homogeneous, with the norms of some venues perhaps more amenable to the promotion of unwanted sexual attention than others. Sexual cultures based upon respect and mutual pleasure hold the potential to be protective against unwanted sexual attention occurring. Likewise, sexual culture is intimately connected to gendered performance. Venues in which hegemonic masculinity is performed through the use of aggressive sexual advances as a form of homosocial bonding, with little to no concern for the target, may be particularly amenable to unwanted sexual attention occurring. Such constructions of gender and gendered sexual expression directly contribute towards sexual norms where men are the relentless pursuers of sex, and women the passive recipients and gatekeepers of these advances, leaving little room for their desires to be heard or actively expressed. In working towards the prevention of unwanted sexual attention, it is vital that these norms be challenged and dismantled.

Yet sexual culture is not acting alone here. Rather, it was often the complex assemblage of culture, time and space—in conjunction with individual interpretations of symbolic cues and sexual norms—that came together to facilitate or excuse the occurrence of unwanted attention. The norms guiding sexual encounters in venues were highly malleable, and nowhere was this more apparent than in the negotiation of sexual consent where the 'rules' of conduct virtually reversed in making sense of consensual versus non-consensual encounters.

A range of challenges arises from such findings. How might we begin to shift these norms in order to absolve the notion that unwanted sexual attention is an inevitable or 'normal' component of venue experience? Moreover, how do we prevent any new cultural norms from being subverted or applied in contradictory ways depending upon the consensual/non-consensual nature of the encounter? How might we (and is it even possible to) develop norms of 'ethical' sexual interaction in an unstable and fluid cultural field? I return to these challenges in the final chapter of this book.

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5

Drugs and Booze

Alcohol features heavily in the occurrence of sexual violence, including, but by no means limited to, that taking place within licensed venue settings (e.g., Graham et al. 2014). Indeed, alcohol is associated with a significant proportion of recorded sexual assaults, with between one-third to two-thirds of incidents involving an intoxicated victim or perpetrator (Grubb and Turner 2012; Ullman 2003). The role of illicit drugs in facilitating sexual assault is less clear-cut, and the best available evidence tends to suggest that the occurrence of drink spiking (where a perpetrator gives their victim drugs or alcohol without their knowledge) is quite rare.

Australian data suggests that over the 2002–03 period around 3000 to 4000 suspected incidents of drink spiking took place nationally, with approximately one-third of these also involving sexual assault (Taylor et al. 2004: p. x). Quigley et al. (2009) provide a more sceptical account of drink-spiking incidents within Australia. In their examination of ninety-seven emergency department patients who were the alleged victims of drink spiking, the authors assert that only nine of these incidents involved 'plausible' drink spiking, with the majority (five) of

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these involving the use of alcohol,[1] rather than illicit drugs, as the spiking agent. In the majority of other cases, patients were affected by the voluntary consumption of excessive amounts of alcohol or illicit drugs. Predatory drink spiking in venues is, based on this evidence, a rare occurrence, with the majority of drug and alcohol-facilitated sexual assaults involving the perpetrator taking advantage of the voluntary alcohol consumption of the victim (see, for example, Burgess et al. 2009; Clark and Quadara 2010). Nonetheless, qualitative research studies have illustrated that perpetrators use illicit drugs as part of their offending strategy (e.g., Clark and Quadara 2010). As always, given the high levels of underreporting by victims of sexual violence, the notion that illicit drugs are not used commonly in sexual offending should be treated with caution. Like alcohol, the consumption of illicit drugs can be commonplace in at least some licensed venues.

However, to say that alcohol or other drugs are associated with sexual violence is not to say that they directly *cause* such violence. Perpetrators can use alcohol or other drugs quite intentionally as a tool for incapacitating their victim, or for diminishing personal responsibility for their actions. Alternatively, perpetrators may take advantage of someone who has become intoxicated by their own means—a not uncommon occurrence in a setting such as licensed venues where intoxication is normative, if not encouraged, behaviour. Such actions are often culturally sanctioned and supported by rape myths and misconceptions, with the intoxicated woman constructed as 'inviting' or 'asking for' sexual attention, or otherwise contributing towards her own assault (see, for example, Grubb and Turner 2012). Alcohol commonly appears in sexual scripts (see Chap. 4). Accepting a drink from a man, for example, is often interpreted as a cue of (hetero)sexual interest and implied (hetero)sexual consent. The recipient of the drink may feel a sense of obligation to consume it and to engage in sexual interaction, as much as the initiator feels a sense of entitlement to sex. Alcohol and other drugs form part of the cultural scaffolding that enables and excuses the occurrence of sexual violence.

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[1] For example, victims may have been served beverages with a larger volume of alcohol in them than they had expected. An example of this would include the addition of shots of spirits to a glass of beer.

Despite the strong association between alcohol and sexual assault, there has been surprisingly little focus on the social, cultural, affective/emotional, and geographical assemblages in which alcohol and other drug-facilitated sexual violence occurs (with a few exceptions, of course, such as Clark and Quadara 2010; Graham et al. 2010). How do these different norms and attitudes pertaining to the relationship(s) between alcohol, other drugs, and sexual violence play out within the context of licensed venues, and how might they feature in the perpetration of sexual violence within this particular social setting?

Alcohol is a central feature of the night-time economy. For most young people, the consumption of alcohol is a routine part of a night out on the town and the ritual of getting ready to go out (see also Chatterton and Hollands 2003). Indeed, for the young people in this study, the consumption of alcohol was a key reason for using venues in the first place, with 82.3 % (*n* = 191) of survey participants saying that they went out to venues for this reason. Alcohol and other drug use can aid relaxation and facilitate ease of social interaction. It is frequently an enjoyable and pleasurable facet of a night out in urban 'playscapes' (Chatterton and Hollands 2003; Jayne et al. 2010; Jayne and Valentine 2016)—although this role can shift across the course of a night in conversation with what Jayne and Valentine (2016: 7) refer to as 'chance elements', and what was initially enjoyable and a source of pleasure may morph into one of illness, regret, negative affective, and emotional states, and exclusion from desired spaces.

Alcohol and other drug consumption are also used as a marker or expression of identity and belonging within venues: they are culturally significant and symbolic practices. Lindsay (2006), for example, argues that alcohol consumption is both shaped by gender and class, and used as a means to *perform* gender and class (see also Hollands 2002). Our taste in alcohol, and our consumption practices (for example, a glass of expensive wine over dinner, as compared with a pint of beer at the local pub after work), is shaped by our habitus, and by our access to economic and cultural capital. As Chap. 3 discussed, the young people in this study tended to go to venues where they felt they belonged, and where they could relate to other patrons. The self-selection of venues in this way shapes, and is shaped by, the type of alcohol consumed and enables a certain type of identity performance based on the brands and types of alcohol available.

For example, Lindsay (2006) observes that niche venues often stock 'niche' or 'craft' products, which are perceived as being of a higher quality. In contrast, commercial venues tend to sell mainstream brands of alcohol (see also Hollands 2002). Niche venues were typically less tolerant of overt intoxication in comparison with commercial venues. In turn, this may shape patrons' decisions in selecting which venues to attend, or in subconsciously knowing which venues they are likely to be excluded from. If, for example, a young person associates the heavy consumption of alcohol with the performance of masculinity or femininity, they are presumably more likely to attend a venue that condones (or, at least, tolerates) intoxication. That said there is much variation within niche and commercial venue scenes (Chatterton and Hollands 2003; Lindsay 2006).

Given the aforementioned relationships between alcohol, sexual victimisation, and violence alcohol is perhaps unsurprisingly linked to being unsafe, as being associated with a higher risk of victimisation and with a loss of control. There is a commonsense assumption that victimisation can be prevented or avoided by limiting alcohol consumption, particularly when it comes to preventing sexual violence. Undoubtedly, intoxication does play some role in vulnerability to sexual violence. Yet the links between alcohol, safety, and victimisation are considerably more complex than this. For instance, Graham et al. (2014) highlight the interplay between alcohol and peer group status in vulnerability to unwanted sexual attention, with lower status women more likely to be subjected to sexual aggression when they are drunk. It is particular intoxicated bodies in particular social and spatial assemblages that are constructed as vulnerable to sexual victimisation.

Context is also vitally important here. In some circumstances, alcohol can in fact be used as a strategy to promote a feeling of safety, rather than negate it. Jayne et al. (2010), for example, discuss how their participants consumed alcohol as a practice that enabled them to feel 'at home', or a sense of belonging within venues. As discussed in Chap. 3, a sense of belonging can be intimately tied up with feeling 'safe' within a venue, and alcohol consumption in this instance represents one means of accomplishing safety through belonging. Our experiences of alcohol consumption are mediated by complex and fluid assemblages of bodies (and alcohol's biological, physiological, and psychological effect on the body), affect, emotion, space, and place within the night-time economy. This richness and complexity must be taken into account when considering the role of alcohol in facilitating unwanted sexual attention and safety. We should resist straightforward, linear accounts of the place of alcohol here, and likewise the simplistic notion that sexual (and other) violence can be avoided solely through the control and restriction of alcohol consumption (Jayne and Valentine 2016).

What role did alcohol and other drugs play in young people's sense of safety, and in their experiences and perceptions of unwanted sexual attention? There are two key themes that I unpack in this chapter. Firstly, the role that alcohol and other drugs play in the maintenance of bodily control, autonomy, and boundary maintenance, and the relationship of these to safety. Secondly, I explore the dominant cultural and venue norms related to alcohol and other drug consumption, and the ways in which these inform the occurrence of unwanted sexual attention. Such norms form another facet of the cultural scaffolding of unwanted sexual attention that the previous chapter began to develop. They also intersect and interplay with norms of sexual interaction. These norms regarding alcohol and other drug consumption, and sexual interaction, are certainly not as mutually exclusive as the structure of these chapters would tend to suggest. Participants in this project tended to focus more on the consumption of alcohol than illicit or recreational drugs in their discussions, and as a result at times I switch to a more specific focus on alcohol (as opposed to alcohol *and* other drugs[2]) throughout this chapter.

Alcohol, Other Drugs, and Self-control

Alcohol and other drug consumption featured as a central theme in participants' discussions on safety and unsafety on a night out. Intoxication, or the avoidance of it, relates heavily to the management of bodily boundaries and bodily autonomy, and these themes feature heavily in the following two chapters. As Chap. 3 outlined, young people draw on a range of symbolic and cultural practices in establishing boundaries between themselves and 'other', undesirable groups. Here, the body itself figures as a bounded entity and boundary. Bodily boundaries present themselves 'through ways of dancing, ways of looking, modes and topics of speech, the body is marked by the boundary and signifies boundary violation' (Moran and Skeggs 2004: 69). In this chapter, it is the bodily boundary (and the control of this boundary), as constructed through alcohol and other drug consumption, which is of primary relevance. The body is a literal boundary in that the individual can control what is able to pass through the outer borders of their body via the self-regulation of the consumption of various substances. Decisions regarding what to consume are, as noted above, also related to identity performance and claims of belonging within a particular space. Boundary control is thus also bound up in expressions of identity (Moran and Skeggs 2004).

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[2] I acknowledge here that alcohol itself is a drug. For the sake of linguistic variety, I occasionally use the phrase 'alcohol and drugs'. This is not intended to imply that alcohol is not a drug in the same way that illicit and recreational drugs are.

Alcohol and other drug consumption and intoxication also influenced participants' control over who came in to contact with the body, and the degree of autonomy they had over their body. This control can become impaired through a person's own drug and alcohol consumption, but it can also be threatened by *other people's* consumption, and very particular 'others' at that, with only certain bodies constituting a (perceived) threat to bodily boundary control. This is not to suggest that bodily boundaries are fixed and immutable, rather 'the borders between bodies are unstable' and constantly in the process of being (re)established and (re)formed (Ahmed and Stacey 2001: 2). They are contingent on particular social and cultural contexts.

Bodily boundary control and its relevance to safety is a situated occurrence. Bodies, Grosz reminds us, 'are always understood within a spatial and temporal context' (1995: 84). In which temporal, spatial, and socio-cultural contexts is the excision of control over bodies, and bodily boundary infringement, warranted? Bodily boundaries do not necessitate physical (corporeal) touch in order to be crossed. As seen in Chap. 2, bodily boundaries can be transgressed through visual and aural means: a prolonged stare, or an unwanted comment. The context-dependent nature of unwanted sexual attention means that the boundary of the body is itself contingent and fluid. The same action in different contexts can form a welcome corporeal exchange, or a bodily violation.

Becoming intoxicated was frequently mentioned as something that negatively impacts on young people's sense of safety on a night out. However, feeling unsafe as a result of intoxication was also a situated and contextual occurrence. As one survey participant said 'getting too drunk without friends' makes her feel unsafe on a night out. For this young woman, it is implied that intoxication alone is not necessarily problematic. Rather, it is intoxication in the absence of the sense of care and community provided by friends that results in her feeling unsafe. In the absence of friends to 'look out' for you, the ability to maintain bodily autonomy and to avoid contact with an unwanted other is impaired. Intoxication in the absence of friends may mean that the sense of belonging that can be enhanced by mutual consumption (Jayne et al. 2010) is replaced by one of isolation and exclusion.

Yet for another participant, Cameron, intoxication purportedly liberated him from concerns for his safety:

> Truthfully I'm quite pissed often when I'm out, so I'm really not thinking about my safety very much.

In this sense, alcohol consumption truly is a strategy *for* safety (Jayne et al. 2010) in that it obliterates individual concerns regarding their personal well-being. However, there is again the important distinction to be made here between *feeling* safe and *being* safe: alcohol clearly provided Cameron with the means to feel safe by virtue of not turning his mind to this issue: however, this lack of attention to safety does not necessarily free one from the threat of harm. Cameron's comments regarding alcohol as a strategy for safety (or as a means of temporarily obliterating the concept of safety) were belied by his later comments:

> Because I'm so often drunk … them kicking me out would be the main, or the only concern that I would have. Noticing when they're around and … influencing my behaviour while they're around would be the main thing … I would more likely make a conscious effort to behave myself if I knew a bouncer was right next to me.

The threat of being excluded from the venue community in fact does negatively impact upon Cameron, although such concerns are not always expressed through the concept of 'safety', particularly for young men. It is also clear from his comments that Cameron maintains a great sense of self-awareness in venues while intoxicated, and is able to control and monitor his own behaviour in a manner that enables him to 'stay safe' by avoiding ejection from the venue. Here, Cameron is able to engage in a seemingly contradictory performance of masculinity, where he is able to simultaneously appear unconcerned about his personal safety whilst also maintaining control and mastery over his body and self.

Alcohol and other consumption signified a (potential) loss of self-control, and fostered a sense of unpredictability. The decision to consume illicit drugs in particular can be accompanied by a sense of the unknown, of being unsure of how one will be affected; however, this affective and emotive state is a temporary one, with the physiological, affective and emotive impacts of drugs soon making themselves known to the user:

> **Frank**: Drugs could maybe make guys feel a bit unsafe as well, like taking drugs. I mean it's been ages since I've sort of felt scared about taking … I remember sort of when I was a bit younger … and feeling nervous about how they were going to affect me… so I've felt unsafe at times. (FG6)

However, while the potential unknown of drug consumption impacted upon Frank's sense of safety, it is likely that not knowing the effect of drugs is a component of the desire or thrill of consuming drugs in the first place. As such, although drug taking is associated with feeling unsafe, it is not necessarily clear that this is an entirely negative phenomenon. At the very least, feeling unsafe may in this instance also be accompanied by a range of other positive emotional states and pleasurable physical sensations (see Olstead 2011 and Saville 2008, for a discussion of risk and pleasure in other contexts). For Frank, this sense of the unknown and feeling unsafe is clearly positioned as related to his status as a *novice* drug user at the time: thus, the 'unsafety' of drugs is temporally and experientially linked, with the drug user mastering (or at least minimising) this sense of unsafety over time with increased familiarity. Further, the decision to engage in the 'risk' of drug taking is likely to be a calculated one, with the perceived risks being played off against the potential pleasure of drug consumption (Duff 2008; Kelly 2005). How each individual reacts to the perceived risks of consuming drugs is also likely to vary considerably. As Kelly (2005: 1444) asserts, 'the way in which youth impart meaning on these drugs shapes their understandings of risk'. As such, the perceived threat or danger of drug consumption is dependent upon young adults' habitus as much as any 'objective' risk (for example, the actual likelihood of overdose or other adverse physical reactions) (Duff 2008; Kelly 2005). Feeling 'safe' or 'unsafe' are multifaceted emotional states: feeling 'unsafe' from drug consumption is not necessarily the same as feeling unsafe from, for example, physical violence or unwanted sexual attention. The source and nature of a potential threat or harm influences an individual's emotional response. This also suggests that binary concepts such as safe and unsafe are not able to fully encapsulate the broad range of emotional states that result in contexts of risk or threat.

Another participant, Dylan, also commented that consuming drugs had the potential to disrupt his ability to self-monitor his behaviour. This could result in him 'not feeling completely sure about how I'm acting', disrupting his psychological sense of safety. Given that being able to behave and interact in a manner that conforms to the social and behavioural norms of a venue played a role in promoting feelings of belonging, as established in Chap. 3, being able to internally monitor social performance is of importance to young adults using clubs and pubs. However, licensed venues are also social spaces where staff and patrons tolerate intoxication from drug and alcohol use to varying degrees. It was unclear from Dylan's narrative whether he was more likely to be concerned about his social and behavioural performance in certain types of venues or social contexts, specifically those that are less tolerant of intoxication, or those venues in which he felt an impaired sense of community and belonging.

For both Dylan and Frank, the sense of unsafety or unsettling accompanying illicit drug use can be read as related to masculine performance. Hegemonic masculinity is typically associated with mastery and control over one's body and space. The potential unknown of drug use, and the interruption to self-surveillance and monitoring of behaviour disrupts this sense of self-control—impairing the ability to engage in a suitably masculine performance. Paradoxically, drug consumption can also be used as a means of masculine performance via the 'riskiness' or danger associated with this consumption-based 'edgework'. Therefore, the role(s) that drug use plays in mediating feelings of safety, gendered performance and so forth is shaped by the particular social context at hand, through the affective and physiological effects of the substance, the effects anticipated by the user, and their emotional and affective state when consuming.

A number of individuals discussed the self-regulatory practices they engaged in when drinking or taking drugs in venues in order to minimise the unpredictability that can accompany their consumption. Engagement in these routines was often explicitly linked to feeling safe. The following comments from survey participants in relation to what made them feel safe on a night out are illustrative of this:

> The fact that I don't let myself get so drunk that I am unable to apply appropriate judgement or function in a situation. (Survey participant, gay male)
>
> I also don't drink, which means that I am able to maintain control at all times. (Survey participant, heterosexual woman)

Young people enacted a range of protective or self-disciplinary practices in relation to drug and alcohol consumption that afforded them a perceived level of control over both what they do and what others do to them (see also Armstrong et al. 2011; Kavanaugh 2013; Parks et al. 1998; Stanko 1985, 1990). Many of these routines closely mirror the safety 'advice' provided to young women who inhabit the night-time economy, although both men and women discussed restricting their alcohol consumption as a safety strategy (see, for example, Brooks 2011). Recent Australian drink-spiking campaigns have included messages such as 'watching your drink; watching your friends' drinks; not accepting drinks from strangers; [and] staying with friends when at bars and nightclubs' (Taylor et al. 2004: 119), and many participants reported using these 'protective' behaviours. Engaging in such practices may provide a sense of security and control in what can at times present as an unpredictable and chaotic social environment—though this may be particularly relevant in venues that the individual is unfamiliar with, and subsequently unaware of, the venue norms. Women were considerably more likely to report engaging in these routines, and this is likely related to the onus that is placed on women to protect themselves from harm (and particularly sexual harm), and the blame apportioned to victims of sexual violence who have voluntarily consumed drugs or alcohol (Brooks 2011; Campbell 2005; Stanko 1985). Maintaining control over drug and alcohol consumption becomes commonsense, expected behaviour in a neo-liberal context where the responsibility for preventing victimisation is outsourced to the individual consumer (see Fileborn 2015a, 2016; Garland 1996).

Indeed, some participants engaged in subtle victim blaming of (usually) women who were the recipients/victims of unwanted sexual attention while drunk. For instance, intoxicated women were seen as the more likely targets of unwanted sexual attention, and a number of interview participants engaged in self-blame for having consumed 'too much' alcohol prior to their assault. Women who are sexually assaulted after consuming drugs or alcohol are typically depicted as having failed in their 'responsibility' to maintain a level of self-control and to engage in the various 'protective' self-disciplinary routines, such as not consuming too much alcohol (Brooks 2011; Campbell 2005). That is, they are viewed as contributing towards their own assault through failing to adequately monitor and control their body and personal space. Such a view plays into a 'belief of a just world' type schema, where the individual believes that they will avoid being sexually violated if they do the 'right' things.

Belief that victims were targeted because they failed to control their personal space and bodily autonomy may also allow young adults to believe that the protective and self-disciplinary routines that they engage in are successful at keeping harm at bay (Bohner et al. 2009; Brooks 2011; Peterson and Muelenhard 2007; Ryan 2011). However, given that a number of victim/survivors were sober at the time they were sexually assaulted, the perception that controlling or limiting alcohol intake will allow sexual violence to be avoided is not an accurate one. Further, according to Brooks (2011: 637), the discourse of individual (victim) responsibility places the onus of avoiding or preventing sexual violence solely on victims and fails to take into account the active choices of perpetrators. It is also important to question what this means in a context where alcohol consumption is a normative behaviour, part of the 'fun' of a night out, and can often be used as a strategy *for* (perceived) safety through belonging (Jayne, Valentine and Holloway 2010). Women face something of a catch-22: whether they choose to abstain from or consume alcohol, either way their safety (whether perceived or actual) can be impaired.

Drugs, Alcohol, and the 'Other'

As well as informing the maintenance of bodily boundaries, intoxication as a result of alcohol and other drug consumption also related to the sense of community experienced in a venue, and the boundaries between self and other. For some young people, the enforcement by venue staff of the responsible service of alcohol provisions represented an enactment or performance of community:

> Responsible bar staff who won't serve people who are drunk (Survey participant, heterosexual woman)
>
> Responsible service of alcohol—i.e. a sense that inappropriate intoxicated behaviour is not condoned (Survey participant, heterosexual woman)

Intolerance of intoxication signifies the boundaries of who belongs within a venue, with those engaging in 'inappropriate' bodily boundary control excluded from the venue community in these spaces. Such comments are also being used here as a means of performance and identity construction by these participants: it is implied that they do not engage in 'inappropriate intoxicated behaviour' in comparison with the undesirable other who lacks such self-control in the face of the temptation of alcohol and other drugs. Bodily boundary maintenance is thus used as a way of reinforcing and reforming the boundaries of community belonging. These corporeal and community boundaries and their enactment are inherently intertwined and inform one another.

The consumption of alcohol and other drugs by other patrons in a venue also signified a potential (or, at times, actual) loss of personal control and autonomy over space and was often mentioned as something that made venue users feel unsafe:

> When people are too drunk and forget about people's right to regulate their own personal space. (Survey participant, bisexual woman)

> Really drunk people, mostly guys, who appear to have lost their inhibitions and approach people they don't know. (Survey participant, heterosexual woman)
>
> People who are extremely wasted on drugs and are not in control of themselves. (Survey participant, woman, did not disclose sexual orientation)

Focus group contributor Jenny recounted an encounter with an extremely intoxicated venue patron, which demonstrates how intoxication levels impact upon the ability of other patrons to maintain control over their bodily autonomy and personal space:

> **Jenny**: Everyone was kind of like pulling away from him all the time [and] he didn't get it (laughs), so he just kept on staying in close …so I think that it was very much a drunkenness level for him. (FG3)

In this instance, alcohol is impairing the ability to read social cues, and to enact an appropriate social performance (Abbey 2011; Abbey et al. 2005). As noted in Chaps. 3 and 4, young adults overwhelmingly attended clubs and pubs to spend time with their friends and pre-established social groups. Only a minority of young people used venues to meet new people or to 'hook up', and those who did use clubs and pubs for this reason were selective about whom they interacted with. Thus, approaches from unknown patrons who are dis-inhibited by alcohol or other drugs disrupted participants' desires for the night, which were generally to spend time with friends, though this is not always or universally the case. Approaches from intoxicated strangers result in a temporary disruption to the sense of community, which is established at least partially through being with friends, and this contributes towards feelings of unsafety in a venue. Interestingly, while the victims of unwanted sexual attention were occasionally blamed for their failure to undertake an appropriate level of responsibility for their behaviour and self-control, it is clear that these intoxicated space invaders are also failing to appropriately 'regulate' their own behaviour. The 'othered' patron in this instance is the individual who has not performed adequately as a self-regulating, neo-liberal citizen.

Regardless of their gender or sexual orientation, participants identified males, and particularly groups of men, as the culprits of these interactions. Thus, it is not just intoxicated bodies, but *gendered* (masculine) intoxicated bodies that were encountered as threat. Given that men/groups of men were read as being *unpredictable* when intoxicated, this may amplify the perceived threat that they pose to individuals' sense of control over their body and personal space (see also Armstrong et al. 2011; Hollander 2001). Hollander (2001: 87) suggests that it is men's perceived dangerousness that is particularly pertinent here. That is, 'even if men do not actually behave aggressively… they are seen by others as having the capacity to do so' (2001: 87). Notably, these men were generally identified as strangers, or individuals otherwise not associated with the young person's friendship group. The fear of unpredictable men represents another manifestation of the 'othering' of the sites of harm. Participants in a study by Armstrong et al. (2011: 25), examining young women's experiences drinking in pubs and clubs, also reported associating the risk of intoxication with *other* people, and particularly men. These women were particularly 'wary of potential hostility, aggression and sexual violence' (2011: 25) from men. Such fears likely stem from the fact that men are overwhelmingly the perpetrators of both sexual and physical violence, though that is not to say that the men who are the objects of fearfulness in licensed venues will actually perpetrate violence.

While the loss of control and autonomy over space and self through alcohol and other drug consumption was generally 'othered' to those outside of one's friendship group, a small number of individuals also identified their friends' excessive use of these substances as impacting on their perceptions of safety in venues. While the individuals who raised this issue did not expand on the reasons for it impacting on their safety in any detail, it seems likely that having friends drinking or taking drugs excessively also signifies a loss of control and potential unpredictability: it connotes open and freely permeable bodily boundaries.

Concern for friends' consumption of alcohol and other drugs is also likely to be related to the need for a sense of community and belonging as much as it is related to a need for a sense of control over self and space—with the boundaries of 'self' and 'space' in this instance extending across an entire social group, and not just pertaining to the individual body (that is, bodily boundaries are interconnected with one another). For instance, members of one's social group who are extremely intoxicated may be more likely to interact with strangers or patrons not otherwise associated with that social group. This disrupts the protective boundaries of the pre-formed social group, and consequently diminishes the sense of community amongst the friendship group—as well as reducing the ability of other people in that social group to control who they interact with in a venue. Although the perception that friends and other patrons are looking out for you is central to a sense of safety in venues, the concern expressed by participants regarding their friends' alcohol and other drug consumption indicates that this is a mutual exchange, and a sense of care and responsibility is extended to others in the individual's social group. The extreme intoxication of friends operates in a dual space where it simultaneously *enhances* a sense of group cohesion, as it places the other members of that group in a position where they must actively take care of or protect their friend.

Alcohol and Other Drugs, and Perpetration of Unwanted Sexual Attention

Young people frequently mentioned alcohol and, to a lesser extent, illicit drugs, as an associated element in unwanted sexual attention occurring. Such discussions indicated that alcohol and other drugs featured in the perpetration of unwanted sexual attention in three main ways: perpetrators were able to take advantage of the normative consumption of these substances in clubs and pubs, and cultural assumptions around intoxicated women as being sexually available; they were able to use these substances intentionally to incapacitate their victims; and perpetrators were able to use their own consumption of alcohol and other drugs in two divergent ways—either to diminish personal responsibility, or to maintain control.

Normative Consumption

The voluntary consumption of alcohol to the point of intoxication has relevance in terms of who participants viewed as the likely victim/recipient of unwanted sexual attention. In particular, women who had consumed large amounts of alcohol were seen as more likely to be targeted for unwanted sexual attention:

> **Noni**: Well sort of in my experience it's always been …the drunkest of the girls. (FG4)

While this was often raised as a form of victim-blaming—and of 'othering' the victims of unwanted sexual attention—some individuals did raise the possibility that alcohol was being used purposefully as an offending strategy, or that perpetrators were intentionally targeting intoxicated women:

> **Jenny**: There's always one really dodgy guy that's in there that's waiting for someone to get sufficiently drunk enough for him [to] latch on to her … he'll just kind of be waiting on the outside and then he'll see someone … stumbling everywhere and then he'll pick her up and he'll dance with her and feel her up … and he's completely sober. (FG3)

Perpetrators are thus able to take advantage of the sexual and social norms of licensed venues to engage in unwanted sexual attention. The fact that both alcohol consumption to the point of intoxication and sexual interaction are normative behaviours in many venues may allow perpetrators to target women who are intoxicated or incapacitated without raising suspicion (see also Clark and Quadara 2010: 41). Further, cultural assumptions around women and alcohol often depict intoxicated women as sexually promiscuous, and as having greater sexual intent in comparison to their sober counterparts—though, as I argued in Chap. 4, this may well be because others perceive these women's behaviour as being more sexual than it actually is (Abbey et al. 2001; Abbey and Harnish 1995; Lindsay 2006; Schuller and Stewart 2000). Such misguided beliefs may enable perpetrators to engage in unwanted sexual attention without other patrons or venue staff noticing that anything problematic is occurring. Certainly this was the case for Brianna, who was reprimanded by venue staff during her sexual assault for engaging in what they perceived to be 'inappropriate' sexual behaviour taking place openly in the bar.

Additionally, women who are sexually victimised while drunk are often viewed as 'getting what they deserve' as they have 'disregarded the traditionally appropriate behaviour designated for girls' (Young 2007: 237; see also Brooks 2011; Eldridge 2010; Schuller and Stewart 2000; Weiss 2010), by not enacting 'appropriate' levels of bodily boundary control and restraint. However, such views tend to apply only where women's drug and alcohol consumption is done *voluntarily* (Angelone et al. 2007). A range of negative stereotypes operate in relation to women who drink in or attend bars, for example that they are 'loose, easily taken advantage of' (Parks et al. 1998: 709; see also Abbey et al. 2001). Together, negative stereotypes regarding women who drink in bars *and* negative stereotypes regarding intoxicated women more generally compound to result in a particularly dismissive or harsh view of women who are the victims/recipients of unwanted sexual attention in licensed venues. In instances of sexual violence or unwanted sexual attention where the victim is intoxicated, the perpetrator tends to be assigned less blame (Schuller and Stewart 2000: 545). It therefore stands to reason that the actions of perpetrators are more likely to be excused in venue settings. However, it remains unclear how such attitudes operate in instances of unwanted sexual attention that occur within LGBTIQ relationship contexts, or where men are the victims/recipients of unwanted sexual attention.

Perpetrators' Intentional Incapacitation of Victims

While participants such as Dana and Brianna voluntarily consumed alcohol and other drugs on the nights they were sexually assaulted, it was also apparent in their experiences that their perpetrators used these substances intentionally as part of both grooming and offending strategies. Bodily autonomy, and the ability to control bodily borders, is central here. Experiencing a complete lack of autonomy over one's body played a significant role in facilitating the sexual assaults of a number of the interview participants in this study, such as Dana and Brianna. Dana, who worked in a venue, was groomed by her boss with a supply of free illicit drugs and alcohol for several months before he assaulted her. By supplying her with extreme volumes of drugs and alcohol on the night of her assault (which Dana voluntarily and willingly consumed, as always), he was able to incapacitate her. Likewise, Brianna voluntarily consumed large volumes of alcohol at after-work drinks with colleagues. Her perpetrator also continued to supply (and ply) her with alcohol when she could no longer be served at the bar (and had been ejected from one venue earlier in the night) due to her considerable intoxication:

> **Brianna**: I think very much it was probably part of his strategy all along [in supplying her with alcohol], was just to sort of take advantage.
>
> **Dana**: I was just basically fed full of cocaine, a couple of bottles of vodka … and was just incredibly drunk, and then it all goes a bit hazy.

As Clark and Quadara note, intoxication to this point results in victim/survivors being 'less able or unable to respond to the assaults' (2010: 42), greatly facilitating perpetrators' access to their victims. The young women who had alcohol and other drugs present as a feature of their assault were in some cases simply unable to control who had access to their body. This is not to suggest in any way that these women precipitated their own assault, but rather to highlight the role that a loss of bodily autonomy can play in facilitating sexual violence. To be clear, it is the choices and actions of the perpetrators that result in unwanted sexual attention occurring: it is the responsibility of those who elect to engage in unethical sexual interaction with incapacitated victims to not assault their victims. Assault does not have to be an inevitable outcome of extreme intoxication. Rather, it is one condoned and excused by dominant social and cultural norms. Of course, experiencing sexual violence itself is also inherently a loss of bodily integrity and autonomy, regardless of whether an 'additional' loss of control occurs through incapacitation. Given that alcohol and other drug consumption is associated with venue settings (particularly alcohol), this may allow perpetrators to use such substances more readily as grooming and offending tools.

A more general lack of regulation of the licensed venue industry, and a tolerance towards the consumption of illicit drugs on premises was mentioned as a feature of venues where unwanted sexual attention occurs or was seen to occur:

> **Dana**: They never really followed liquor licensing rules either, like people would be absolutely smashed in there, people would be smoking choof out the back … some of the regulars would O/D on heroin.

Venue environments that are tolerant of extreme drug and alcohol intoxication may, as noted earlier, provide the opportunity for perpetrators to use drugs and alcohol as offending tools. However, it may also be that these venues signify more broadly a lack of care and concern (that is, they lack a sense of community) towards patrons. As Graham and colleagues suggest, some venues are 'considered to be locations where "anything goes"' (2010: 201–2), creating an atmosphere in which perpetrators feel that they are able to offend with relative impunity. Although, as Lugosi (2009) argues, while venue staff may create the opportunity for certain behaviours to be enacted, patrons who engage in unwanted sexual attention within tolerant venue environments still make an active choice to do so. In light of this tolerant venue environments should be viewed as *facilitating*, rather than directly causing, unwanted sexual attention.

Yet for both Brianna and Dana it was more than just their perpetrators' strategic grooming and supply of alcohol and other drugs that influenced their intoxication. Both women recounted that their emotional states at the time influenced their decisions to consume alcohol and other drugs to the point of extreme intoxication. As Brianna said:

> I think my mood definitely had an influence on it … probably within an hour or two I'd actually drunk quite a bit, and I think it was a combination of other people buying me drinks and … being in a mood where I'm like like 'oh, it doesn't matter anymore', and just … drinking quite quickly … in a short amount of time.

Brianna had what she described as a 'bad day' at work, where she was a new employee. She described this as influencing her decision to consume large amounts of alcohol, but also as informing her decision to attend drinks with her new colleagues in an effort to establish herself as a member of the workplace. It is clear from Brianna's account that her negative affective and emotional state directly contributed towards her desire to consume alcohol quickly, to consume more than she perhaps otherwise would have, and that it influenced or interacted with the physiological effect the alcohol had on her. Likewise, Dana was in a relationship with an abusive and controlling partner at the time of her assault, which she viewed as contributing directly towards her perpetrator's behaviour as well as her own emotive/affective state at the time:

> I think there's like a bit of a story behind it, because I don't think, well it was probably a lot to do with the venue, but I also think it was probably to do with my lifestyle at the time.

Dana believed that being in an abusive relationship made her more susceptible to her perpetrator's grooming strategy in the months leading up to his assault, as well as influencing her own desire to regularly consume large volumes of drugs and alcohol as a means of escape. It is apparent in Dana's comment above that she attributes her assault to a complex array of factors relating to her own situation at the time, as well as the specific cultural context of the venue. However, this can also be read as a form of self-blame, particularly given that her 'lifestyle' at the time sat outside the bounds of normative femininity.

In discussing Brianna and Dana's emotive and affective states at the time of their assaults, it is again not my intention to apportion blame or responsibility for what happened to them. Rather, it is my intention to illustrate how the choices of their perpetrators arose within a complex assemblage of their victims' affective/emotional state, and the lax cultural norms of the particular venues they were in with regards to sexual interaction and drug/alcohol consumption. For these participants, it was not *just* that they were consuming alcohol or other drugs, but that these substances were being consumed while they were in particular affective/emotive states, which led to particular further affective and embodied impacts, within a particular cultural and social setting, and within the presence of men willing to perpetrate (and the absence of willing bystanders). These factors all came together to enable their perpetrators' actions.

Maintaining Control and Diminishing Responsibility

Young people viewed perpetrators' attitudes to the consumption of alcohol[3] as taking two divergent paths: some perpetrators were discussed as consuming alcohol themselves to diminish their personal responsibility; while others were believed to remain sober in order to stay in control. The tactical decision to remain sober was apparent in Jenny's earlier comments, where she had observed men doing this in order to take advantage of intoxicated women. Similar modes of offending have been documented by Clark and Quadara (2010), whose participants also reported perpetrators deliberately maintaining sobriety. As Schuller and Stewart's overview of the literature on alcohol and sexual violence indicates, in circumstances where the perpetrator was either sober or less intoxicated than their victim 'the assailant was viewed more harshly' (2000: 537; see also Maurer and Robinson 2008). This adds another layer of complexity to the construction of hierarchies of seriousness, discussed in Chap. 2—with instances where the perpetrator was sober being viewed as more 'serious' than circumstances in which the perpetrator was intoxicated. However, as shall become clear in the following discussion, some young adults challenged this hierarchy of perceived seriousness.

A number of participants believed that perpetrators used alcohol to excuse or mitigate their decisions to engage in unwanted sexual attention or other forms of anti-social behaviour:

> Why it is that guys think a few drinks (in them) is an excuse to behave poorly? They are in the minority of course! I generally just avoid venues were this kind of behav[iour] is 'the norm'/acceptable. (Survey participant, heterosexual woman)

Normative views around the consumption of alcohol and sexual violence, which tend to excuse the behaviour of intoxicated perpetrators, are being challenged here. Yet this participant is also making claims about particular 'types' of men—those who she does not associate with, and who attend the venues she does not go to. Sexually predatory men are again framed as the 'other' and as outside of this participant's community. Similarly, participants in Hutton's examination of clubbing scenes identified that men often used ecstasy use as 'an excuse to push things "one step further" [sexually] … with the explanation that they were "off their heads"' (2006: 87). Likewise, a number of the victim/survivors in Clark and Quadara's (2010: 41) study of offending tactics viewed their perpetrator as having purposefully used their own alcohol consumption as a means of diminishing personal responsibility. This reframes perpetrators' actions as a choice, and not an inevitable outcome of becoming intoxicated.

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[3] No participants explicitly discussed perpetrators' use of illicit or other recreational drugs to either stay in control or to diminish their responsibility, although these substances can also be used in this way.

In contrast, intoxicated victims are generally seen as being more responsible for their victimisation. Indeed, intoxicated perpetrators are often assigned less blame for their actions; although as Schuller and Stewart (2000) note the findings in the literature on this are somewhat varied (Graham et al. 2010). For example, participants in Maurer and Robinson's study (2008: 425) viewed 'intoxicated male perpetrators to be less blameworthy than sober perpetrators', but viewed intoxicated female victims more harshly than their sober counterparts. It is certainly promising that some young people in the present study openly challenged men's use of alcohol as an excuse for engaging in unwanted sexual attention, suggesting that there may be pockets of cultural change occurring regarding how the use of alcohol in sexual offending is viewed. However, given that intoxicated men are viewed more broadly as less responsible for their actions, and intoxicated, 'provocatively' dressed women (that is, the 'type' of women one might expect to find in a licensed venue) are deemed more responsible for their victimisation, this suggests that clubs and pubs may provide the ideal social setting to enable perpetrators to engage in unwanted sexual attention with relative impunity.

Venue Culture

While it is clear that alcohol and other drugs can play a key role in facilitating unwanted sexual attention, and can be drawn on as an offending tool by perpetrators, to what extent does this rely on the particular venue setting and norms? Venues differ quite significantly in terms of their tolerance of drug and alcohol consumption to the point of extreme intoxication (Armstrong et al. 2011: 26; Miller et al. 2012), and these states of being are certainly not universally acceptable in venues. For example, Brianna contrasted the attitudes of two different venues she was in on the night of her assault:

> **Brianna**: I think their bouncers … were much better about not serving people who were intoxicated, so I think there was a point where we … got booted out.
>
> **Brianna**: I wasn't even really walking properly … I think I'm pretty suspicious for that … place to not have realised that I … definitely should not have been served more alcohol.

Brianna had attended the first venue earlier in the evening with a larger group of workmates but was eventually ejected on account of being intoxicated—the venue was clearly upholding responsible service of alcohol provision. In contrast, she was later able to enter another venue (the 'dive bar') in which her perpetrator assaulted her and was able to continue consuming alcohol in spite of her extreme intoxication at that point. Clearly, there are stark cultural differences across venues when it comes to tolerance of intoxication. Venues that are accommodating of extreme intoxication may (although not necessarily intentionally) assist perpetrators in using alcohol as an offending strategy.

The experiences of victim/survivors such as Brianna also demonstrate how some of the common and normative behaviours in licensed venues can inadvertently contribute towards facilitating sexual offending: buying a round of drinks for friends contributes towards their intoxication, which can in turn be taken advantage of by perpetrators to enact unwanted sexual attention. There is an intersection here of permissive cultural environments that ignore or condone extreme intoxication and the consumption of drugs, combined with socially acceptable behaviours in venues, that facilitates the occurrence of unwanted sexual attention.

Brianna also acknowledged that it could be difficult for bar staff to keep track of where drinks are going in a venue and who is purchasing drinks for whom. Perpetrators are able to take advantage of the hectic venue environment, as it allows them to continue to supply alcohol to a victim/potential victim who would otherwise not be served at the bar as a result of intoxication. Research by Costello et al. (2011) illustrates that bar staff face a range of barriers to cutting off alcohol supply to intoxicated individuals—for example, fear of instigating an abusive or violent response from the patron, difficulty telling if someone is intoxicated or not, and concern for the economic benefit of intoxicated patrons who tend to spend more money on alcohol. Thus, there is a range of contributing factors in venues that may be drawn on by perpetrators in alcohol-facilitated sexual assaults.

In other instances, cultural attitudes towards alcohol and intoxication were used to ignore individuals who had been assaulted in venues. For example, victim/survivor Anne lay unconscious in the toilets of the venue in which she was sexually assaulted:

> **Anne**: Apparently people came … and saw someone on the ground but thought that maybe it was just someone who was drunk and been sick.

As such, it is not enough to merely restrict the consumption of alcohol in clubs and pubs in order to reduce offending. Attitudes towards alcohol consumption and intoxication (and particularly intoxicated women) also allow alcohol to be used as a tool in sexual offending. For instance, victim/survivors of sexual violence are frequently viewed as less credible, or as having contributed towards their own victimisation if they were using drugs or alcohol when they were assaulted (Schuller and Stewart 2000; Weiss 2010; Young 2007). A number of individuals were aware of the likelihood that they would not be taken seriously if they were drunk when they experienced unwanted sexual attention:

> **Clementine**: I think also it's the alcohol element … that makes people think … that they're not going to be taken seriously.

Indeed, Schuller and Stewart's research investigating police attitudes towards intoxicated complainants found that 'the more intoxicated the officers perceived the complainant to be, the less credible she was viewed' (2000: 547; see also Jordan 2008). This suggests that the participants' belief that they would not be taken seriously if they reported unwanted sexual attention that occurred while they were intoxicated is a well-founded one. Venue environments are conducive to a 'perfect storm', where many of the conditions that result in the discrediting and blame of victim/survivors (and minimising of the actions of perpetrators) are brought together in a complex assemblage.

Alcohol and other drugs also impaired victim/survivors' memories of the assault in a number of instances, and this contributes negatively towards their perceived credibility if they choose to report to the police (see also Clark and Quadara 2010: 44). The loss of memory that often accompanies high levels of drug or alcohol consumption—in conjunction with the impact this has on perceived victim/survivor credibility—affords perpetrators with an additional level of control over the outcome of their violating behaviour, as it decreases the likelihood that they will face any negative consequences. A number of the victim/survivors had no memory or impaired memory of their experience as a result of being intoxicated:

> **Brianna**: I still to this day don't really know if I was date raped, I can't remember what happened and it didn't seem like a lot of alcohol that I'd drunk.

One of Brianna's perpetrators continued to attempt to make 'friendly' contact with her after the assault. Clark and Quadara's (2010) respondents identified similar strategies, with a number of perpetrators using these actions as an attempt to reframe sexual violence as a 'consensual' encounter, particularly when the victim/survivor had no memory (or impaired memory) of the event. Although Brianna did not explicitly interpret her perpetrator's actions in this way, it is plausible that contact was made in an attempt to reframe the assault. This ongoing 'friendly' contact indicates that her perpetrator did not view his actions as problematic, but rather as the 'normal' or 'expected' outcome of going out on a date.

However, alcohol and other drugs were not involved in all incidents of unwanted sexual attention discussed by interview participants, and this discussion is not intended to imply that intoxication alone *causes* sexual violence, though it may be a factor that facilitates offending. For example, Clementine was sober during her experience of unwanted sexual attention. That said, Clementine did perceive the consumption of alcohol to have influenced her perpetrators' actions, and her own sobriety as shaping her response:

> I think people are more daring, and … people drinking seem to assume that everybody else is in the same state that they are. I think that was part of it, I was stone cold sober … so I didn't find it funny … it wasn't something for me to, to laugh about or to think was silly …perhaps if I'd been drinking I would have been a lot more violent in my reaction.

Clementine implies here that consuming alcohol would have created a different affective and emotional state for her, which in turn would have mediated a different, 'more violent', embodied and corporeal response to her perpetrator's actions. Alcohol is also attributed here to a different kind of relationship between bodies: alcohol is seen as promoting a perceived unity of affective and emotive experience between perpetrator and victim.

Conclusion

While this discussion has focused on a largely negative aspect of alcohol and drug consumption, and cultural attitudes towards drugs and alcohol consumption (namely, their role in the facilitation of sexual violence), that is not to say that consumption of these goods should always be viewed as a negative activity (Harrison et al. 2011; Jayne et al. 2010; Lee et al. 2011). For example, participant Anne found that consuming alcohol in overseas bars in the aftermath of her assault was a key aspect of her recovery and a liberating experience for her. Anne was unable to attend venues in Melbourne after her assault, as this would trigger anxiety attacks and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Such an affective and emotional response was, for Anne, strongly linked to a specific geographic area, and the possibility of seeing her perpetrator again. Overseas, she was freed from this threat and was able to attend and enjoy venue spaces without experiencing such a negative affective response. For Anne, feeling unsafe or at risk of harm was linked strongly to particular geographical and affective assemblages. While Anne was not necessarily free from the risk of harm drinking overseas (indeed, Anne herself acknowledged that she in fact put herself in what she would otherwise perceive as 'risky' situations), the change in geographical and affective assemblage enabled this seemingly paradoxical experience.

In saying this, it is my intention to highlight that drug and alcohol consumption cannot be viewed as a purely negative or 'risky' endeavour. In particular, I wish to avoid any implication that limiting the alcohol and drug consumption of victims/potential victims should be used as a strategy for reducing the occurrence of unwanted sexual attention. The risks of drugs and alcohol in relation to unwanted sexual attention are created primarily through broader social and cultural attitudes that are willing to ignore or excuse the behaviour of perpetrators, whilst placing blame on victims, whether or not either group is intoxicated. Changing these cultural attitudes should be at the forefront of preventing unwanted sexual attention, rather than attempts to curb the alcohol and drug consumption of young adults. Limiting alcohol or other drug consumption can only ever function as a limited and shortsighted prevention strategy, particularly in the absence of other strategies to address other factors in the complex assemblage that is alcohol-facilitated sexual violence. It addresses only one potential offending tool, and runs the risk of victim blaming. Likewise, alcohol-facilitated sexual violence, as I have illustrated throughout this chapter, occurs within particular, complex assemblages of people, spaces, and cultural/social norms. In preventing the occurrence of alcohol-facilitated sexual violence, it is necessary to work towards identifying and disassembling these assemblages.

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6

Space and Control

The discussion so far has focused on the more intangible features of pubs and clubs and their respective cultures. What remains to be considered in the assemblage of unwanted sexual attention (and general perceptions of safety) is the role of the material: the physical, built environment and design of venues. Are there identifiable features within licensed venues that seem to promote unwanted sexual attention taking place? Does the physical design and environment influence the sense of control and autonomy that patrons have over their body and personal space? How might these material features temporarily align with the cultural aspects of venues, and with the body, in the production of unwanted sexual attention?

On the face of it, locating these tangible elements of a venue presents much potential for taking preventative action: 'problematic' material elements can simply be identified and removed. However, this assumes that a straightforward relationship exists between a physical environment and the ability to engage in harmful sexual behaviours. While I certainly seek to identify and explore the role of the material or non-human in this chapter, and argue that these features can play a substantive role in facilitating unwanted sexual attention, it remains important to resist and

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contest straightforward or simplistic notions of the ways in which they feature in perpetration. The material environment constitutes one facet of a complex assemblage, with the weighting assigned to it changing as the ephemeral assemblage of elements shifts over time and space, or as it is experienced in differing ways by diverse bodies.

Spaces are not simply the inert backdrop upon which unwanted sexual attention (and the other myriad, normative practices that happen in venues) occurs. Rather, spaces 'have a constitutive effect on social processes' (McDowell 1996: 28). Following the landmark work of Elizabeth Grosz (1995), bodies and spaces (or cities more specifically for Grosz) are seen here to interface with one another in complex 'assemblages or collections of parts, capable of crossing the thresholds between substances to form linkages, machines, provisional and often temporary sub- or micro-groupings' (Grosz 1995: 108). As seen in Chap. 4 in relation to the negotiation of sexual consent, the arrangement of bodies in spaces co-produces or co-constitutes the movements and flows of the body. In Chap. 5, the concepts of bodily autonomy and control featured centrally. These themes are further explored in the following discussion. How might these corporeal, material and cultural elements come together in fluid movements to afford or negate certain bodily exchanges or interactions, including those that, in some contexts, are experienced as an affront to bodily autonomy or encountered as unwanted?

Spaces are also gendered (and raced, and sexed, and so forth)—or, at least, are imbued symbolically with gendered meaning (Duncan 1996). Licensed venues were, traditionally, highly masculine spaces. Indeed, until relatively recently, women (and other 'undesirable others', such as Indigenous Australians) were physically excluded from venues—geographically positioned as outside the bounds of the venue community—or were allowed only in segregated spaces. As a (quite literally) 'public' space, the local pub was associated with many of the 'masculine' qualities that Nancy Duncan describes as constituting 'ideal' public space: 'the cultural, rationality, critical public discourse, citizenship … the market place, waged labour' (1996: 128). As well as being inscribed with these 'masculine' features, the pub was, and is, a performative space—a stage upon which (in this case, 'blokey' working-class) masculinity could be reiterated and (re)confirmed.

Yet the past few decades have witnessed the increased 'feminisation' of venues and subsequent contestation and reconfiguration of this previously 'masculine' realm. With the increased disposable income that accompanied middle and upper-class women's entrance into the workforce (and changes in the 'acceptability' of women's consumption of alcohol and intoxication—though this is also heavily shaped by class), women have been positioned as valuable consumers, with subsequent efforts from many venues to attract and welcome women as patrons. Venues are thus increasingly coded through 'feminine' signifiers—for instance, through the inclusion of spaces for dancing, Ladies' Nights, and drink specials for 'ladies'.

As will be established later in this chapter, however, the spatially organised gendered power relations of venues continue to be contested. Valentine (1996: 150) notes that spaces 'are rarely being produced in a singular, uniform way … there are usually "others" present who are producing their own relational spaces' or who experience the same space in very different ways, from a different socio-cultural locus, subverting the dominant gender/sexual/racial norms and contesting the power relations of that space.

The opening chapter introduced the centrality of the public/private divide both as the traditional, dominant means of organising space, but also as a key site of feminist agitation and political claims around sexual violence. The public/private divide is an artificial and inherently unstable one (Duncan 1996). The nature of licensed venues exposes this artificiality, and can be seen as destabilising the public/private divide. Most simply, licensed venues do not easily 'fit' within either of these categories of space, instead oscillating between features of the 'public' and the 'private'. Venues are, to be sure, 'privately' owned spaces, with patron access to venues largely controlled and regulated by proprietors. They are not spaces that are freely available and accessible to all. Duncan (1996: 129) argues that the privatisation or commercialisation of space is accompanied by a clearance 'of marginalised people … and redesigned as a spectacle for the consumption of affluent classes'. Indeed, as seen in Chap. 3, venues frequently function as sites of exclusion for certain undesirable 'others'. It would appear that they have always functioned in such a way: it is more a question of *who* is othered within or from these spaces. As, Linda McDowell observes that 'depending on their position in the social structure, people are differentially located in space' (McDowell 1996: 31).

Yet venues simultaneously seem ‘public’ in nature, assembling and bringing together disparate, strange—though socially and culturally aligned—bodies. They expose one’s actions to the observation of strangers and fellow citizens, and they may bring us into contact with individuals with whom we would not usually choose to associate with. Even within venues, there are varying conceptions of privacy. Certain spatial arrangements, such as tables or booths, give rise to a sense of privacy by providing a space where friends can converge with the expectation that they will not be approached or interrupted by the strangers surrounding them. These are publically private spaces. By contrast, open and chaotic spaces such as the bar or the dance floor may give rise to approaches from, and interactions with, strangers. Behaviours typically associated with the ‘private’, domestic realm, such as overt (hetero)sexual activity can take place quite openly within venues, as Chap. 4 highlighted, subverting the (hetero)sexual norms of ‘public’ space.

The extent to which a space is perceived to fall into the categories of ‘public’ and ‘private’ has important implications for the ways in which young people feel they are able (or should be able) to exert an amount of control over their space and interactions with others; it shapes the norms governing the rules of bodily exchange and interaction. It has important implications for our expectations of *how* bodies should be arranged in space, and the circumstances under which they may make corporeal, visual, or aural exchanges with other bodies. As Benjamin said:

> Even the difference between, when we’re talking about licensed venues, and being in an unlicensed venue such as a private space, the difference is that people have gone in to a public arena so they do accept the fact that they’re in a public space and so though something might be unwanted that’s part of the compromise of being in public. (FG2)

This framing of ‘public’ space suggests that unwanted touch is, to a certain extent, an inevitable or unavoidable aspect of public life. Inhabiting public space implies a level of consent, or at the very least resignation, to touch and interaction with strangers. However, the conceptualisation of licensed venues as public or private space is considerably more complex than this. Indeed, many participants (and particularly women) did *not* view unwanted touch as an inevitable component of inhabiting venue spaces, and many young people did *not* desire or expect to have direct verbal or corporeal interactions with other patrons. Nonetheless, Benjamin's comment illustrates that young adults categorise venue spaces in different ways, and that their expectations of what should or will occur in a 'public' versus 'private' space will frame how they interpret and experience unwanted touch (perhaps more so in its more 'minor' iterations). What constitutes part of the 'compromise' of inhabiting 'public' space for Benjamin may be encountered as invasive and unwanted for another person. It is also unclear from Benjamin's comment why, and in which contexts, unwanted touch should feature as an inevitable component of being in public. His comments are also probably shaped by his gendered experience of the world. One may be more willing to accept unwanted touch as an inevitable 'compromise' of public space when it is not experienced as a routine form of objectification and harassment.

Space Invaders: Spatial Control and Bodily Autonomy in Venues

The ability to mediate or control who enters your personal space, or physically accesses your body, was vital to many people's sense of safety in clubs and pubs. As the previous chapter explored in some detail, the excessive consumption of drugs and alcohol either personally or by other patrons could reduce the ability to monitor or control one's personal space and physical autonomy. This could occur either as a result of incapacitation or through the impaired ability of other patrons to respect physical boundaries (or, perhaps, the use of alcohol consumption as an *excuse* to ignore these boundaries). A range of other features in the physical design and environment of venues also affected young people's sense of safety, and their perceived ability to control their personal space and body.

The physical design and environment of a space has the potential to influence the occurrence of unwanted sexual attention. That is, the design of a particular venue may affect whether unwanted sexual attention occurs, where in a venue it occurs, and the form of unwanted sexual attention. It follows from this that altering the physical environment of venues *may* assist in preventing unwanted sexual attention, although as I have stressed above, this is a far from straightforward relationship. A 'crime prevention through environmental design' (CPTED) approach may therefore be of some use here. CPTED posits that 'the physical environment … plays a fundamental role in the criminal event and that design professionals could therefore shape environments to mitigate crime opportunities' (Schneider 2005: 272; see also Fisher and Piracha 2012; Marselle et al. 2012; Parnaby 2006). By altering the physical design of venues, theoretically, CPTED can 'increase the risks and effort of offending, remove the excuses for and reduce the rewards of offending' (Clancey 2011: 56). However, whether CPTED approaches are actually effective at preventing crime has been widely debated (Fisher and Piracha 2012; Parnaby 2006; Schneider 2005). Nonetheless, it will become clear in the following discussion that the physical design of venues plays a clear role in mediating people's perceptions of safety. Additionally, a number of victim/survivors viewed the environment of venues as contributing to or facilitating their experience. Again, it is vital to stress that a CPTED approach addresses only one element of what is, in reality, a complex assemblage of factors that facilitate unwanted sexual attention. While environmental design is important, it cannot be assumed that changing elements of the material environment will necessarily lead to a straightforward reduction of unwanted sexual attention.

Boundaries and Surveillance

Venues are sites of technological and human surveillance. Patrons enter venues under the panoptic gaze of CCTV cameras, ID scanners and other technologies, while venue staff, security and, at times, law enforcement monitor and survey the actions of patrons and those hoping to gain entry to a venue (Palmer et al. 2012). The role of such surveillance technologies is several-fold: to identify, eject (or prevent the entry of), and control the behaviour of potentially undesirable or 'problematic' patrons; as a form of evidence gathering to enable the investigation and prosecution of those who engage in criminal behaviour; and, as a Foucauldian self-disciplinary tool, encouraging the self-regulation of behaviour on the basis that the patron may be observed, identified, and face consequences for actions breaching normative venue or legal conventions.

Of course, the extent to which surveillance technologies achieve these aims is debatable. They are accompanied by serious concerns for civil liberties (Palmer and Warren 2014). There are also questions regarding which bodies become the targets of surveillance in which spaces, and whose behaviour is deemed worthy of surveying. Surveillance technologies are often deployed in the production of the 'responsible', neo-liberal consumer and exclusion of the anti-social other in night-time spaces as much as they are used in attempts to prevent or control criminal activity (see, for example, van Liempt and van Aalst 2012).

There has been considerable attention paid to the use of surveillance technologies in venues; yet the ways in which patrons themselves monitor and survey space remains under-examined. Patrons engage in what is variously termed 'natural surveillance' (in crime prevention parlance), social surveillance, or lateral surveillance (Andrejevic 2005), of venue spaces and the bodies within. Such surveillance represents an embodiment of neo-liberal regimes of self-responsibility and the surveillance state (Andrejevic 2005). Put simply, young people watch and survey other young people within venues. Natural surveillance, according to Parnaby and Reed, is a 'by-product of the routine ebbs and flows of social life across time and space: people glancing in all directions as they pass from one place to another' (2009: 87). These routine glances in turn (supposedly) reduce the potential for offending behaviour to occur by increasing the perception that a 'motivated offender' will be caught. Although, as seen already in the experience of Brianna, and in the earlier discussion on bystander intervention, natural surveillance appears to have a very weak role in preventing unwanted sexual attention in venues in some instances.

Interestingly, while Duncan (1996: 129) suggests that private or quasi-private spaces such as licensed venues are spaces where the affluent classes go in an attempt to 'more easily free themselves from the various types of public surveillance, regulation and public contestation', it is not clear that such an aim is actually achieved in licensed venues—or at least for certain bodies in certain venues. Indeed, Parnaby and Reed (2009: 87) argue that this natural surveillance has the potential to be 'experienced in a differential and not always benign manner', and may discriminate against and further marginalise 'othered' groups. Natural surveillance practices must be understood 'in terms of their potential impacts on the identities and experiences of particular individuals or groups' (Parnaby and Reed 2009: 93), as enactments of power, and as shaping the boundaries of belonging within a space.

This is not to suggest that surveillance is wholly negative in its operation. For example, Westcott and Owen (2013) illustrate the role of surveillance in the formation of online friendships as a tool for investigating the personality and interests of a potential friend. Surveillance is probably used in this way within venues in initiating new consensual romantic or social endeavours. Although, the extent to which this constitutes 'surveillance' as opposed to mere 'observation' of others in a space is questionable: surveillance tends to imply a purpose of watching for social control, rather than potential friendship. Likewise, surveillance enables newer venue users to learn the 'accepted' modes of interaction and bodily comportment within a particular space. Surveillance can occur *for* social cohesiveness, as much as it may also be used to monitor and exclude the other. Nonetheless, who is looked at, by whom, and the ways in which this gaze impacts upon its object is shaped by the stratification of bodies within a particular space, and by the ordering power of gender, race, sexuality and so on. That said, social surveillance is typically characterised by more diffuse and fluid power-relations in comparison with the more hierarchical surveillance of private security or state actors (Marwick 2012).

For the young people in the study, being able to monitor venue space, and maintain a sense of who was in one's immediate environment was a major factor in producing a sense of safety, and the performance of safety routines. Interestingly, this surveillance was purely 'manual' (i.e., done using their eyes), and no participants discussed the use of mobile technologies in their surveillance regimes, although the use of such technological surveillance within the night-time economy has been identified by others such as Timan and Oudshoorn (2012). Participants identified a range of issues relating to the environmental design or physical environment that reduced their ability to monitor who was in a venue or within their immediate personal space, which in turn may impede upon their sense of safety. Most commonly, dark lighting, overly crowded and large venues, and toilets in obscure or secluded locations were mentioned as features that contributed towards a lack of safety. Similarly, such features were identified as negating the ability of bar staff to monitor patron behaviour and 'look out' for patrons, which is an important aspect of venue community, as established in Chap. 3. For example, one individual responded that she felt unsafe 'when there are so many people it's impossible to really maintain vigilance'. The design of the space, and the subsequent organisation of bodies in this space (which another participant evocatively referred to as a 'mashing' of bodies), reduced this participant's ability to adequately monitor and survey other patrons, thus impinging on her ability to fulfil her neo-liberal responsibility to actively maintain her own safety.

However, what is less clear in participants' comments (particularly survey participants) is the contexts in which the visibility of other patrons becomes important. That is, is visibility and surveillance important in all venues, or only those in which the young person feels a reduced sense of community and belonging? Conversely, does reduced visibility and surveillance itself lead to a decreased sense of community and belonging? Whose behaviour do young people feel the need to monitor, and in which contexts?

While a number of women commented that they tend to survey the behaviour of intoxicated men, often the objects of the surveying gaze were not identified. The perceived need to observe space was also occasionally related to personal identity and the location of threat. For example, Clementine reported being hyper-vigilant in lesbian bars/nights if there were heterosexual men present. Here, it is the individual perceived as dangerous who is subjected to lateral surveillance. For Clementine this hyper-vigilance was based on first-hand encounters of heterosexist abuse from men. As seen in Chap. 3, those who are seen to be dangerous are just as often those who sit outside of the venue's community—the raced/classed/gendered 'other'. Similarly, Armstrong, Thunstrom, and Davey's participants were particularly likely to be hyper-vigilant around intoxicated patrons and strangers (2011: 32), which further indicates that the tendency to monitor the crowd is related to context, and to the sense of community and belonging that is felt in a particular venue.

The desire to survey other patrons also sits at odds with many participants' own dislike of being watched by others. Indeed, as illustrated in Chap. 2, staring was often experienced as a form of unwanted sexual attention. Of course, these participants are aware that their own gaze is used for the purposes of surveillance rather than sexual objectification, though how the object of their gaze experiences it is another question entirely. There is something of a safety paradox apparent here, where participants wanted to watch others *for* their own safety, yet experienced being watched by others as threatening or dampening their own sense of safety. The experience of being watched by other patrons is a highly gendered (and sexed, and raced and so on) one. Our experience of being watched by others is thus shaped by our particular location within the venue community that night, and our embodied and historical experiences of watching and being watched. Being surveyed by another patron could variously be experienced as objectifying, threatening, othering, exclusionary, sexually inviting and arousing, welcomed, reciprocated, and so forth. The experience of being watched—and the exchange or flow of power from and between the watcher to the watched—is not a static one, but shifts and flows across bodies and space.

'Mashed' Bodies, Spatial Flows, and Unwanted Sexual Attention

Crowded spaces directly compromise the amount of control a patron has over their personal space and body. In crowded spaces it becomes more difficult to avoid incidental touching and brushing in order to manoeuvre one's body through space. While such incidental or unavoidable touching was not necessarily problematic in and of itself, it often directly contributed towards the opportunity for unwanted sexual attention. Dark, crowded spaces generate a sense of anonymity and, perhaps counter-intuitively, can reduce the likelihood of a perpetrator's actions being observed. Perpetrators can thus take advantage of such spaces to engage in unwanted sexual attention with relative impunity. Anonymous groping in crowded spaces often leaves the victims with minimal recourse for action, and as one survey participant pointed out 'venues can't respond to unwanted sexual attention if they don't know when it's happening'. In dark, crowded venues it is simply not possible to observe the behaviour of patrons at all times. Packed spaces, as one participant pointed out, also increase the likelihood of becoming separated from one's friends, severing the individual patron from the community and 'safety net' provided by the friendship group. Surveillance as a safety strategy, then, revolves around watching and being watched; at least by certain bodies in certain contexts.

Many of these spatial features are present in the dance floor, and this was perhaps the most commonly mentioned site of unwanted sexual attention within venues. It was the space where unwanted sexual attention was, almost unequivocally, seen as being most likely to occur. As illustrated in earlier chapters, the dance floor is often a sexually charged and loaded space, and the seething masses of bodies moving to pounding music lends itself to certain forms of physical interaction. This makes it a particularly ripe and interesting space to consider in the production of unwanted sexual attention.

It was clear from participant discussions that the dance floor was a space that reduced the ability for surveillance to occur, and reduced control over who accessed one's body:

> **Gloria**: People can't see where hands are going, that makes a big difference. If you're in a large crowd and someone could touch you and, and you don't know who touched you and no-one else can see what they've done it becomes really hard to turn around and go 'you shouldn't have done that'. (FG3)

Gloria's comment highlights how perpetrators of unwanted sexual attention are able to take advantage of the mass of bodies in the space, and the relative anonymity it provides in order to perpetrate unwanted sexual attention with impunity. The physical environment described here can be seen as encouraging certain forms of behaviour at the expense of others, with an emphasis on creating an environment that promotes sexual and physical forms of interaction. Features that were identified as impairing the ability to negotiate sexual consent are also present in this space. Environmental elements that hinder clear and open communication, decrease ability to control bodily autonomy and personal space, and decrease an individual's ability to monitor their immediate environment all assemble here to facilitate perpetrators' actions.

The organisation of bodies in this space lends itself to advances or physical touch from strangers, as the space is chaotic and pre-formed social groups are easily disrupted:

> **Cameron**: Because people are generally isolated when they're dancing … that's where people think … they can go and pick up, or ask someone for a drink … whereas if people are in a group already it's just not going to happen in that context. (FG5)

Cameron draws our attention to the potential for patrons to become isolated on the dance floor as a causative factor for unwanted sexual attention. In this sense, 'isolation' is from one's friends, given that the dance floor is generally a crowded area. The protective boundaries provided by friends can be more easily permeated, disrupted, and circumvented amongst the hectic and constant movement of dancing bodies. In doing so, the perpetrator/initiator of the unwanted sexual attention is able to use the space to disable a potentially protective factor (the victim's/target's friends) that might otherwise prevent or disrupt unwanted sexual attention. The crowded nature of the dance floor space, in conjunction with the emphasis on physical movement, can be taken advantage of by perpetrators of unwanted sexual attention:

> **Gloria**: Dancing too close when you're in a packed music venue and you feel like they're purposely moving against you. (FG3)

Although the behaviour in question is clearly unwanted for Gloria, the intentions of the perpetrator/initiator of the behaviour are ambiguous. Are they purposefully rubbing against her, or is the interaction an unfortunate outcome of a tightly packed venue space? Such uncertainty, as highlighted in Chap. 2, may also contribute to patrons' reluctance to report unwanted sexual attention out of concern that they may have misinterpreted incidental or accidental touching.

In addition to reducing the visibility of other patrons, packed venues contributed to feeling unsafe as they reduced participants' *mobility* in a space. As one survey participant commented 'crowds (so you can't move)' make her feel unsafe, while for another 'enough space to walk easily to an exit' enhanced her sense of safety. Crowded spaces impede the ability of individuals to move freely about the venue space, to have control and immediate autonomy over where their bodies are located in space, and their ability to remove themselves from a venue in the face of a perceived or actual threat.

Conversely, not all young people experienced crowded or reduced visibility venue spaces as impairing their safety: for some participants such spaces in fact *enhanced* their sense of safety. For example, focus group participant Elise said that a venue 'usually feels safer when there's lots of people there', with the mass of bodies providing a greater sense of community and of being 'looked out' for. In the context of unwanted sexual attention, large spaces could play an important role in coping strategies:

> **Florence**: But I think at bars and things … it's a bit more big open spaces and so it's … easy to get away if something bad is happening, and it's more difficult to get in that situation. (FG1)

Patrons are able to exploit or take advantage of larger spaces to avoid or escape from an unwanted advance in a way that is not possible in smaller, more intimate venues, as they foster a sense of anonymity, and present the possibility of losing yourself (and others) in the crowd. However, larger spaces, in conjunction with other environmental features, could also facilitate unwanted sexual attention occurring. As one survey participant commented, 'opportunistic groping in a crowded place … can happen quickly, even anonymously, so it can be hard to do anything about it'. This was often compounded by other environmental factors, such as loud noise and dark lighting, which made it difficult to identify and respond to the perpetrator. Conversely, Brianna described the venue that she was in when she was sexually assaulted as physically small, and the bar staff could easily observe all of the patrons in the venue. The role of the physical environment and design of a venue in facilitating unwanted sexual attention is a complex one, and cannot be viewed in isolation from the cultural environment and other assemblage of factors that enable the actions of perpetrators.

Isolation

Young people's perceptions of safety were also negatively affected by having to access isolated venue spaces within venues, which prevented surveillance from other patrons or friends. For example, one survey participant said that 'secluded stairways or long corridors to the toilets' made her feel unsafe. The reduced or removed ability of friends to observe may compromise the immediate sense of community felt by an individual in a venue, and it also removes the protective guardian function often provided by friends as discussed in Chap. 3 (see also Kavanaugh 2013: 29). Indeed, this may go some way to explaining the populist notion that women frequently accompany one another to the bathrooms in clubs and pubs. Such responses suggest that this gendered routine is being used as much as a safety mechanism as it is for some 'time-out' from the venue, or to adjust hair and make-up and engage in other feminine performances.

For a number of the victim/survivors interviewed for this project, their perpetrators were able to take advantage of the design of venue space to facilitate their actions, and to reduce the likelihood of being observed by other patrons or staff—that is, they were able to use the design of space to isolate and control their victim:

> **Anne**: Because I didn't want him to get any closer to me, I stepped back through the push door of the female toilets … I think he deliberately, like he was herding me into the toilets.

In Anne's experience her perpetrator, an ex-partner, was able to use the design of the toilet doors to 'herd' her into an isolated area within the venue. Once they were in the toilets, a range of other features decreased the ability of other patrons and staff to engage in natural surveillance and bystander intervention. This included toilet stalls that could not be observed over or under the top of the door, and loud music playing in the bathrooms, which decreased the likelihood of other patrons hearing what was happening and cut Anne off from the venue community. These spatial features combined with the cultural and social attitudes around intoxication in venues (where Anne's work colleagues ignored her as they presumed she was ‘just’ drunk) to greatly decrease the likelihood of bystander intervention. The bathroom doors enabled this misperception by obscuring the reality of Anne’s brutally injured body that lay behind the door. Anne believed that the aforementioned design features played a role in her assault, as without them her perpetrator ‘wouldn’t have felt like he could get away with it because people would have seen him’. Anne felt that, in designing the venue, the possibility that sexual violence may occur in this space had not been considered. Instead, commercial interests were seen to take precedence, with the design based around ‘how to pack as many people into one room as possible’, rather than attempting to maximise the safety and well-being of patrons through design.

For another victim/survivor, Dana, the practice of staying back for drinks after work allowed her perpetrator to isolate her in the venue once all other patrons and staff had left. As her perpetrator was also the manager of the venue, he had access to this space after hours, and was able to wait until most other staff had left before further isolating and assaulting Dana. As opposed to anything specific or unique about the physical design or environment of the venue itself, in this instance her perpetrator’s complete control over the venue space—and over Dana after he incapacitated her with drugs and alcohol—facilitated his ability to offend.

For other participants, the location in which the unwanted sexual attention occurred, and particularly its degree of isolation, influenced the perception of seriousness of the incident. Hierarchies of seriousness are thus spatially structured, adding another layer of complexity to the ways in which sexual harm is constructed. For example, focus group contributors Noni and Mary saw unwanted sexual attention that occurred in the toilets or other isolated areas as being more serious. For them, this demonstrated a greater level of ‘maliciousness’ and planning in comparison with seemingly more opportunistic forms of unwanted sexual attention, such as groping on the dance floor. This suggests that perceptions of the harm of unwanted sexual attention are also related to the way that a venue space is used by perpetrators.

It may also be that this circumstance is viewed as more serious because it adheres more closely to a ‘real’ rape stereotype, in that the unwanted sexual attention or sexual violence is taking place in an isolated area. The relative distance from friends and other patrons may also add to the perceived seriousness of this example, as the protective role of friends and sense of community provided by other patrons are removed. However, this perception does not necessarily equate with the reality of victim/survivors' experiences. Brianna, for example, was openly assaulted in front of other patrons. Visibility did not negate the seriousness or harm of her experience, and, in some respects, even amplified it, as onlookers failed to provide assistance and reprimanded her for her own assault. Instead, cultural attitudes and the perception that the interaction was consensual provided her perpetrator with the same level of invisibility as an isolated space: he was able to hide in plain view.

In a similar vein to accessing isolated spaces, being alone in a venue was often associated with being or feeling unsafe, as the 'safety net' provided by your social group was absent (see also, Brooks 2011). Women, in particular, responded that they were more likely to be approached by strangers when they were by themselves in a venue. Their control over their personal space was reduced by virtue of being alone, and having the physical barrier provided by friends removed. Being alone may also transform the perceived public or private nature of an occupied space. Sitting and talking with friends, as noted earlier, may be construed as a relatively 'private' action in an otherwise 'public' space. The removal of one's friends transforms the space occupied by the lone woman into one that is perceived as 'public', which makes the approach of a stranger a more 'acceptable' or normative behaviour. Such experiences were also highly gendered. It is notable that only female participants discussed having their space invaded by male patrons in this way. A lone woman in public space is seen as open to approach in a way that does not apply to men. This is the embodiment of the patriarchal norm that a male guardian should accompany a woman when in public space and that when she is not accompanied she is 'available' for approach. For some individuals it was possible to construct physical or spatial barriers or to engage in protective routines when using venues alone that reaffirm a sense of control and autonomy over personal space:

> **Florence**: Sometimes you arrive early or I go out alone, I've got a bad habit of taking work, there's a nice bar that I go to and have a glass of wine and do my work at night alone. But that doesn't really count because I've got a laptop. (FG1)

In Florence's case, feeling safe while alone in this venue was also connected to a sense of belonging and understanding the venue culture. It was being in a 'nice bar' that allowed her to feel comfortable and at ease, as well as the presence of physical barriers warding off approaches from other patrons and reconfiguring her space as being 'private' in nature. The performance of work is also being used by Florence to justify the solitary use of venues, which is an action that may otherwise be at odds with the social nature of clubs and pubs.

Fear of the Unknown

Familiarity is intimately tied to a sense of safety. Familiar venue environments are, as Chap. 3 illuminated, connected to a sense of community and belonging. Knowing the norms of a venue space and the 'correct' ways to behave provided young people with a sense of safety. Yet it is not just this sense of community and belonging that facilitated a sense of safety. Safety is also linked to the familiarity of the geographical location, of mastery and knowledge of the topographical environment and being able to navigate a space with ease. Being outside of one's 'geographical comfort zone', as one survey participant put it, contributed to feeling unsafe and ill at ease:

> If the venue is in an area that is isolated or that I am unfamiliar with. (Survey participant, heterosexual woman)

Unfamiliar environments may engender fear through signifying the unknown or 'other'. Others have contested such an understanding of unknown spaces suggesting instead that 'not knowing what to expect, or what encounters the night ahead would bring were always a major part of the appeal' in travelling to (in this instance) rave parties in unfamiliar locations. Again, this reminds us to pay heed to the contextual and affective/emotional specifics of the unknown (Jaimangal-Jones et al. 2010: 254). England and Simon (2010: 202) contend that fear plays a significant role in shaping an individual's 'mental maps' and, consequently, the geographical areas they will or will not inhabit at various times (see also

Corteen 2002; Gardner 1995). Further, England and Simon argue that aversion to particular spaces as a result of fear works 'to define and maintain the shifting boundaries between deviance and *belonging*, order and disorder' (2010: 204, my emphasis). Thus, where participants felt they belonged is actively shaped and expressed through their constructions of safe and unsafe geographical zones. Additionally, Tyner (2012) suggests that a sense of place (or lack thereof) is fundamentally a reflection of power relations. 'Place becomes a site of contestation, the locus of social control where ideologies of racism, sexism, classism …are enacted' (2012: 11). A sense of belonging is therefore enacted and expressed through geographical location (and being in a 'safe' and familiar space), as much as it is related to a sense of being 'like' others and having an understanding of venue culture. A geographical sense of place marks the literal boundaries of group belonging.

Under this reading of space, unwanted sexual attention itself can be understood as an act of power (as can *all* forms of sexual violence) exerted as a means to contest ownership of venue spaces. Licensed venues have traditionally and historically been viewed as masculine spaces. Men traditionally dominated venues as both patrons and owners/management (Kirby 1997; Wright 1997). The past few decades have borne witness to the increasing feminisation of venue space (Chatterton and Hollands 2003; Kirby 1997; Lindsay 2006). Women are accessing clubs and pubs at a rate similar to men, and venues are increasingly seeking women as customers (Grazian 2009; Kirby 1997; Lindsay 2006). Unwanted sexual attention committed by men against women can thus be viewed as a means of contesting this challenge to previously 'male' space, and of reasserting dominance over venue spaces (Chatterton and Hollands 2003).

Likewise, within venues, a gendered division of space can occur. For example, women often dominate the dance floor, at least in heteronormative venues (Northcote 2006). The seemingly frequent occurrence of unwanted sexual attention on the dance floor can be read as a means to contest and subvert the female domination of this space. Unwanted sexual attention is an embodied power struggle. While this example has drawn on gendered power relations, similar arguments could be constructed in relation to men's use of heterosexist violence and abuse in licensed venues.

More generally, unfamiliar places are associated with being lost (Day et al. 2003). As Day and colleagues highlight, 'the experience of getting lost in unfamiliar areas is ranked as highly fearful. The anxiety, fear, and even terror that accompany being lost demonstrate the importance of orientation for well-being' (2003: 315). Given the potential for unknown spaces to result in highly negative emotional and affective states, it is understandable that young people associated unfamiliar spaces with feeling unsafe. A lack of knowledge of a certain area or venue can also make it difficult to pre-empt any potential threats to safety, and thus allow an individual to *feel* as if they are in control. Conversely, safety was linked with having knowledge and a perceived mastery over spaces that are used regularly. This enhances the perception that an individual has a level of control over the space they inhabit; however, it does not necessarily mean that an individual is actually safe. A sense of familiarity with venue environments also assists some individuals in mitigating risk:

> **Laura**: I know some people in the industry so I'm, I've been forewarned I suppose as to what could go wrong … if you're forewarned as to any potential risks with clubbing then it feels a lot safer than if you just sort of go on a whim. (FG7)

Understanding what could or is likely to go wrong in a venue relies on a learned knowledge of different venue environments. As discussed in Chap. 3, being able to avoid (or feel as though one has avoided) a dangerous situation relies on an understanding of the social and behavioural norms of a venue, which is knowledge that is acquired with time and exposure to venue environments. This suggests that younger or less experienced club-goers are more likely to be exposed to various environmental threats. However, Laura's comment takes the cause and effect of her strategies for granted, as it is unclear whether the protective strategies she uses actually prevent anything negative from occurring or not. That said, Brooks asserts that 'behaviours that give women the sense that they are in control of their environment and their own bodies have an understandable appeal' (2011: 641). The sense of reassurance gained through employing these strategies and beliefs to feel 'safe' may allow women to access spaces that would otherwise be deemed too dangerous (see also

Mehta and Bondi 1999). However, engagement in precautionary strategies ultimately cannot be viewed as emancipatory, as the 'normative feminine body–weak and vulnerable–is produced *in* and *through* such acts' (Campbell 2005: 120–121 original emphasis; see also Brooks 2011).

Venue Design and Community

The sense of community that is so central to young people's sense of safety in venues is itself co-generated in conversation with the physical design and environment of a venue. Certain arrangements of space lend themselves to enhancing a sense of community, and it is perhaps unsurprising that many young people identified such environmental features as enhancing their sense of safety. As one survey participant said in relation to what makes her feel safe on a night out:

> Prefer places that have many grouped sit down areas for people to chat instead of packing everyone in. (Survey participant, bisexual woman, 27)

Venues that provide spaces to sit generate areas within the venue where a social group can exist in relative isolation or privacy from other patrons. As noted previously, many people did not seek interaction with people outside of their immediate friendship group, and venues that provided or created insular spaces for groups to sit facilitated this by making approaches from other patrons more difficult. As one survey participant highlighted, not having anywhere to sit made her feel unsafe on a night out, as 'drunken people are more likely to approach when standing'. Whether the design of a venue provided spaces for friendship groups to sit in relative isolation was also seen to contribute to the occurrence of unwanted sexual attention:

> **Ingrid**: Well I always think places, open-air places I think you're less likely [to have unwanted sexual attention occur] …
> **Gloria**: Just because there's tables and beer gardens where you can sit down and relax rather than being forced to stand up squish in and dance. (FG3)

These exchanges identify a range of environmental and design features that were viewed as either increasing or decreasing the likelihood of unwanted sexual attention occurring. Venues with spaces to sit were seen as less likely to have unwanted sexual attention occurring as they provided patrons with a greater level of control over who entered their personal space. This is due to the protective presence of friends—making it difficult for patrons outside of the friendship group to approach (which would often contravene the unspoken rules of venue culture)—as well as tables and chairs acting as physical barriers to outside approaches. Of course, the assumption here again is that individuals outside of one's friendship group are responsible for unwanted sexual advances. It may be that different 'non-human' elements of a venue play a stronger role in facilitating unwanted sexual attention between friends, or that the same elements function in very different ways (for example, the same level of 'privacy' created by these segregated spaces may prevent bystanders from witnessing or intervening in unwanted sexual attention perpetrated by a friend). Gloria's comment also highlights the role that the physical design and environment of venues can have on the atmosphere or mood of a venue. Spaces with seating and open-air sections contribute towards a more 'relaxed', sociable atmosphere, whereas venues geared towards dancing or with a lack of adequate seating may favour more physical forms of interaction. There are particular assemblages of affect, spatial arrangement, community and culture in these different scenarios which act to either enhance or reduce the likelihood that unwanted sexual attention will, or can, be perpetrated.

Not being touched, or being forced to touch other patrons (for instance, in crowded venues), and maintaining a sense of personal space was important to many respondents in achieving a sense of safety. It was not necessarily clear what constitutes 'personal space' for each participant, and is likely that different participants hold different conceptions of what an 'invasion' of personal space involves, and different conceptions of bodily invasion in different venue contexts. Typically, this included both the boundaries of their own body, as well as not having other patrons approach their friendship group. For example, young adults across a range of demographic groups highlighted the importance of both personal and group corporeal and spatial boundaries in feeling safe:

> People invading personal space people forcing personal conversation. (Survey participant, lesbian woman)
>
> When people respect my personal space. When there is room to move around the venue and also enough room to dance. (Survey participant, queer woman)

The comment from the queer survey respondent draws links between the notions of bodily autonomy and respect. Having bodily autonomy and personal boundaries respected is interrelated with the concept of community, as it is linked with other patrons expressing a sense of care or concern for the well-being of others; for instance, by *not* engaging in unwanted touching or behaviour that is detrimental to the well-being of other patrons.

The ability to communicate clearly and openly with friends, or other patrons who have approached, also played a role in safety through community. As one survey respondent commented 'places to sit *away from noise* and just talk' (participant's emphasis) made her feel safe in clubs and pubs. As discussed in Chap. 4, the ability to negotiate consent in venues can be hindered as a result of noise levels that inhibit or impair the ability to converse clearly with others. The inability to clearly communicate can signify a loss of control and autonomy, as it reduces the ability to clearly express your desires, or to negotiate bodily boundaries at any given time. This is further compounded by environmental features such as dark lighting, which also restrict non-verbal forms of communication. Again, it is also likely, given that many individuals went to venues to spend time with their friends, that loud music and noise in clubs and pubs reduced their ability to socialise. Reduced or impaired sense of connectedness with friends may result in a decreased sense of safety.

That said respondents made it clear that they tried to select the venue based on their desires for the night. Thus, young people who go out to talk with friends are likely to attend a venue with a quieter environment that allows them to do so. However, this also depends on the appropriate 'type' of venue being available or accessible on that night. For instance, patrons may be refused entry, the venue may be full to capacity, or there may simply be a lack of 'quiet' venues in that particular geographical area. It may not be possible to locate a venue that covers multiple, and at times contradictory, desires on a night out. For example, in an area with a limited number of queer venues, there may be an absence of 'quiet' venues that are also queer-friendly. Further, young people may not have acquired the relevant cultural knowledge to locate the 'type' of venue that meets their needs for that particular night. Even if young adults have sought out a 'louder' venue (perhaps for the purposes of dancing or seeing a live band), this does not necessarily mean that they do not want or need to have *any* verbal communication with their friends. Indeed, a number of patrons expressed the desire for 'louder' venues to also provide quieter spaces where they could talk to their friends or just have 'time out' from the hectic club environment if necessary (and participants in Hutton's 2006 study expressed similar concerns).

Physical aspects of a venue that signified disorder, or a lack of care towards the well-being of patrons and staff, were also mentioned as contributing towards negative perceptions of safety. Broken and unclean bathrooms, broken glass, syringes, and otherwise dirty and unkempt venues were all commonly mentioned as features that negatively impacted on young people's sense of safety. Many club-goers greatly valued being in venues where the staff appeared to hold genuine concern for patrons' safety and well-being. Venues that are unkempt, or run-down and unclean to the point of being potentially dangerous can convey to patrons that their immediate well-being is of little concern to the venue staff. Unclean venues signify a lack of community, and can symbolically communicate an 'anything goes' atmosphere in which perpetrators feel their behaviour is more likely to be tolerated or ignored. Of course, this is likely to vary across different types of venues. For some niche venues a run down or unclean environment may be part of their appeal, creating an 'edgy' or 'grungy' atmosphere.

The perception of these environments as being unsafe and as lacking community may in many instances be an accurate one, given that the physical environment of licensed venues has been linked to physical violence and high tolerance of extreme intoxication (which may in turn contribute towards the occurrence of both physical and sexual violence, as discussed previously) (see, for example, Armstrong et al. 2011; Graham and Wells 2003; Homel et al. 2004). For example, Armstrong and colleagues identify characteristics such as 'poor lighting, crowdedness, worn or soiled décor, unclean and malodorous segments and a relative lack of social controls' (2011: 26) as being features of high-tolerance venue environments. These echo the features identified by participants of this study as contributing towards them feeling unsafe.

Contested Understandings of Venue Space

Creating venue environments that maximise the possibility for natural surveillance to take place, and that enhance feelings of community, can reduce the potential for unwanted sexual attention to occur. However, the narratives of a number of interviewees complicate this view somewhat. For instance, for some victim/survivors, isolated spaces played no role in their experience. Indeed, two women were sexually assaulted in very open areas of the venue in full view of other patrons and staff, and, as highlighted earlier, one of these incidents was interpreted as being consensual. Preventing sexual violence through changing the physical environment and design of venues is unlikely to be successful if patrons or staff are unable, or unwilling, to recognise and intervene in instances of sexual violence when they occur. Given that unwanted sexual attention is not always taken seriously as a form of sexual harm, there may be little need to conduct this behaviour in an isolated space if perpetrators are unlikely to encounter any serious consequences. As detailed in the previous two chapters, while Anne saw the venue design as playing a strong role in facilitating her perpetrator's actions, it was also clear from her narrative that the venue culture relating to sex and alcohol still played some role in facilitating what happened. This suggests that the physical design of a venue cannot be viewed in isolation from the culture of that venue.

Another interviewee, Clementine, disputed the role that the venue environment (and culture) played in her experience of sexual violence. Clementine was sexually violated in an open-plan and less crowded area of the venue, and it was not clear that venue design facilitated her perpetrator's actions in any particular way. At the same time, there was a level of tension or contradiction in this participant's account of the role of the venue design and environment:

Clementine: The structure of the place is that you are supposed to push everyone together … that's what they're designed to do, that's why you have rooms for dancing that are completely packed … I don't think the venues are to blame I think it's … people and their attitudes.

Clementine implies here that venue management/owners purposefully create venue spaces where physical touch is an almost unavoidable outcome of spatial design. Bodies are pushed together, blurring corporeal boundaries and impairing control over personal space and autonomy. While this is not inherently problematic, and for some may even be a desired aspect of venues, as highlighted earlier this arrangement of bodies also creates opportunities to engage in unwanted sexual attention. Yet Clementine simultaneously resists viewing this as a causative factor in the occurrence of unwanted sexual attention, and her comments rightly draw attention back to the active choices of perpetrators/initiators of unwanted sexual attention to take advantage of the space to engage in inappropriate behaviour. Her comments again highlight that changing the physical environment alone is unlikely to prevent unwanted sexual attention if broader social, cultural, and attitudinal change does not also occur.

Further, approaches to crime prevention through environmental design have been heavily criticised for positioning crime as 'inevitable, but predictable and manageable' (Campbell 2005: 128; see also Kavanaugh 2013: 32). Thus, environmental approaches to preventing sexual violence also frame it as an unresolvable feature of social life. Campbell (2005) critiques environmental approaches to crime prevention for placing the onus to prevent crime on the victim, rather than the perpetrator. However, it should be stressed here that in examining the environmental features that facilitate unwanted sexual attention, it is critical to identify components of the venue environment that venue management and staff can alter. It is not my intention to draw undue attention to the behaviour of victims/potential victims in venues, nor do I wish to curtail their use of venues in any way.

Clementine's comments also indicate that changing the physical environment or design of venues may in fact be unnecessary if broader attitudinal change is achieved. Spaces are *produced* through the social as much as they influence social interaction (Tyner 2012). Thus, through altering social and cultural attitudes that promote sexual violence in a venue, the possibility for spaces to be read in a manner that is suggestive of sexual violence is reduced or removed. However, given that social and cultural change is often a long and difficult process, altering the physical design of venues to discourage unwanted sexual attention presents as a viable option as an interim measure. Clementine also highlights that the physical spaces in a venue that facilitate unwanted sexual attention (such as the dance floor) are often the very spaces for which young adults attend venues. As such, it is not necessarily desirable to remove these spaces from venues.

Conclusion

Clearly, material and non-human elements of venues can play a significant role in the assemblage of factors that precipitate unwanted sexual attention. The environmental design and layout of venues can lend itself to certain arrangements of bodies in space, and to certain conceptualisations of space as ‘public’ or ‘private’, which can in turn present opportunities for perpetrators to engage in unwanted sexual attention. Spatial design can also be deployed in isolating victims, and in severing the potential support and intervention of community members. Yet, at the same time, the perceived need to avoid overly crowded or, conversely, isolated spaces, to watch or be watched by others, are intimately connected and bound up in expressions of community, belonging, and power. Spatial design can also function in fluid and contradictory ways in an assemblage of unwanted sexual attention. The same spatial features and bodily arrangements can act either for or against safety depending upon the particular context at hand. Where does this leave us in terms of utilising and manipulating the physical environment as a strategy for reducing or preventing unwanted sexual attention? Certainly, there is some potential benefit to be gained through developing venue environments that promote a sense of community and cohesion, and that maximise the potential for surveillance of others. At the very least, this may enhance the sense of safety felt by some patrons in some contexts; though, it may in fact *decrease* the sense of safety felt by those subjected to this lateral surveillance. Removing or altering features of the environment that enhance anonymous touch or the isolation of potential victims may also impede the use of spatial elements by perpetrators. However, in the absence of efforts to address other cultural, emotional/affective and social elements that also contribute towards unwanted sexual attention, such efforts can only have minimal impact.

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7

Taking Back the Night: Preventing Unwanted Sexual Attention

> *A woman visits a bar in an unfamiliar location for the first time. While she is there with a few friends, most of the people in her social group that night are acquaintances. A man in the bar, a stranger to her, stares persistently throughout the night. He approaches her to talk. She attempts to dissuade him by using closed body language and giving short responses to his questions. Although he is not overtly sexual, she is unsure what his desires or intentions may be and suspects he is attempting to pick her up. Her friends pay little attention to what is happening and make no effort to intervene. Staff observe their interaction but take little further notice as such behaviour is par for the course in that venue. She visits the women's bathrooms for an extended period of time in the hope that on her return he has gone.*

The vignette that opened this book depicted a scene clearly meeting a legal definition of indecent assault under Victorian law at the time.[1] The scenario presented above demonstrates that unwanted sexual attention can assume more subtle forms and can be variously interpreted as unpleasant, harmful, or as part of the 'normal' course of events in licensed venues. It is my hope that this book has engendered an understanding of how and why

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[1] This offence would now be referred to as Sexual Assault under the current Victorian legislation.

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incidents such as the one depicted above can also constitute unwanted sexual attention and thus deserve to be considered as problematic, even though such behaviour is highly unlikely to meet any legal threshold for sexual assault. The more subtle forms of unwanted sexual attention in pubs and clubs have, by and large, been ignored within existing research and policy. Yet the research presented and explored throughout this book highlights that all kinds of unwanted sexual attention hold the potential to be problematic and harmful, though there may be a lack of agreement regarding which forms of this behaviour are harmful and what exactly constitutes harm. Such understandings are shaped by a complex assemblage of personal identity (particularly gender and sexual orientation), the sense of community and belonging felt in a venue, individual understandings of harm, embodied experiences, emotion and affect, the venue environment and venue-specific norms, and the broader norms and structures governing our understandings of sexual violence and sexual interaction

To revisit the question posed at the end of Chap. 2, what can we now say unwanted sexual attention 'is'? How can we best conceptualise this form of sexualised harm? Unwanted sexual attention cannot be viewed in isolation from the context in which it occurs, and the assemblage of factors that surrounds it. Virtually any activity has the potential to be experienced as unwanted under particular circumstances. Like Kelly's (1988) continuum of sexual violence, unwanted sexual attention ranges in form and perceived severity. There is not, and was not, agreement over what behaviours 'count' as being unwanted sexual attention, and for this reason alone we should seek to privilege victims' experiences and own definitions, rather than attempting to develop some universally applicable typology of this category of sexualised harm.

Unwanted sexual attention presents in some ways as a highly elusive category of behaviour: it is fluid, context-dependent, and shaped by individual perceptions, identity and desires (though this was perhaps more so the case for experiences which fell within the more 'minor' end of behaviours—but, again, what differentiates 'minor' from 'serious' unwanted sexual attention is by no means clear or straightforward). The boundaries of what constitutes unwanted sexual attention are blurred by the occurrence of consensual sexual interaction and expression of sexual desire in venues, and by young people's understandings of normative and 'reasonable' sexual expression. Yet, at the same time, nor is this category of behaviour completely unbounded or free-floating. It is heavily shaped by structural norms regarding gender and sex and by our dominant discursive productions of sexual violence.

What has emerged through this research is an appreciation of the complex nature of unwanted sexual attention, and how young adults perceive and understand these experiences. Young adults' understandings of this phenomenon were multi-faceted and, at times, contradictory. Individual identity mediated the manner in which participants both perceived unwanted sexual attention in venues and how they constructed and conveyed their personal experiences of this behaviour. Their responses reflected attempts to establish their individual identities as much as they constituted any 'reality' of unwanted sexual attention in venues. Sources of threat and danger were overwhelmingly associated with the 'other'; that is, people (and the spaces used by these people) outside of the participants' own social and cultural milieu. Such a discursive construction is inherently at odds with what is known about the nature of sexual violence: victims usually know their perpetrator, and violence usually takes place in familiar locations. What is unclear is whether this discourse of the 'other' is obscuring forms of sexual harm perpetrated by known individuals, and whether young people face barriers to discussing or locating harm within their own social world, or whether it is in fact an 'accurate' portrayal of their particular experiences of unwanted sexual attention.

This research clearly articulates the need for unwanted sexual attention to be addressed seriously as a form of sexual harm. To take unwanted sexual attention seriously requires us firstly to conceptualise sexual harm as including incidents and events such as the vignette that opened this chapter—events that are easy to dismiss or overlook, but which may be detrimental to an individual's sense of personal autonomy, safety, and pleasure. In the concluding discussion that follows, I put forth some potential conceptual and theoretical approaches for achieving this. Once the issue of unwanted sexual attention as a form of sexual harm is 'on the map', a range of questions arise as to what can be done about it. Although there are no straightforward answers here, this research points to areas where preventative action can be initiated. I consider three potential pathways for preventing unwanted sexual attention in clubs and pubs:

teaching sexual ethics; addressing venue culture and environment; and implementing effective venue staff training and policy. While these three preventative mechanisms have been selected for discussion here, given the complex and multifaceted nature of unwanted sexual attention these should not be considered the only avenues of prevention. Nor should such strategies be implemented in an individual or ad hoc manner—a range of co-occurring efforts targeting different aspects of the issue is required. Unwanted sexual attention in venues cannot be viewed in isolation from the sexual violence that occurs across virtually all aspects of society. The prevention efforts addressed here must also coincide and form part of a broader strategy for eliminating sexual violence. It is my hope that these practical recommendations will bring us closer to 'taking back' pubs and clubs as spaces free from unwanted sexual attention.

Towards an Inclusive Understanding of Unwanted Sexual Attention and Sexual Violence

In the opening chapter I addressed the need to adopt an approach to understanding sexual violence that is inclusive of sex, sexual, and gender diversity. Existing dominant accounts of sexual violence are, I argued, unable to do justice to the experiences of young people from these diverse groups, and often ignore or obscure the underlying causes of sexual violence perpetrated against and within these communities. Indeed, the research presented throughout this book further demonstrates the need to develop theoretical and conceptual approaches to sexual violence (including unwanted sexual attention) that are inclusive of this diversity.

Certainly, a man perpetrating unwanted sexual attention against a woman was the most common paradigm discussed and experienced by participants. As I have stressed throughout this book, this fact should not be ignored or downplayed. Men's use of violence as a method of maintaining and perpetuating the oppression of women must continue to be central to our understandings of sexual violence. Yet unwanted sexual attention was shown to occur across a much broader range of circumstances than this. It also took place between members of the

LGBTIQ communities, occurred as a form of homophobic or transphobic violence, as well as being part of the 'usual' sexualised violence experienced by women (or those read as woman) within these communities.

Firstly, this suggests that unwanted sexual attention and sexual violence must also be conceptualised (at times) as forms of homophobic and transphobic violence. These types of violence are not always wholly distinct from one another. For example, unwanted sexual attention may be intentionally deployed by a perpetrator as a form of heterosexist violence, or may be experienced in this way by the victim (regardless of the perpetrator's intention). Efforts to prevent sexual violence must therefore also include, or work alongside, efforts to end homophobia and transphobia (and likely many other forms of structural oppression). Heterosexist violence can itself be seen as working to maintain the same power structures that promote men's violence against (cis-gender, heterosexual) women. This violence works to uphold a system in which heterosexual men hold disproportionate levels of power maintained through the violent exclusion and oppression of those who do not enact hegemonic gender or sexual identities.

A theoretical approach is thus required that takes into account the intersecting and overlapping structural factors such as homophobia, transphobia and heterosexism in addition to gender. These form part of the power structures that enable and excuse violence against and within the LGBTIQ communities, and which shape the ways in which LGBTIQ people experience and understand sexualised violence. Indeed, as bell hooks argues, we cannot eliminate one form of oppression without also eliminating others as all forms of oppression 'are supported by similar institutional and social structures, one system cannot be eradicated while the others remain intact' (1984: 35). Heterosexism also contributes towards the occlusion and exclusion of LGBTIQ people's experiences within mainstream or dominant accounts of sexual violence. As bell hooks reminds us, it is the 'Western philosophical notion of hierarchical rule and coercive authority that is the root cause of … all violence between those who dominate and those who are dominated' (1984: 118). We are all taught to accept and utilise coercion and violent force, where necessary, to maintain power and control. LGBTIQ people are certainly not immune from this, though they may also be less able or willing to enact such power and control in comparison to other groups (particularly heterosexual men).

We currently lack an adequate understanding of the ways in which diverse gender and sexuality may play a role in sexual violence within LGBTIQ communities, although some such as Braun et al. (2009); Girschick (2002), and Ristock (2002) have initiated important work in this area. For example, how might particular hegemonic gender performance(s) with the LGBTIQ communities promote or discourage the perpetration of sexual violence? Gender is by no means irrelevant to sexual violence within the LGBTIQ communities, but the role that it plays remains poorly articulated, and it cannot be assumed that the same gendered power dynamics that occur in heterosexual sexual violence automatically apply. Likewise, we could pose similar questions regarding sexuality and the dominant sexual scripts within these communities. Further exploration of these (and other) questions is required to allow us to continue to develop a comprehensive theoretical account of sexual violence within and against LGBTIQ communities.

Towards an Assemblage of Unwanted Sexual Attention

As I elucidated above, the fluidity of unwanted sexual attention makes it a difficult category of behaviour to conceptualise. It is difficult, if not impossible, to neatly determine which behaviours ‘count’ as unwanted sexual attention, and it is not possible to simplistically order these behaviours according to their level of harm or severity. Put simply, unwanted sexual attention is not linear or hierarchical in nature. The concept of assemblage has been used throughout this book in trying to make sense of unwanted sexual attention. I contend that it is most productive to view unwanted sexual attention as occurring within an assemblage of factors, with the particular arrangement or alignment of factors working together to shape both the extent to which an experience ‘counts’ as unwanted sexual attention, and the extent to which it causes harm. Yet these assemblages are not free-floating or totally unbounded. They continue to be shaped or limited by the various structural relations (gender, heterosexism and so forth) discussed throughout this book.

Throughout each chapter I have illustrated how unwanted sexual attention is shaped and informed by an array of material and non-material factors. It is shaped through the body and through discursive accounts of what violence is, through identity and place, and through culture and space. Such factors may have more or less relevance depending upon the particular context at hand: they come into and out of focus. We can think of unwanted sexual attention as being kaleidoscopic in nature: all of these 'parts' are fluidly assembling and reassembling with each other in seemingly endless permutations. Yet there is also a sense of structure, of the material casing and internal structures of the kaleidoscope shaping, limiting, and guiding where these pieces fall, and the patterns they are able to form. The pattern formed is not determined in its whole by this structure, but neither does it escape its guidance.

Certainly, this poses some challenges for working towards the prevention of unwanted sexual attention. Which particular aspects of these complex assemblages should we target in our prevention efforts? If these assemblages are fluid and fleeting in nature, with seemingly endless permutations, is it in fact possible to prevent unwanted sexual attention is all its forms? The structural elements of these assemblages do provide some clear starting points for prevention: namely, that preventative efforts must continue to challenge and dismantle dominant power structures and inequalities based on gender and sexual orientation. With regard to the more ephemeral aspects of unwanted sexual attention, it seems that the most productive option is to work with this fluidity in developing prevention efforts, and I turn now to consider how this could be achieved.

Sexual Ethics Education

There is clearly scope for the use of educational programmes and campaigns in reducing and preventing unwanted sexual attention. In particular, the findings of this research indicate a need for adolescents and young adults to be educated on ethical and respectful sexual relationships. Given the role that broader social and cultural norms around sex and gender can have in facilitating unwanted sexual attention, attempting to challenge and disrupt these norms is likely to go some way to preventing unwanted sexual attention.

A sexual ethics approach presents considerable potential as a preventative strategy. Such educational approaches embody Rubin's (1992) belief that the morality (or ethicality) of a sexual encounter should be based upon the ways in which each partner treats and respects the other, the extent to which each partner's sexual desires and pleasures are affirmed, and by the extent to which coercion, force, or other similar strategies are used to pressure the other party into sexual activity. This approach is not otherwise concerned with judging the types of sexual acts, or the sexual and gender identities of those involved. This is an important point in the context of licensed venues, where sexual interaction can be a desired component of a night out, as Chap. 4 established in some detail. The aim here is not to stop young people from engaging in sexual activity in licensed venues (as if this would be desirable or achievable anyhow), but rather to ensure that the sexual encounters that do occur are negotiated in an ethical manner. Eliminating all instances of unwanted sexual advances is unlikely to be possible, for we cannot always reasonably tell if someone will be interested in us sexually before a direct advance is made. However, by undertaking these advances in an ethical manner, one that respects the desires and subjectivity of the other person, an individual greatly reduces the likelihood that an unwanted advance is also a harmful one.

Moira Carmody's (2003, 2005, 2009a, b) work in this field provides perhaps the most comprehensive approach to sexual ethics education to date. Drawing on Foucault's work on sexual ethics, Carmody argues it is vital for the individual to take care of oneself as well as the other in a sexual encounter. This requires an awareness of one's own sexual desires and boundaries, as well as recognising the impact our actions have on others. We can also see similarities here with Cahill's (2009) approach to sexual violence discussed in Chap. 4: sexual ethics requires a sexual actor to be responsive to their partner's (or potential partner's) sexual subjectivity. An ethical approach to negotiating sex has the potential to foreclose—or, at least, to greatly reduce—the potential for sexual violence or coercion to occur.

Carmody's approach has been integrated into her highly regarded Sex & Ethics programme, and I strongly advocate for the use of this (or similar) educational programs as part of a comprehensive strategy to prevent unwanted sexual attention. Enabling young people to become ethical sexual actors requires a discussion and deconstruction of dominant narratives of gendered, heteronormative sexual scripts. These narratives—for example, that men are the relentless pursuers of sex, and that women are the gatekeepers or passive recipients of men's advances—limit or even deny open acknowledgement and negotiation of individual desires. Instead, young people must be provided with a broad range of sexual and gendered subject positions from which to act (Carmody 2003). Vitally, Carmody's approach recognises that 'all sexual encounters, regardless of the gender of the people involved, invite the possibility of ethical or unethical sexual behaviour' (2003: 201). Thus, sexual ethics education must be inclusive of LGBTIQ young people and, as Chap. 2 highlighted, this group of young people are certainly not immune to experiencing or perpetrating unwanted sexual attention.

Developing strategies for communicating about sex, consent, and pleasure, and listening to the ways in which our sexual partners communicate, is also vital. As we saw in Chap. 4, consent is primarily communicated in non-verbal ways. While this is not inherently problematic, the young people in this project held a clear double standard regarding the communication of consent in consensual versus non-consensual encounters. Likewise, consent was generally seen by participants to be negotiated at the point of physical sexual contact, and participants often held assumptions regarding what certain activities (e.g., going home with someone, accepting a drink) communicated.

The ethical negotiation of consent requires ongoing and active communication from both parties, placing an onus on those involved to actively seek out the consent of their partner, and to check in and renegotiate throughout an encounter. This can include verbal and non-verbal communication (Carmody 2005). There is not necessarily one 'correct' way to communicate desire and consent (or lack thereof): what is important is that each partner listens to and respects what is being communicated. The 'misreading' of sexual refusals, as Chap. 4 illustrated, can be readily excused and culturally sanctioned. There is a need to challenge and dismantle the cultural scaffolding that allows this to occur. Negotiation of consent must be framed as starting from the outset of a potential sexual encounter, and not as something that begins once physical interaction is involved. As Chap. 2 highlighted, these early components of a sexual encounter (such as staring, verbal comments and so forth) hold the potential to be both unwanted and harmful.

It is vitally important that context is taken into account in the ethical negotiation of sex and sexual interactions. For example, a consideration of how the particular relationship context, cultural/social context, involvement of alcohol and drugs might shape the possibilities for the ethical negotiation of sex, and the flow of power between the parties involved, is key. This enables young people to apply a sexual ethics framework to their sexual encounters across different contexts. These are flexible, malleable skills that can be adapted to the particular situation at hand. Given the centrality of personal identity, space, and place in mediating understandings and experiences of unwanted sexual attention there is merit in encouraging young people to consider the implications these factors have for the negotiation of consent and acting as an ethical sexual agent—for example, by encouraging adolescents to consider the use of venues as a space for the performance and construction of sexual identity, as opposed to a space for engaging in sexual activity, and the manner in which this would alter how they sexually interact and negotiate with others.

Staff Training

It was evident from participant discussions that venue staff and security require training and guidance to develop the skills to respond appropriately to incidents of unwanted sexual attention, and to act as ethical bystanders. Such an approach has been introduced in the UK through the Hollaback *Good Night Out* campaign, with a similar programme currently being developed in Melbourne at the time of writing. A number of victim/survivors experienced responses from staff that were clearly inadequate, that exacerbated the trauma of their assault, and that contributed towards a venue culture tolerant of unwanted sexual attention. Staff training could involve, for example, briefing sessions provided by local sexual assault centres to learn how to respond appropriately to patrons who report unwanted sexual attention. Alternatively, educational components could be built into existing training requirements for venue staff, such as obtaining a responsible service of alcohol certificate.

Such training requires reinforcement through venue policy that creates clear expectations regarding how staff should respond to incidents of unwanted sexual attention. This would assist venue staff to recognise and appropriately respond to instances of unwanted sexual attention in a way that avoids exacerbating the harm of the incident for the recipient/victim.

Given that understandings of unwanted sexual attention were often subjective, context dependent and influenced by personal identity, venue staff would benefit from training that communicates this subjectivity and highlights the need to privilege the experience of the victim rather than their own pre-conceived notions of what 'counts' as sexual violence. There is benefit to be gained from venues developing clear policies around responding to unwanted sexual attention, and from communicating to patrons—for example, through signs placed in high visibility areas throughout the venue—that such behaviour will not be tolerated. This holds the potential to motivate a shift in venue culture towards one that is not tolerant of unwanted and unethical sexual attention.

Since venue staff are likely to hold many of the same beliefs and misconceptions regarding sexual violence as other community members, broad educational efforts designed to combat these misunderstandings are still required. Many currently identified 'problems' within the night-time economy, such as alcohol-related violence and drug use, have a high level of visibility and receive a great deal of policy and educational intervention. Unwanted sexual attention, on the other hand, is a largely hidden phenomenon; particularly, but not only, in its more 'minor' incarnations. One of the challenges in preventing unwanted sexual attention is raising awareness and understanding of it in the first place. Educational strategies need to extend beyond 'everyday' understandings of what constitutes unwanted sexual attention or sexual violence to encompass the full scope of harmful sexual behaviours.

Venue Culture and Environment

The development of strategies to change venue environment and culture to prevent unwanted sexual attention presents a series of challenges. As I have argued and demonstrated throughout this book, young adults' perceptionsof unwanted sexual attention were inherently tied to the 'other': other people, other venues, and other cultures different from their own. This makes it difficult to accurately identify aspects of venue culture that directly contribute towards unwanted sexual attention. It also poses challenges in terms of generating venue culture that is experienced as safe and welcoming by all individuals, given that experiencing a venue in this way is intimately connected to young people's sense of identity and where they fit in the social and cultural world.

Similar challenges are faced in relation to venue environment and design. As Chap. 5 illustrated, young people's need to survey space in order to generate a sense of safety can be intimately connected to the sense of community and belonging they experience within a venue, again suggesting that it is not always possible to design spaces in a way that will enhance young people's perception of safety in all spaces at all times. Yet venue design at times played a direct role in enabling the actions of perpetrators and in preventing intervention from other patrons. The roles that venue culture and design played were also varied and contested. These features were not always a clear contributing factor to the occurrence of unwanted sexual attention, though they could at times form an important component of the assemblage of elements leading to unwanted sexual attention. This suggests that there is some merit in addressing venue culture and design in preventing unwanted sexual attention. However, it cannot be expected that such efforts alone will be successful in preventing this behaviour in all its iterations.

While it may not be possible to develop venue spaces that are experienced as safe by all young people, it is nonetheless possible to alter aspects of venue culture and design that may be taken advantage of by perpetrators of unwanted sexual attention. In particular, developing venue cultures that promote ethical sexual interactions (as discussed above), rather than models of sexual interaction based on entitlement and objectification, is a key prevention strategy. Creating venue environments that are intolerant of unwanted sexual attention (through the introduction of venue policies and staff training) is an important element of this. When venues generate an expectation that patrons will act in sexually ethical and respectful ways, venues limit the ability of perpetrators to take advantage of cultural assumptions regarding dress, flirtation, consumption of alcohol, and so forth as indicators of sexual availability or as proxies for consent.

Likewise, venues can takes steps to minimise the presence of design features that can be taken advantage of by perpetrators. For example, they can avoid (where possible) the creation of secluded or remote areas in a venue and ensure that staff regularly patrol such spaces to increase natural surveillance. However, such an approach can only ever offer a short-term, and limited, fix. Without changing the cultural attitudes and power structures that enable unwanted sexual attention to occur, and that enable perpetrators to take advantage of these spatial features, significant change is unlikely to occur.

Venues must be given the scope to design their responses according to the particular needs of their patrons and the culture of the venue. For example, reducing isolated spaces is unlikely to be relevant for a small venue where staff can observe the entire venue space at any given time. Likewise, encouraging staff to have greater interaction with patrons as a form of bystander intervention or to create a greater sense of community may be a sensible course of action in a small venue but would probably be onerous in a larger venue with hundreds of patrons at any given time. While venues must be afforded flexibility in their approaches to unwanted sexual attention, all venue responses should be guided by a broader set of principles that can be adapted by a particular venue to fit their venue space, culture, and patrons.

Concluding Remarks

This project sought to illuminate an under-recognised social harm and to initiate a dialogue around the nature and causes of unwanted sexual attention. The findings of this research indicate that unwanted sexual attention is a ubiquitous experience in clubs and pubs and is encountered by young adults from a range of demographic groups. It has the potential to cause harm in many instances, yet it is often normalised behaviour within the context of licensed venues. Unwanted sexual attention has been shown here to be a complex and multi-faceted form of sexual harm. Concepts of self, space and culture all come together to influence the ways in which young people experience and understand unwanted sexual attention. Theoretical and conceptual frameworks for unwanted sexual attention need to encapsulate this assemblage of context and identity and the consequent fluidity and diversity in experiences of unwanted sexual attention that this generates.

In presenting clear avenues for the prevention of unwanted sexual attention, particularly through the generation of an ethical approach to sex, this research begins the process of reimagining and taking back licensed venues as a space where sexualised violence does not, and cannot, occur. It is my hope that interactions in licensed venues can ultimately be transformed so that experiences such as those contained in the vignettes, and encountered by my participants, are no longer understood or excused as a 'normal' part of going out, and that clubs and pubs can be encountered as safe social spaces free from the threat of sexualised harm.

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