

Abstract Considering the intersection between managerial discourses, sexuality and contemporary cultural resources such as lifestyle magazines, this article reflects critically on the extent to which the discourses and techniques associated with the management of bureaucratic organizations have been incorporated into the (self-)management of sexuality and sexual relations. Locating its concern with sexuality within critical social theory, the article develops a critique of the work of those who emphasize the postmodernization of sexuality and the informalization of management. Drawing on recent research involving an analysis of management texts and lifestyle magazines, as well as a series of semi-structured interviews, it argues that contemporary cultural discourses on sexuality, permeated as they are by references to managerial imperatives such as efficiency and effectiveness, serve to arrest the inter-subjective aspects of eroticism (Bataille, 1962; Rose, 1995) and to reduce sexual relations in the contemporary era to yet another aspect of the 'reflexive project of self' (Giddens, 1992).

Keywords everyday life, lifestyle magazines, management discourse, sexuality

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Managing Between the Sheets: Lifestyle Magazines and the Management of Sexuality in Everyday Life

Introduction

When they looked at one another their glances, speaking of the secret they shared, drew them together, deepened their feeling for each other and made it less ordinary, more intimate, as their secret set them apart, as it were, from everyday life.
(Balzac, 1955 [1883]: 168)

A couple's sexual spark is often stifled by everyday life . . . usually all it takes are a few expert tips to lift the lid and release the pressures.
(Sheree Conrad, author of *Sexual Intelligence*, cited in *New Woman*, July 2001: 58)

Sex manuals . . . which imply the infinite plasticity of pleasure . . . are dangerously destructive of imagination, of erotic and of spiritual ingenuity.
(Rose, 1995: 63)

This article explores the various ways in which the discourses and techniques associated with the management of bureaucratic organizations have come to be incorporated into what is perhaps one of the most personal and intimate aspects of everyday life, namely sexuality and sexual relations. It draws on various contributions to contemporary critical theory and critical management studies in an attempt to consider the influence of managerialism on what Bauman (1998) refers to as the 'cultural processing of sex'. Specifically, its aim is to reflect on the extent to which the 'everyday' utilization of managerial discourse could be seen as consistent with a liberalization of sexuality, guiding the management of the reflexive project of the sexual self (Giddens, 1992) and the pursuit of a proliferation of sexual possibilities in an era of so-called postmodern sexualities (Simon, 1996). It argues, conversely, that the contemporary management of sexuality constitutes a notable example of a managerial colonization of everyday life, signifying not only an intensification of 'Fordist sexuality' (Gramsci, 1988) and a 'Taylorisation of sex' (Jackson and Scott, 1997) but also a corresponding threat to imagination and ingenuity, as Gillian Rose put it.

The research on which the article is based involved:

- (i) an analysis of managerial discourse in contemporary management texts (sampled from cross-referenced book sales, library lending and citation lists);
- (ii) an examination of managerial discourse and visual as well as discursive representations of sexuality in lifestyle magazines (sampled from National Readership Survey data to identify the most popular; 10 magazines, five men's and five women's, were subscribed to over a one-year period, and 10 back issues, where available, of each magazine were obtained, totalling some 220 magazines);
- (iii) a series of semi-structured interviews (one group of eight women; one group of eight men; one group of eight men and women; 10 men and 10 women consisting of two batches of five with interim analysis), based on a (piloted) interview schedule, using a selection of magazines as prompts.¹

Lifestyle magazines were considered largely because, as Holland et al. (1998) have noted, the relative silence around sexual pleasure in formal

and informal sex education means that many young men and women seek guidance from the mass media, and particularly lifestyle magazines in order to learn about sex. Of course, (much like the analysis of management texts) the degree to which people internalize and live by these 'rules' of conduct is not something that can be concluded simply from an analysis of their content, hence the inclusion of a series of semi-structured interviews in the research design. The aim of this latter part of the research was to explore the ways in which we make sense of contemporary representations of sexuality and management in everyday life in particular texts that are rich in both respects, namely lifestyle magazines. The findings of each of the three phases of the research have been interpreted, and are considered here, largely in the light of feminist theory, critical social theory, post-structuralism and particularly what has come to be known as critical management studies.

Critical Management Studies and sexuality

Critical Management Studies (CMS), inspired largely by critical social theory, organization studies, post-structuralism and also contemporary feminist theory, has recently begun to interrogate systematically the philosophical assumptions that underpin the imperatives and techniques of mainstream management (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992; Fournier and Grey, 2000). As CMS has gathered momentum in recent years, a number of related themes can now be identified, broadly speaking, as characteristic of this approach (see Sotorin and Tyrell, 1998). These include a critique of instrumental rationalities; a rejection of the performance imperatives of systemic modernity; an emphasis on critical reflection; and a commitment to interpreting and intervening in relations of oppression. In particular, critical analyses of work organizations and their management have raised ethical questions concerning the management of subjectivity, and the scope of organizational power to shape social identity and the lived experience of organizational life. Themes such as the emergence of an increasingly instrumental attitude towards the self have been raised, as has the erosion of traditional boundaries between business and personal relationships, since many service organizations in particular require workers to turn relatives and friends into customers and to treat customers as if they were friends or relatives. Where CMS is particularly useful, in this respect, is in providing a theoretical framework within which to explore the relationship between the imperatives of the workplace and the management of everyday life (see Hancock and Tyler, forthcoming), and within which to understand the various social and cultural forces which shape and influence the subjective experience of this relationship, as it is manifest, for instance, in sexuality and sexual relations.

Attempting to work within the analytical framework provided by the theoretical concerns of CMS and critical social theory more generally, this article begins with a broad consideration of the relationship between everyday life and the management of the self, going on to explore the ways in which the management of sexuality in the everyday lifeworld has been shaped by the intersection of modernity and postmodernity. It then focuses on the extent to which, in line with an intensification of the imperatives of Fordist sexuality (Gramsci, 1988) and a Taylorization of sex (Jackson and Scott, 1997), managerial discourses have begun to colonize contemporary cultural resources such as men's and women's lifestyle magazines, as indicated by the extent to which they are permeated by concerns with sexual efficiency: '10 Seconds to a 10 Minute Orgasm' (*Cosmopolitan*, April 1996); and effectiveness: '7 Easy Steps to Orgasm Heaven' (*New Woman*, March 1997); imperatives traditionally associated with the management of work organizations. On this basis it is argued that, in line with an intensification of the performance imperatives of late modernity and with an 'over-investment' in sexuality (Foucault, 1979), even in our ostensibly 'private' lives the organizing forces of managerialism are all too apparent. The article ends by relating the management of sexuality in everyday life to the broader philosophical concerns of critical social theory, and concludes, somewhat pessimistically, that the bureaucratization of sexual relations is indicative of the extent to which 'the rational organization of everyday social life' (Habermas, 1985: 9) is part of the contemporary cultural landscape.

The rationalization of everyday life

As Crook (1998) has observed, in recent years the 'everyday' has once again begun to occupy that somewhat precarious space reserved for 'fashionable' topics in the social sciences. Recent work that has problematized the production and management of lived experience include De Certeau's (1984) concern with the 'everyday' as a vantage point from which the disciplinary effects of 'the gaze' can be deflected; Bourdieu's (1984) celebration of a popular 'anti-taste', Featherstone's (1991) emphasis on the 'aestheticization of everyday life' and also Maffesoli's (1996) postulation of everyday 'sociality'. Giddens' (1992) work on the management of the reflexive project of the self as grounded in a transformation of everyday, intimate social relations is also cited by Crook (1998) as a significant influence on recent accounts. To this list of relatively recent contributions we could add Bakhtin's (1968) emphasis on the 'carnavalesque' and also Wouters (1998) analysis of the process of 're-formalization', which, he argues, is taking place in contemporary western societies as we find ourselves, he argues, without the security provided by

tradition for life choices and actions. Accounts such as those presented by Maffesoli (1989, 1996), De Certeau (1984), Bakhtin (1968) and Wouters (1998) all tend to emphasize the spontaneity, playfulness, sensuality, informality and heterogeneity of everyday life. Maffesoli (1989) in particular emphasizes the Dionysian quality of everyday life in his proxemic account of sociality, which stresses that the everyday is far from routine or rationalized and indeed constitutes an increasingly important 'escape' route from the rationalization of the lifeworld. In short, the tenor of much of this work is celebratory, resonating with that of the 'post-Excellence' managerial literature (see Peters and Waterman, 1982) emphasizing that rather than the sphere of the lifeworld being increasingly rationalized (Habermas, 1984), bureaucratic organizations are in fact becoming more akin to everyday life.

A more critical approach to everyday life, which relates closely to Habermas' (1984) account of the rationalization of the 'lifeworld', can be identified in the contributions of Cohen and Taylor (1976), Ritzer (1992) and Rojek (1994), each of whom has argued that various 'escape attempts' such as hobbies, holidays and social relations have become increasingly subject to rational organization. In his account of 'post-emotionalism', Mestrovic (1997: 73–4) in particular, has argued that 'contemporary mythologies and rituals seem unable to offer an escape from Eliot's waste land'. From this perspective, as Ritzer (1992: 23) has put it, 'the escape routes from rationality have been rationalized. There is no way out'. Rojek (1994) arrives at a similar conclusion in his *Ways of Escape*, in which he argues that all forms of escape are eventually co-opted and commodified.

Adopting a similarly critical approach, but focusing on the rationalizing impact of the 'enterprise' culture on the management of everyday life, Du Gay and Salaman (1992) have argued that everyday life has fallen prey to the 'totalizing' and 'individualizing' effects of the imperatives of economic rationality upon which the concept of an 'enterprising self' is based. According to Du Gay and Salaman, this means that all social relations come to be perceived as exchange relations in which social subjects 'are reimagined as customers' (Du Gay and Salaman, 1992: 622). Hence, they argue that through the discourse of enterprise the distinctions between production and consumption, between the 'inside' and 'outside' of formal organizations and crucially, between 'work-' and 'non-work-' based identities are progressively blurred such that we all engage in a process of self-management. They illustrate this argument with reference to the ways in which the language of enterprise has traversed its traditional limits and has 'colonized our interiors' (Du Gay and Salaman, 1992: 629).

Hence, by living one's life as an 'entrepreneur of the self', modes of existence that might appear to be politically or philosophically opposed

can be brought into alignment (Du Gay and Salaman, 1992). This is illustrated, for instance, in the increasingly common practice of drawing up pre-nuptial contracts and cohabitation agreements setting out joint financial arrangements and even how often couples can reasonably expect to have sex (Collinson, 1999). Another interesting example of the rational pursuit of the self as an entrepreneurial project can be cited in the use of dating advertisements (and also dating agencies) for the purpose of meeting a partner. Janice Coupland (1996) has suggested that the use of such advertisements are an efficient and 'rational' response to the contemporary organization of work and everyday life which imposes a particular configuration of modern life circumstances – time-pressured, work-centred, mass-mediated. As Jagger (1998: 796) also notes, 'in recent years, there has been a dramatic increase in self-advertising as a method of meeting partners'. Hence, following Coupland (1996) and Jagger (1998) it could be argued that those who use dating agencies and advertisements 'can be seen as rational consumers engaged in a process of constructing the self and the wanted partner as products in the dating market place' (Jagger, 1998: 798). Grey (1994) notes similarly, in his account of 'career' as a project of the self, that the pursuit of a career 'offers a vehicle for the self to become' (Grey, 1994: 481); one that effectively embraces the individual's whole life, including relations with friends, family and sexual partners. Hence, the conflation of self and career becomes 'an instrumental project which is to be managed and achieved' to the extent that self-management, both in and of everyday life, constitutes 'a more productive and economical form of management control than disciplinary power, with its costs and unintended consequences, could ever be' (Grey, 1994: 494–5).

Providing the philosophical backdrop to many of the relatively recent critical approaches to the rationalization of everyday life, Habermas' account stresses that the 'lifeworld' has become increasingly subject to bureaucratic administration. Rather than a particular region of social space, the phenomenological concept of the 'lifeworld' designates, for Habermas, a series of presuppositions given form, repeatedly, in our 'everyday acts of mutual understanding' (Habermas, 1987: 124). His analysis emphasizes that the lifeworld has become increasingly colonized by 'formally organized systems of action based on steering media' (Habermas, 1992: 112). Habermas (1984) argues that the pathologies of modern society flow largely from this colonization, as the lifeworld has become increasingly driven by imperatives of money and power and a fragmentation of 'everyday consciousness' (Habermas, 1987: 355). The emancipatory task of contemporary critical theory, for Habermas, is thus to facilitate the lifeworld in regaining confidence in its own consensus-generating capacity in the face of colonization by systems such as the state and bureaucratic

organizations. In his account of the processes whereby the logic of scientific-technological rationality came to penetrate the private realm of everyday life Habermas (1985) also emphasizes, therefore, the unrealized potential in the project of modernity, particularly in terms of the pursuit of emancipatory imperatives. Habermas' (1985) defence of modernity assigns a particularly critical role to the concept of 'communicative action' in the everyday lifeworld. Grounding his theory of communicative action in an (early) Hegelian philosophy of inter-subjectivity (see Benhabib, 1992), Habermas argues that human subjectivity evolves socially in an environment (the lifeworld) in which individuals must recognize themselves. The lifeworld, in this sense, is the basis of a self formed dialogically – in other words, through engaging and coming to terms with others. Hence, the basis of Habermas' account is that becoming a subject is founded on 'the intuition that a telos of mutual understanding is built into linguistic communication' (Habermas, 1987: 99).

Although the ontological assumptions upon which this 'intuition' is based are clearly not unproblematic (see Passerin D'Entreves and Benhabib, 1996 and also Langsdorf, 1997) and his concept of the everyday open to the charge of 'romantic nostalgia' (see Crook, 1998), Habermas' inter-subjective philosophy seems particularly applicable to developing a critical understanding of the management of sexuality and sexual relations in everyday life. It is the 'colonization' of this inter-subjective process that, I would argue, underpins the management of sexuality and sexual relations in the contemporary era such that communication, to employ Habermas' terminology, is more monological than dialogical. That is to say, it is externally imposed on an arrested sexual subjectivity driven not by an erotic ethic of mutuality but more so, by a rationalized 'enterprise' culture (Du Gay and Salaman, 1992), one entirely in tune with the imperatives and techniques of modernist sexuality.

Modernist sexuality, Fordism and the Taylorization of sex

In her historical-sociological account of the development of ideas about sex and sexuality in modernity, Gail Hawkes (1996) argues that given the ascetic spirit of modernity, it is not surprising that sexuality became a prime candidate for managerial attention. As Marcuse (1955) argued in *Eros and Civilization*, 'the scientific management of instinctual needs has long since become a vital factor in the reproduction of the system'. Echoing both Marcuse (1955) and Foucault (1979), this reproduction of the system, Hawkes argues, came to be reflected not simply in the outright

prohibition of sex, but through the reordering of ways of knowing, thinking and speaking about sexuality, of what is *prioritized* (a scientific association of sexuality with 'nature'; an enduring convergence of behaviour and identity, and the privileging of (re)productive (hetero)sexuality in the construction of healthy, moral and rational sexual subjects) and *marginalized* (women's sexual autonomy, same-sex desire, expressions of youthful sexuality and auto-eroticism) in modernist sexual orthodoxy (see also Burrell, 1984). In the process of 'modernization' sexuality became, therefore, increasingly subject both to systematic organization and scientific analysis. Indeed, sexology emerged, during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, in a period in which scientific approaches to the management and investigation of human behaviour were dominant. Many of the central tenets of sexology, of course, sat quite comfortably with earlier pre-modern religious ideas about sex being for procreation rather than pleasure. Yet sexology (founded as it was on a claim to the enlightening power of reason), also espoused a replacement of prejudice and fear with a series of 'truth' claims to knowledge of what is 'natural' and 'normal' in terms of sexuality (Jackson, 1987). Despite a strong shift away from the positivist influence of biology, medicine and sexology, towards a much greater emphasis on the social construction of sexuality from the 1960s onwards, the essentialist ontology of sexology has 'left us with a legacy of sex as unavoidable, as given, an uncontrollable urge *needing to be managed*' (Carabine, 1992: 25, emphasis added).

Hawkes (1996) in particular has argued that through a process of sexual 'modernization' and the subjection of sexuality to scientific discourse, modernity came to be characterized by a 'sexual mode of production' (Hawkes, 1996) according to which issues of efficiency and outcome came to the fore. Modernist regimes of sexual efficiency came to replace pre-modernist discourses of physical and moral danger, as the 'science' of sex offered a blueprint for the effective and efficient rationalization of the erotic (Hawkes, 1996).

In this respect, Jackson and Scott (1997) have argued similarly that erotic pleasure has been rationalized in line with Taylorist principles of scientific management. Their account builds on Scott and Freeman's (1995: 161) earlier observation that 'modernist sexuality can be seen as Fordist sexuality, as something to be worked at and improved upon . . . Further it can be seen as Taylorised in that the way to the finished product (male orgasm) is held to be by means of linear progression through a series of simple operations'. For Jackson and Scott (1997: 558–9) 'trends towards rational constructions of the sexual, coupled with a pedagogic approach to the management of everyday life' have contributed to what they term the 'Taylorisation of sex' involving 'the production of rationalised means of producing pleasure'. This Taylorization process, they

argue, assumed ‘a series of stages to be gone through before the final output: foreplay leading to coitus culminating in orgasm’, driven primarily by a performance imperative locating sexuality firmly within the driving force of modernity (Jackson and Scott, 1997: 560).

Both Hawkes’s (1996) account of modernist sexuality, and Jackson and Scott’s (1997) analysis of the Taylorization of sex reflect Gramsci’s (1988) earlier work (written in the 1920s) on the relationship between sexuality and Fordism, in which he argued that modern sexuality and its management should be understood in relation to Fordist accumulation imperatives. In particular, he emphasized the extent to which Fordism demanded a mode of regulation that extended well beyond the immediate site of production, so that sexuality became sublimated to the interests of calculative rationality (Marcuse, 1955). Gramsci (1988) highlighted the extent to which the Fordist regulation of sexuality and of sexual behaviour occurred in the formation of a civilized ‘sexual habitus’, which he described as ‘a process of psycho-physical adaptation to specific conditions of work . . . not something ‘natural’ or innate, but [which] has to be acquired’ (Gramsci, 1988: 281). He argued that the formation of this sexual habitus was a necessary element in sustaining the mass production techniques of Fordism, which required that sexuality be mechanized and excluded from the sphere of work organizations. Just as the activities of workers in the labour process must be shaped carefully towards a given end, so their appetites outside the workplace must reflect the prevailing ideology of ordered rational action: ‘the truth is that a new type of man demanded by the rationalization of production and work cannot be developed until the sexual instinct has been suitably regulated and until it too has been rationalized’ (Gramsci, 1988: 282). Gramsci’s analysis suggests, therefore, that a distinctly Fordist sexuality was a necessary correlate of mass production, one characterized by ‘a new sexual ethic’ (Gramsci, 1988: 282) of regulation and rationalization, of sexual asceticism, ‘assimilated . . . in the form of more or less permanent habits’ (Gramsci, 1988: 288).

Sexual postmodernization and the (reflexive) management of the sexual self

Relatively recent approaches to sexuality emphasize the extent to which modernist or Fordist sexuality has evolved into a postmodernist sexual ethic, according to which (modernist) values of thrift and self restraint, of saving oneself rather than ‘spending’ (Hawkes, 1996), have given way to a slow yet consistent process of sexual post-modernization (Simon, 1996; Roseuil, 2000).² Postmodern sexualities are seen to be characterized by

a progressive disengagement of the modernist association of sexuality with reproduction (Hawkes, 1996). Postmodernist approaches also emphasize the proliferation of available sexual identities as lifestyle choices and not as essential expressions of a sexual 'nature', emphasizing particularly how

Processes of individualization and de-traditionalization are releasing individuals from traditional heterosexual scripts and from the patterns of heterorelationality which accompany them. (Roseneil, 2000: 3.10)

'Sexual postmodernization' (Simon, 1996) is also understood in terms of a rejection of the science of sex (and its pre-social conception of sexuality as an innate drive), in favour of a performative ontology, based on process, paradox and play. A postmodern sexual ontology is seen to be 'far more rooted in the poetic than the physical or biological' (Simon, 1996: 148), characterized by pluralization, experimentation and a multiplicity of choices, 'erotic pluralism and an ethos of tolerance' (Seidman, 1989: 299). For Simon, sexuality is an aspect of social life which is increasingly multiple, fragmented, diffuse and contested, forged out of the contingent circumstances of choice, pluralism and complexity that ultimately link together in the creation of a sexual self (Giddens, 1992).

Where those of a postmodernist persuasion differ from a more critical understanding of this dissolution into sexual pluralism which focuses on the increasing scope for commercialization and commodification (Weeks, 1985), is that in the potential chaos of perpetual change postmodernists claim to identify enormous possibility. In the separation of sexuality from religion, from traditional familial structures, communities, and other repressive aspects of everyday life such as restricted forms of communication, a space is seen to emerge for new kinds of sexualities, and thus, of sexual subjectivities. Postmodern sexualities are understood to be characterized by 'a de-naturalization of sex' (Simon, 1996: 30), by self-consciousness and reflexivity (Giddens, 1992), by the proliferation of a plurality of meanings, acts and recursive identities (Plummer, 1996), and by pastiche and an indeterminate blurring of boundaries (Gergen, 1991). Following the relatively recent proliferation of 'lifestyle' choices offering a multiplicity of sexual alternatives the perception is that, as Plummer has put it (1996: xv), 'a supermarket of sexual possibilities pervades'.

Emphasizing this sexual proliferation as a defining feature of late-modernity, Giddens (1992: 1-2) argues that the gradual social and economic liberation and individualization of women, the demise of ideologies of romantic love and the separation of sexuality from reproduction have all been instrumental in promoting a new form of intimacy: the 'pure relationship'. Pure relationships presume 'equality in emotional give and take' (Giddens, 1992: 58) and an 'opening out of the self as a precondition of active, confluent love' (1992: 62). In other words, the

notion of the pure relationship is meant to represent a democratic form of intimacy, which is supposedly typical of certain features of modernity, such as contractual relations, for instance. As Mellor and Shilling (1997: 181) have noted, in Giddens' analysis 'pure relationships are entered into as the result of individual judgements in terms of a person's own life plans'. The pure relationship is shaped by what Giddens calls 'plastic sexuality'; that is, sexual pleasure severed from its integration with both reproduction and obligation. Sexual transience is seen as the guiding principle of the (self-) management of the pure relationship, in an analysis which is predicated on the view that intimacy is above all a matter of emotional communication in a context of erotic equality. Giddens (1992) argues that such intimate equality indeed characterizes the late-modern era, an era in which, he argues, the 'biological justification' for heterosexuality as 'normal' has lost its foothold. Giddens (1992) argues, in this respect, that late modernity has released sexuality from the confines of a heterosexual, monogamous, procreative hegemony and replaced it with 'sexual pluralism', a sexual identity defined and structured by individual choice.

Seidman (1989: 295), who also champions the emergence of a post-modern sexual ethic 'as a domain of pleasure and self-expression . . . erotic choice, experimentation and diversity', argues that critics of the liberating potential of sexuality have not grasped the shift in sexual ethics which has occurred in parallel with the move towards a reflexive, postmodern sexual ontology. This shift, he argues, is signified by a change from a morality centred on the sex act to one centred on the communicative context; in other words, whether the erotic exchange is consensual and reciprocal, involving mutual respect and responsibility. For Seidman, 'this involves a significant opening towards erotic pluralism and an ethic of tolerance' (Seidman, 1989: 299). In a similar vein to Giddens (1992), Seidman argues that the humanizing, anti-instrumental character of contemporary sex manuals signifies a discursive shift towards a libertarian sexual ethic, underpinned by a 'post-romantic sex ideology', an 'erotic pluralism' and a 'tolerance of non-procreative sexualities' (Giddens, 1992: 307–9).

Also focusing on the evolution of a post-romantic ideology, Angela McRobbie (1996: 172) argues that in contemporary lifestyle magazines repetitive (reflective) codes of romantic love have given way to a more critical (self-reflexive) emphasis on sex and sexuality which, she argues, suggest a 'knowing' tone of parody grounded in a micro-politics of resistance. For instance, in many of the contemporary 'lifestyle' magazines aimed specifically at women, terms such as 'slut', 'tramp' and 'slapper' all undergo self-conscious re-appropriations and are made to re-signify feminine sexuality ironically, implying the evolution of what McRobbie (1996: 188) terms 'a knowing sexual subjectivity'. McRobbie argues that a limited range of images have given way to more choice in terms of

lifestyle and especially so in the self-management of sexuality. She argues, therefore, that contemporary 'lifestyle' magazines allow considerable scope for a reappraisal of the pleasures of femininity and masculinity. McRobbie argues that sexual representations in lifestyle magazines now breach the boundaries of what, in the past, has been considered appropriate, particularly in terms of gendered sexuality. So prominent are these themes, she argues, that they overshadow the stylistic differences between magazines of vastly differing titles, 'creating a whole field of sex which is significant in its distance from the old world of boyfriends, orgasms, and living together' (McRobbie, 1996: 185). Taken together, these themes suggest to McRobbie the emergence of 'a new form of sexual subjectivity, based on 'knowledge and self-reflexiveness . . . in a social environment where the politics of sexuality – though by no means resolved – are at least part of everyday life' (McRobbie, 1996: 192). In short, as she puts it (1996: 193), 'the ironic space in magazine discourses offers possibilities for critical reflection'. So, what McRobbie appears to identify in contemporary lifestyle magazines is a discourse that declares the death of sexual naivety, producing 'a space for great reflexivity and critique'. (McRobbie, 1996: 188). Yet does this space also provide new opportunities for the dissemination of managerialism in cultural resources such as lifestyle magazines? If so, what are the implications of this for the lived experience of sexuality and sexual relations?

Sexuality and managerialism in contemporary cultural resources

Gramsci (1971), Foucault (1977) and Bourdieu (1984) have all emphasized the hegemonic significance of 'experts' and 'cultural agents' – intermediaries who intervene in the relationship between culture and subjectivity – in colonizing potentially critical discourses and in practising cultural closure as a result. The key site of hegemony, for Gramsci, is the myriad of everyday activities and experiences that culminate in common-sense assumptions and are cemented in some semblance of 'normality', thus concealing or mystifying the interests of dominant groups whose definitions of reality, norms and standards appear as natural and normal, rather than as political and therefore contestable. Foucault (1977), of course, recalls this aspect of Gramsci's work in his account of the ways in which 'experts' operate as the architects of both cognitive and normative discourses. Bourdieu (1984) also emphasizes the role played by cultural agents in shaping cultural capital in his account of the new *petit bourgeoisie* as a symbolic elite. His concept of capital is useful in terms of understanding the ways in which contemporary cultural resources such as

lifestyle magazines relate to the management of what Gramsci (1988) described as a Fordist 'sexual habitus' and enables us to conceptualize investment in the self as the site of 'sexual capital'. The concept of sexual selves as investors in 'sexual capital', guided by the advice of 'experts', is particularly useful in enabling us to grasp, for instance, the extent to which as Denise Grady (1999: 1) observed in a recent article in the *New York Times* that focused on Viagra trials, 'disappointment in the bedroom, once considered part of life's normal ups and downs, has become the next frontier . . . another enemy to be conquered'. This point applies obviously not only to the overwhelming (commercial) success of new drug technologies such as Viagra but also to the rise of the sex therapy industry as the provider of 'quick fix' solutions to sexual problems. It could be argued that the latter particularly constitutes but one further example of what Bauman (1994: 38) has referred to as 'our understanding of life-processes and collective living as a succession of 'problems' to be resolved and our deeply ingrained dependence on ever more expert and technique-intensive solutions to problems'.

As Hochschild (1994: 2) has noted in this respect, like other commercially-based 'advice givers', the editorial collectives of lifestyle magazines and the authors of self-help books act as 'investment counsellors', recommending to readers of various types how much and in whom to 'invest'. Hochschild cites the role played by 'advice givers' as indicative of a more general trend towards what, drawing on Weber, she refers to as a 'commercial spirit of intimate life'. Lifestyle magazines appear to contribute to the spread of this commercial spirit, at least in part, by linking their 'advice' on investment strategies to inspirational images, products and ideas but also more generally to a discourse on the management of everyday life, and to living one's life as an entrepreneur of the self (Du Gay and Salaman, 1992; Giddens, 1992).

Indeed, contemporary lifestyle magazines are filled with language more usually associated with management texts, particularly those that constitute 'post-Excellence' managerial discourse.³ Readers of lifestyle magazines are invited to ensure that their sex lives are 'well planned' and 'controlled', 'efficient' and 'effective' and to review their performance accordingly, as the following extracts indicate. 'Train yourself for really ambitious sex' (*Cosmopolitan*, January 1997); 'guaranteed – the best sex ever' (*Cosmopolitan*, December 2000); 'great sex – 20 ways to perfect your style' (*Company*, August 1995); 'how to achieve world class love-making' (*Cosmopolitan*, April 1997); 'much, much, much better sex – we show you how in embarrassing detail' (*New Woman*, November 2000); '33 sex tips – all scientifically proven' (*New Woman*, December 2000); 'sex – better and more of it' (*New Woman*, January 2001); 'the scientific way to have the very best sex of your life' (*New Woman*, February 2001); 'the world's

greatest sex ideas ... to turn you into the greatest lover on Earth' (*Men's Health*, May 2001); 'get more sex – how to boost your investment in your love life' (*Men's Health*, June 1996); 'have 14 days of the best sex – ever' (*New Woman*, July 2001); 'sex overload – how to have sex so good it hurts' (*Sky*, November 1998); '100 new sex tips – the best ever' (*Sky*, December 2000); '10 sex tricks that never fail' (*Sky*, December 2000) and, 'sex – the best investment you'll ever make' (*Men's Health*, November 1996). In assessing potential return on one's investment in 'sexual capital', keeping in mind that '... sex should always be as wild and exciting as possible' (*New Woman*, May 2001), plenty of investment advice is on offer. *Men's Health* (April 1999) invites its readers to test their sexual knowledge on the 'Orgazmatron' (a self-assessment questionnaire that quantifies levels of sexual performance) and *More!* invites its readers to assess their score on the 'Lust-O-Meter' (*More!*, 15–28 November 2000). One particularly noteworthy 'investment tip' offered by *Men's Health* (June 1996) is to 'start each new relationship with a new pack of condoms'. Well worth the (emotional and financial) investment, they claim.

A strong theme, particularly in *Men's Health* and in *Cosmopolitan* and *New Woman*, is the need to reconcile the demands of work with investment in 'sexual capital': 'it's hard to get down to it when you're still casting an eye over the year-end results at 10pm. We explain how to streamline your love life' (*Men's Health*, June 1996), or 'Tip 4: soften up after a hard day's work by holding his gaze as he tells you about his day. Wink, smile, giggle. Turn on the charm and be as gentle and concerned as he likes you to be' (*New Woman*, March 2001). (Note: in *Men's Health* it is love making and not the working day that gets the 'streamlining' treatment, in women's magazines the reverse seems to be the case). On a slightly more reflexive note, *Men's Health* (June, 1996: 89) has recently asked its readers to reflect

why is it that recent surveys seem to indicate that people have far less sex than the average person might imagine? Has sexual mystique flown out of the bedroom window leaving sex much less sexy that it once was? Or could it be that the 90s' lifestyle leaves little room for passion? How do we make our lives more sex friendly? Read on.

There is certainly no shortage of advice on how to manage this tension effectively and efficiently: 'a combination of work, stress, city living and kids can leave little room for hanky-panky . . . ways to make your love life more sex friendly' (*Men's Health*, June 1996); 'lessons in love – your 15 minute foreplay schedule' (*Men's Health*, August 1998); 'lazy sex – bedroom shortcuts for the over-worked (or just lazy) lover' (*Maxim*, May 2000); 'sex express. Full steam ahead – all aboard *Maxim's* fast-track locomotive to pleasure central' (*Maxim*, December 2000); 'twice the sex with half the

foreplay – follow our ten sure-fire shortcuts to instant intercourse and you'll get there quicker than the Flying Scotsman' (*Maxim*, December 2000); 'sex, next Wednesday, guaranteed – 50 ways to make yourself (instantly) more attractive' (*Men's Health*, November 1996); '7 ways to guarantee more sex' (*Men's Health*, January/February 1998); '50 ways to tell if you're onto something special in the sack' (*Elle*, September 1998); 'how to have the sexiest, most relaxing and most productive hour of your life' (*Men's Health*, November 1998); 'how to take a woman to orgasm – every time' (*Men's Health*, November 1996); '10 red-hot sex games – tried and tested' (*FHM*, February 2001); 'how to play sex games – spice up your boring bedroom antics with *FHM's* DIY guide' (*FHM*, February 2001); 'a seven point plan for sex which guarantees your ladyfriend an orgasm' (*FHM*, April 2001); 'follow our step by step guide to the easy way to boost your sex life' (*New Woman*, March 2001); 'how to deliver in the bedroom' (*Men's Health*, March 1998); 'how to arouse her in an instant' (*Men's Health*, June 2001); 'how to turn on a stranger in five minutes' (*Men's Health*, June 2001); '10 minutes to better sex' (*New Woman*, September 1996); '10 ways to come quickly: your turbo-charged guide to express sex' (*Sky*, December 2000) and, surely the most efficiency-driven of all? 'Right first time sex – 20 ways to stop wasting time in the bedroom' (*Men's Health*, September 1997). In a similar tone, *Men's Health* (June 1996) also prescribes for the couple whose life is 'so frantic they rarely meet' that they 'get out the Filofaxes at the beginning of each month and arrange mutually convenient dates that take priority over everything'. Similarly, *Marie Claire* (April 1998) emphasizes the importance of managing the tensions between work and a meaningful sex life: 'it shouldn't be too time-consuming to write a thoughtful note or cook a nice meal for two – such demonstrations can all contribute to the sex-friendly ethos to which we all aspire'. Also in *Cosmopolitan* (July 1998): 'a timetable too full to include sensual delights must be reviewed as a matter of urgency'. (As noted earlier, in 'women's magazines', it is working life that is required to adapt to the demands of the bedroom). In sum, the general tone of most of the lifestyle magazines is that in managing a great sex life, 'good planning is essential' (*Men's Health*, June 1996).

Throughout these magazines, particularly *Men's Health*, there is a drum beat of performance anxiety: 'great sex [it is never just 'good'] – be (much) better than the average man' (*Men's Health*, May 1996). 'Be a Professor of Sex – are you performing at your peak?' (*Men's Health*, July/August 1997). Failed sexuality (or 'bad sex' to use the correct magazine terminology) is addressed (as a matter of urgency) in the language of self-improvement and entrepreneurialism, as the following extracts suggest: 'what constitutes bad sex? What it is and how to avoid it' (*Men's Health*, March 1996); 'compared to bad sex, death and taxes are a doddle' (*Elle*,

August 1998); '10 ways to conquer impotence' (*Men's Health*, September 1996) and, of course, 'fast, highly effective methods of preventing premature ejaculation' (*Men's Health*, March 1997) features prominently as a theme in many issues of *Men's Health*. Such magazines claim that techniques involving the management of the sexual self can come to the rescue of any unfortunate individual, who is 'counselled' in a way which assumes a fundamentally shared commitment to dominant discourses on sexuality (namely, the rational pursuit of 'great sex').

By apparently pushing back the limits of what can and can't be discussed, the producers of contemporary sexual discourses are, in many ways, able to present themselves as radical sexual pioneers promising, for instance, '42 brand new sex tips that even Bill Clinton won't have heard of' (*Men's Health*, November 1998), when in fact, it could be argued that they continue to be limiting and controlling. In particular, magazines such as *New Woman* and *Cosmopolitan* (referred to by one respondent as 'girlie flicks' – all female group interview, March 2001) borrow notoriously from feminist discourse, implying to their readership a genuine (emancipatory rather than simply commercial) commitment to the equal (sexual) worth of men and women. Several respondents acknowledged this: 'in *Cosmopolitan* I think they try to represent women as their own being, independent, they have a right . . . I think it's about giving you options' (interview with Nireen April 2001). Other respondents noted in this respect, 'it's all about managing life . . . it says to women don't be satisfied with roll on roll off sex, and don't allow this to happen and if it's happening then you've got problems in your relationship' (all female group interview, March 2001).

What self-proclaimed 'feminist' lifestyle magazines and advice books seem to appropriate from feminism, however, are simply the sound bites and buzz-words. Within this paradigm, as Hochschild (1994: 15) puts it, 'the spirit of commercialism . . . instrumentalizes our idea of love and commercializes it'. Lifestyle magazines and self-help books certainly propose that sex should play a more central role in the lives of women especially, and that women should rid themselves of anachronistic ideas about the importance of sexual asceticism. However, it also seems that within the discourses of enterprise which guide individuals in managing the sexual 'career of the self' (Grey, 1994), potentially critical and emancipatory discourses such as feminism are 'colonized'; that is, incorporated into those cultural resources that are currently particularly influential in guiding the commercialized management of everyday life, as the interview data on which this article is based suggests:

Cosmo's really two-faced because it'll say you don't need a guy you know, you know you don't need a guy you can do it your own way on your own. They've got all these articles about guys and how to get guys . . . on the front cover of

that one [points to *Cosmopolitan*, April 2001] actually I just noticed it's oh dear yes . . . Still Single? Like 'oh dear, what a shame'. 'Why The Love of Your Life is Right Under Your Nose'. 'Kissing Karma Sutra – Ten Ways To Make Him Addicted to Your Lips'. At the same time they're saying you can be an independent woman with financial security. As long as you buy all the stuff they're advertising, of course. That's how it is. (All female group interview, March 2001)

The pursuit of a performance imperative through the deployment of management techniques and principles was certainly the dominant theme that emerged from the analysis of interview transcripts. As one respondent noted, 'we're all managers . . . whether we do it successfully or efficiently is another matter' (interview with Greg, March 2001). Most respondents noted, however, that 'there's a lot of pressure to perform' (interview with Lawrence, April 2001). One emphasized that everyday life 'is quite a project . . . it's almost as if they [lifestyle magazines] construct a project for you to work on . . . how you allocate your resources and so on, not just your money but your time and energy as well . . . and if you don't work on that project, or you don't work hard enough at it, well then . . . you're a no-body' (interview with Richard, April 2001). Others referred to the lifestyle magazines (used as prompts during each of the interviews) variously as 'manuals for life' (interview with Derek, March 2001), and as 'lifestyle guides' (interview with Jane, April 2001), noting how ' . . . they actually perform a kind of socially-acceptable sex manual function' (all female group interview, March 2001); 'they are kind of 'experts' . . . authorities to consult' (all male group interview, March 2001). In relation to the role of lifestyle magazines as cultural resources shaping the lived experience of sexuality, Alison summed up the view of several respondents when (in an all-female group interview, March 2001) she said that

I definitely think they're [lifestyle magazines] trying to create an image . . . or to give people some image or even standard of what sexuality is . . . or should be nowadays, in the times that we're living in [how do you mean?] . . . well, sexuality is seen as central to everything we do, our entire lives and when you open out the images of sexuality you get in the magazines, we all seem to have to say that we're just not like this and then you worry . . . that's where they're really negative. You feel that you're not part of something that you should be, that you're not 'in' with the crowd.

In terms of the ways in which relationships are effected by the kind of lived experience to which Alison refers, many respondents noted how ' . . . it's not as if your partner is going to read these magazines and say "I want you to do that to me"', but you're just left with a general feeling of expectation . . . or rather feel that your partner might have particular expectations of you . . . and yeah, I suppose, your performance' (interview

with Ellen, March 2001). Others (both men and women) noted how ‘they can leave you feeling quite inadequate’ (all female group interview, March 2001). As one particular respondent put it,

. . . it probably makes people feel that they don’t have a very good sex life . . . or life in general really, or that their own sex life is a bit inadequate and you know, that might not necessarily be true but I think that’s the way it makes you feel . . . it could make some people feel you know . . . because their body isn’t the way it should be then their sex life cannae be any good, because their tummy’s too fat or they’ve got a big bum or whatever then they can’t be sexual or have a good sex life . . . they can’t be any good at it. (interview with Stephanie, March 2001)

Anxiety about the ‘rational’ pursuit of sexual performance manifested itself, both for men and women, particularly in relation to an aesthetic conception of what constitutes ‘good sex’. ‘Good [or rather ‘great’] sex’ was deemed, by many respondents, to be sex that ‘looked good’ and to be sexual meant to ‘look sexual’ according to the aesthetic norms and voyeuristic standards of the magazines under consideration: ‘good sex in these magazines is the kind of sex that looks good – it’s almost as if you’re supposed to think of your sexuality, and look at it, as an outsider, as someone on the outside looking in and judging how good it looks . . . to be good it has to look good’ (interview with Alison, March 2001). Another respondent noted, in this respect that ‘what they [lifestyle magazines] sell is an aesthetic lifestyle . . . and part of that is an aesthetic sexuality’ (interview with Derek, March 2001) so that, as one particular female respondent put it ‘sexuality is reserved for people who look like the people in these magazines’ (interview with Pauline, March 2001). In this sense, the aesthetic conception of good sex presented in lifestyle magazines seems to conflate discourses on sexual health and morality with those on performance, so that aesthetic sexuality is defined as simultaneously both morally virtuous (‘safe’) and skilfully executed (‘successful’). The dominant discursive and visual representations of sexuality in the magazines considered were also deemed to be overwhelmingly heterosexual: ‘it’s always “her” as the partner in men’s magazines, and vice versa’ (interview with Jane, April 2001); ‘they’re very heterosexual and very heterosexual’ (interview with Derek, March 2001); ‘. . . it certainly reinforces the idea that heterosexuality is normal and that anything else is, well . . . perverse, I suppose’ (interview with Nireen, April 2001).

Critical Management Studies and sexuality in everyday life

On this basis, it could be argued that those currently celebrating the advent of the postmodernization of sexuality and its management are

perhaps peaking too soon, and in so doing, appear to ignore the potentially de-humanizing effects of an instrumentalized hedonistic ethic which is driven more by performance imperatives than a genuine ethic of erotic pluralism and mutuality. In particular, such approaches to everyday life as those considered at the beginning of this article seem to overlook the arresting effects of our 'over-investment' (Foucault, 1979) in sexuality which, as Foucault puts it, burdens sexuality with new expectations. In this context, far from being an aspect of pleasure and play, sexuality assumes responsibility for securing our sense of self, as 'good sex' becomes an important marker of 'distinction' (Bourdieu, 1984); that is, of maintaining a relatively secure position in a social hierarchy of self and others; of being 'in' as one respondent (cited earlier) put it.

Hence, in the colonization of sexuality by managerial discourses, the freedom to pursue our sense of self through genuinely inter-subjective, erotic relations devoid of performance imperatives and the linear purposiveness associated with processes of rationalization, is largely denied us. The idea that western societies have undergone a process of sexual post-modernization operates, therefore, in a narrow historical framework which deflects attention away from continuities such as women's continued familial dependence, from their exploitation as sexualized, low paid workers; from intensifying regimes of bodily appropriation; from the continued primacy of heterosexuality and also, as has been argued here, from a managerial colonization of sexual relations. The aggregate effect of this managerial colonization of sexuality, it could be argued, has been entirely commensurate with the atomization of the individual and not, as Giddens (1992) suggests is the case, with the evolution of 'erotic equality' and emotional communication in a process of sexual postmodernization. As Mestrovic (1997) has argued, ways of escape seem to have been rationalized and McDonalized, leaving little room for an 'authentic' or irrational experience of everyday life. Even sexuality appears, at least discursively, to have lost its spontaneous connection with eroticism through the contemporary prioritization of the reflexive (cognitive and individualized) project of the self over and above embodied sensuality and the pursuit of an erotic fusion of selves based upon a conscious refusal to limit ourselves within our individuality (Bataille, 1962). Within this framework, the process of becoming a (sexual) subject can be understood to be more reflective of organizationally-prescribed and externally imposed norms and values than self-reflexive, through 'the creation – and maintenance – of a BRAND CALLED YOU' (Peters, 1997: 6, for instance).

As Gillian Rose (1995: 63) has remarked 'love-making is never simply pleasure'. Rather, eroticism ideally embodies the capacity to reject (albeit temporarily) the linear purposiveness of a rationally-ordered social life (of

‘a brand called you’). Of course, erotic relations are made up of a cluster of rules and role expectations (of mutuality, for instance), yet these are formulated and enacted according to a negotiated communicative eroticism, to borrow from Habermasian terminology, which places an emphasis on dialogicality and self-entrustment. Eroticism is, ideally, a process of self-creation and a space within which the mundane existence of everyday life can indeed be escaped from – a place ‘for invention, to meander and side-step the linear purposiveness of those who seek to order social life’ (Featherstone, 1998: 15); yet which seems to have become increasingly subject to external mediation thereby arresting this inter-subjective experience of mutual escape. So-called sexual postmodernism and the ‘informalization’ of everyday life imply, as Bauman (1998: 21) emphasizes, a burden of liberation according to which greater freedom of choice turns out to be yet another pressure to perform, requiring a ‘controlled de-control’ not dissimilar to that which characterizes the tempo of many of the ‘informal’ aspects of contemporary workplace participation. This suggests, therefore, a need to think (once again) more critically about the management of sexuality in everyday life than postmodernism allows us to and more fundamentally to focus on the need, as Bataille (1962: 241) puts it, ‘to find a place for the disorders of love-making in an orderly pattern covering the whole of human life’.

Conclusion

Throughout this article it has been argued that the incorporation of management discourses and techniques into contemporary sexuality and sexual relations appears to erode the exalted and ‘special’ status of sex, reducing it to yet another rhetorical aspect of the ‘reflexive project of self’ (Giddens, 1992). Erotic sex, as Rose put it, is clearly about much more than just pleasure; it is a way in which individuals can express themselves and find an inter-subjective release from the fragmenting and alienating effects of organized society (Marcuse, 1955). However, through the incorporation of managerial imperatives, discourses and techniques into those cultural resources that in part guide us through everyday life, sexuality has also become yet another aspect of the lifeworld in which the work ethic seemingly reigns supreme. In other words, it appears that the idea of ‘performance’ has intruded into the most intimate, inter-subjective aspect of our lives creating, as one respondent put it:

. . . a lot of pressure for men and women . . . because there’s always the message ‘be sexually skilled’ and all this really explicit stuff about how to do it, not simply to please your man . . . and in women’s magazines it is always to please your *man*, but also to please yourself. You are supposed to be able to harmonise your sexual relationships and your career and everything, and to be really skilled at

it . . . it just creates so much pressure (interview with Claire, March 2001, original emphasis).

It seems that with this incitement to sexual and managerial discourse, has come a corresponding performance imperative that does not simply repress sex, but suppresses (or rather arrests) the inter-subjectivity of eroticism so that ‘. . . in so far as we manage our relationships, there is . . . a loss of intimacy and spontaneity’ (interview with Derek, March 2001). A proliferation of lifestyle magazines, aimed at both men and women, instruct us that it is no longer enough to be ‘doing it’; we should be ‘managing it’, ‘working at it’, ‘improving it’ and so on. Hence, ‘for all its emphasis on flexibility, post-Fordist sexuality . . . is more an extension of some of the underlying principles of Taylorisation than a challenge to it’ (Jackson and Scott, 1997: 566). Not only does this continued proliferation of ‘expert’ knowledges, and barrage of representations of sexuality as a largely aesthetic phenomenon, limit our freedom as sexual subjects in the so-called post-modern era of choice and creativity. Their impact, in terms of lived experience, also makes it difficult for us to engage in the ethic of mutuality within which erotic sex is ideally embedded, so that ‘in the place of the unself-consciousness of mutual love . . . a hateful self-regard is unleashed’ (Rose, 1995: 67); one that seems to manifest itself in the discourse and imperatives of managerialism and in the (self-conscious) pursuit, in our most intimate encounters, of the entrepreneurial project of the self.

Notes

1. The research on which this paper is based was carried out with financial assistance from the British Academy (grant number SG31030) and the Division of Sociology and Social Policy at Glasgow Caledonian University. Respondents were aged between 18 and 58 (the mean age was 36) and were largely self-selected, initially in response to requests for assistance posted around campus at Glasgow Caledonian University, on electronic discussion lists and in local cafes and bars and subsequently by means of snowball sampling. Those who took part described themselves variously as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual or celibate. Some were married or in long-term relationships, others were divorced or separated; some were single and others described themselves as ‘going out with someone’. They belonged to a range of occupational and ethnic groups. Their contribution to the research is gratefully acknowledged here and to protect the anonymity of respondents, pseudonyms are used throughout. Recent commentators have advocated the use of qualitative methods in empirical research on the lived experience of sexuality and sexual relations. Frith (2000) in particular highlights some of the main benefits of the focus group method, arguing that it not only enables the exploration of under-researched topic areas, but that it also provides greater insight into the language commonly used by respondents to describe sexual activities and relations, and provides the

conditions under which people feel comfortable discussing sexual experiences. Consequently, 'focus groups can provide rich data for researchers . . . who wish to investigate the social construction of sexuality through talk' (Frith, 2000: 291). Interviews were typically relaxed in tone, lasting around an hour each, and whilst a list of topics to be discussed was kept in mind, respondents were encouraged to reflect on their experiences and perceptions as the structuring devices. Those who contributed were, where possible and appropriate, allowed the space and time to pursue issues they perceived to be important, relevant or interesting. They were actively encouraged to speak from experience and to relate, in the case of the group interviews, their own experiences and interpretations to those of others taking part. The style of questioning and prompting was as open-ended as possible, to encourage narrative responses. In interpreting their accounts, I have drawn on respondents' own words (and the meanings they attach to their own experiences/perceptions and those of others), on my own notes (from reflections on the interviews, notes made between interviews and from the analysis of texts/magazines), and on discussion with the respondents themselves, with seminar groups, and with colleagues.

2. See Bauman (1998), Adkins (2000) and also Storr (1999) for more critical accounts that relate the emergence of an aesthetic sexual ethic to the accumulation imperatives of consumer capitalism.
3. Key words that constitute contemporary management discourse (and also the language of what might broadly be termed 'self-actualization' literature) include accountability, action, archetypes, assumptions, awareness, behaviour, beliefs, change, commitment, communication, community, conflict, culture, dialogue, dynamics, empowerment, exercises, goals, identity, information, infrastructure, interaction, knowledge, language, leadership, learning, listening, measurement, models, performance, personal mastery, planning, power, practice, principles, priorities, problems, process, quality, reflection, relationships, skills, strategies, styles, systems, teams, templates, thinking, training, values, and vision (especially personal and shared), as well as particular phrases such as 'personal mastery', 'mental models', 'mastering paradox', 'building systems', 'setting goals' and 'attaching formulation to implementation' (Peters and Waterman, 1982; Peters and Austin, 1985; Peters, 1988; 1992, 1994; Handy, 1989, 1994, 1997; Pascale, 1990; Senge, 1990; Holden, 1998). There is a particular concern with 'measuring and developing', 'continually improving', 'project management' and identifying 'strategic priorities', as well as 'identifying the symptoms', 'diagnosis and strategy', and 'implementation or treatment' (Handy, 1985) as well as 'redesigning life' (Handy, 1994), and particularly 'monitoring performance and measuring effectiveness' (Coleman and Barrie, 1990). In addition, the language of contemporary (post-Excellence) management literature involves a quantification of the management process: 'how to manage in 11 chapters' (Payne and Payne, 1999); '7 steps to connecting thinking to acting' (Mintzberg, 1994), 'seven steps for breaking through organizational gridlock' (Senge et al, 1994), 'how to turn the three secrets into skills' (Blanchard and Lorber, 1984), 'five basic value adding strategies' (Peters, 1988), 'the four

capability building blocks' (Peters, 1988) often located within a time-consciousness: 'five minutes to better management' (Blanchard and Johnson, 1983) that conflates efficiency and effectiveness: 'pursue fast-paced innovation' (Peters, 1988), 'how to make free time work for you in 5 easy steps' (Stewart, 1997), and 'seven keys to super-efficiency' (Fletcher, 1986).

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