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## **Introducing Masculinity Studies to Information Systems Research: The Case of Gaydar**

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### **Abstract**

*Studies of men's gendered experiences of information systems are needed. In order to support this claim, I introduce the area of Masculinity Studies to Information Systems research and, using this, present an exploratory analysis of an internet dating website for gay men - Gaydar. The information system which forms part of the Gaydar community is shown to shape, and be shaped by the members as they accept and challenge aspects of it as related to their identities. In doing this, I show how the intertwined processes of information systems development and use contribute to the creation of diverse interpretations of masculinity within a group of men. In sum, my analysis highlights different kinds of men and different versions of masculinity that can sometimes be associated with different experiences of information systems. The implications of this work centre on the need to expand our knowledge of men's gendered experiences with information systems, to reflect upon processes of technology facilitated categorisation and to consider the influences that contribute to the roll out of particular software features along with the underlying rationales for market segmentation in the software and software based services industries.*

### **Introduction**

In this paper, I want to demonstrate that Information Systems research can be enriched by paying attention to men's gendered experiences of technologies. Everyday discussions of gender usually centre on the biological differences between men and women and what this means for their lives. This view can be characterized as *essentialist* - where biology accounts for gender difference and *biologically deterministic* - that someone's gender will predictably lead them to think and act in certain ways and that they will have predetermined physical and psychological capabilities. For example, a common view might be that men are better placed to fix cars and women to fix dinner! Admittedly, this is a very simplistic example and analysis of this view, but it makes the point. Within Information Systems research there are several studies that favour biologically based explanations, albeit they finesse the argument a little more. Such studies tend to treat gender as a variable which is used to highlight and explain purported differences in men's and women's experiences of information systems development, adoption and working in the IT industry (Truman and Baroudi, 1994; Igbaria and Chidambaram, 1997; Venkatesh and Morris, 2000; Natale, 2002). However, within the social sciences, the division of society into men and women is usually considered more of a social, than biological, phenomena (Wharton, 2005). Some Information Systems researchers have set their work within this frame resulting in insights into such areas as women's experiences in the information technology profession (Trauth, 2002; Adam et al., 2006; Moore et al., 2006) and technology usage in the home and at work (Adam and Green, 1998; Wilson, 2002; Adam, 2005). Any theorisation of men and masculinities has yet to happen.

Whichever view of gender is taken, what really matters is that it is used as a fundamental way of organizing and classifying our lives (Adam et al., 2004). Given gender's societal importance, and the field's concern with the sociotechnical, then it seems fairly obvious we need to do a bit more work here. Everyone has a stake in gender even though it is often absent from mainstream discussions about the field of Information Systems being relevant

(Trauth, 2002; Adam et al., 2004; Kvansy et al., 2005). In this paper, I want to extend research in this area by focussing upon the ‘technologies’ used in a men’s internet dating site called Gaydar. In particular I attend to how such technologies shape and, are shaped by, gay men and their diverse masculinities.

In the next section the area Masculinity Studies introduced and discussed. Gaydar is then introduced and a thematically organised deconstruction of this follows. The analysis shows that the use of internet dating by gay men involves navigating, shaping and being shaped by a set of sociotechnical arrangements that are infused with diverse interpretations of what it means to be masculine in the gay community, on-line and off-line. Through this study, I aim to open up the study of gender and IS to include attention to men and masculinities.

### **Masculinity Studies**

The Masculinity Studies field is largely pro-feminist and social constructivist in nature (Beasley, 2005). Masculinity studies writers, do not take up the cause of masculinity, they seek to understand and critique its role in work organisations and society (Beasley, 2005; Connell, 2005). This is not because there is anything essentially wrong with masculinity; problems arise because it usually refers to a set of characteristics that are favoured over others, potentially resulting in relations of inequality and oppression. Definitions of masculinity are diverse and ever changing, however even with all the usual problems of definitions, we need some form of idea of what I mean by this. The closest helpful definition I have found is one that sees masculinity as “behaviours, languages and practices, existing in specific cultural and organizational locations, which are commonly associated with males and thus culturally defined as not feminine” (Whitehead and Barrett, 2001: 15-16). A key part of this definition is the idea of ‘common association.’ Although men and masculinity might be commonly associated, as Kerfoot (2001) states, women can be masculine too. It is important therefore that I make it clear that we should not conflate men and masculinity although in this paper I present a study predominantly concerned with men. Within Masculinity Studies, gender relations are nuanced as masculinity is thought of in terms of how it configures relations between men and women, men and other men and even women and other women. Consequently, attention is paid to diversity in masculinities in relation to such categories as colour, sexuality, gender, age and social class. It is such diversity in the nature of men and their masculinities that I think we need to pay attention to in Information Systems research.

Within Masculinity Studies, there are various ways of theorizing relations of masculinity. I would suggest anyone who is interested in pursuing these ideas consider the following texts which provide excellent introductions (Carrigan et al., 1985; Connell, 1987; Beasley, 2005, Whitehead and Barrett, 2001; Adams and Savran, 2002 and Connell, 2005). Yet, whilst there is diversity of thinking within Masculinity Studies, there is a shared fundamental critique of biologically deterministic explanations, arguments for the need to consider diversity in masculinities and agreement that masculinities are not fixed, they can shape and be shaped overtime in unpredictable ways (Donaldson, 1993; Hanke, 1998; Moore and Schmidt, 1999; Demetriou, 2001; Hearn et. al., 2003; Miller, et. al., 2003; Thorsby and Gill, 2004). However, although focussing upon diversity in Masculinity Studies has proved fruitful, this does bring certain issues. In particular, Collinson and Hearn (2001) for example argue: that there is a danger that the emphasis upon difference in masculinity becomes a sophisticated mechanism for forgetting women; that such a focus on difference can also lead to valueless categorisation rather than a focus upon gendered living experiences and that a focus upon masculinity might downplay other social divisions, such as class. Clearly the study of masculinities raises difficulties, but I still think there is value in incorporating this literature into the study of Information Systems, we need a way to theorize men’s experiences and masculinity.

### ***Masculinity Studies, Technology and Information Systems***

Clearly, Information Systems research offers an array of interesting sites for investigation as it is recognised to be dominated by men, the oft so called gatekeepers of masculinity, as a field of academic study and in work organisations and society (Panteli et al., 1999; Panteli et al., 2001; Robertson et al., 2001). However, few studies have focused on masculinity and technology, even when technology is defined in the broadest of senses (Lohan and Faulkner, 2004). Within Information Systems research Adam et. al’s (2004) survey includes a good range of papers, but none of these theorize masculinity. Within Management Studies research that consider information systems, Knights and Murray (1994) and Eriksson-Zetterquist and Knights (2004) raise masculinity in their work, but although recognizing diversity in masculinities, this is not always carried through in the analysis. For example, in Eriksson-Zetterquist and Knights’ (2004) study of men resisting an information system, they assert that their work questions the idea that new technology reinforces masculinity in organisations. From a masculinities studies

perspective, their finding is not surprising - the men who were resisting were older, the younger men did not resist. Thus, the older men can be seen as a subordinated group, their age shaped their inability to live up stereotypical notions of the relationship between technology and masculinity. Narrowing this further, there are a few studies that focus on gay men and technology, but although representing a further unpacking of masculinity, they do not draw upon the masculinities studies field. For example, in one study gay men are treated as a homogenous promiscuous group who cannot live without the supporting tools of the mobile phone and internet chat rooms (Anderson et al., 2002). In another, more rigorous study of gay on-line communities, this stereotypical view is challenged with internet chat rooms been seen as a useful political device (Yang, 2000). However, masculinity is not a direct consideration here either. This absence of research matters because those who study gender and technologies, particularly those doing feminist technology studies and research into gender and information systems usually subscribe to Wajcman's (1991) technology as masculine culture thesis - the welding of technology, masculinity and competence. I thus aim to respond to the call for the further study of the link between masculinity and technology (Lohan and Faulkner, 2004). If we are to overcome the problem of gender being predominantly attributed to women (Faulkner, 2002), then I also think that studies of gender and information systems that explicitly examine men's experiences are required.

### **A Deconstruction of Gaydar**

This study has been constructed from a Masculinity Studies informed reading of Gaydar. I have been a member and active participant in the community since 1999. Halberstam (2003) states that researchers may coexist in the same friendship networks and may function as co-conspirators. Data collection and analysis involved participant observation of the software in use (in terms of profile configuration, not chat room usage), analysis of the functionality and content of the site and the site of the Gaydar developers, Qsoft. I have also drawn on documentary evidence such as media packs provided by Qsoft. Mindful of the ethical considerations for online community based research, at this stage I have not studied individuals (Brownlow and O'Dell, 2002; Ess and AoIR Ethics Working Committee, 2002; Carter, 2005). I have treated Gaydar as a publicly accessible site and have decided not to reproduce quotes from private member profiles, or members themselves, to ensure that no 'private' data is made 'public'. I have made it clear on my profile that I am an academic interested in Gay men's use of technologies, such as Gaydar, and have discussed my work with those in the community who have asked about it.

Gaydar is one of several gay online communities that could have been studied. However, the aim of case studies is to reach a fundamental understanding of structure and process (Gummesson, 1991). Single cases have frequently led scholars to see new theoretical relationships and question old ones in part because focussed research permits the deep understanding of an entity (Dyer and Wilkins, 1991). The data from this study contributes 'rich insight' (Walsham, 1995) in respect of a neglected area in Information Systems research, masculinity. Clearly, studying another community might have well have made this area seem unimportant but in this instance it does. I also recognise theories are ways of seeing and not seeing, thus a different theoretical lens might have provided a different view of Gaydar (as might the same lens on a different internet dating site). Of course, this work will not provide complete answers. As Knights (1997) tells us, the demand for exhaustive and complete explanations is a deeply masculine construction, and one that should be resisted.

### ***Background to Gaydar***

Gaydar is a colloquial concept that existed long before the internet, as with so much of the language associated information and communications technologies. The term Gaydar is based on the concept of the radar. It is premised on having the capability to locate and work out if a person is gay. Gaydar, as an idea, is necessary because gay people, despite popular conceptions, do not necessarily have phenotypical characteristics. Thus, outside of spaces where you might expect to find gay people, such as gay bars, Gaydar is used to enquire about, and maybe confirm, the sexuality of an individual. It is perhaps best described as recognition based on verbal and non-verbal behaviour, a key feature being various forms of eye contact, or 'Gaydar Gaze' (Nicholas, 2004). Therefore, the use of the term for the Gaydar group of websites, of which one of the aims is to assist people to locate each other through a technologically mediated 'gaze', seems appropriate. Gaydar operates in around 159 countries but in this paper, the focus is on Gaydar.co.uk, the United Kingdom member's site.

The company that developed and operates Gaydar is called QSoft. It was started in November 1999 by a gay male couple and QSoft now provides information systems development and consulting services, specifically targeted at accessing the 'gay market' in much the same way as PlanetOut (see Campbell's (2005) study for an interesting

analysis of the commercial interests in gay internet usage). Although Gaydar is largely unknown outside the gay community it has over 3 million members worldwide with around 1.2 million of those being based in the UK. According to Hitwise, in 2007 the community was the UK's largest gay dating website with a market share of over 76 per cent. It was also purported to be the 4th largest lifestyle website in the UK, receiving more hits than companies such as Marks & Spencer, Ryanair.com and Ticketmaster UK. The majority of members are gay and bisexual men. There are some gay women, bisexual women, transsexual, transgender and transvestite members, but these are in the minority. Access to the site is via registration and whilst this is free to guest members, extra services can be obtained by upgrading to member status for £60 per year.

***Gaydar Profiles and the Shaping of Masculinities***

To be part of the Gaydar community it is necessary to construct a personal profile which I argue contributes to the shaping of a range of masculinities. The software used to create member profiles is configured by the member based on drop down menus, tick boxes and some free text. The profile created can be very detailed and results in the intended and unintended categorisation of the members into groups with identities that are well known within the gay community. Indeed, in a gay lifestyle magazine, AXM, writer, Paul Hartnett has said “you only have to surf Gaydar for a few minutes to gauge what makes so many gay men tick” (Hartnett, 2005: 40-41). Configuring the profile requires the creation of a member name, input of member status, what the member is on Gaydar looking for and a geographic location (see Table 1). Permutations might be a single gay man, looking for a relationship based in Manchester, UK or a bisexual couple looking to meet friends, in Leeds, UK. The kind of optional data that can be input is extensive and ranges from physical attributes such as hair colour through to sexual and non-sexual activity preferences. There are also free text spaces for members to write about themselves and what they like to see in others.

**Table 1. Mandatory Profile Categories**

Member Status Choices (Only one to be selected)	Reason for Profile (Several selections possible)	Geographical Location
Single Gay Man	Relationship	City is a free text field
Single Gay Woman	Friendship	
Single Bi-sexual Man	1-on-1 Sex	Region and country are configured by drop down menus
Single Bi-sexual Woman	Group Sex	
Gay Male Couple	Email/Chat	
Gay Female Couple	Other Activities	
Bi-sexual couple		
Group (Gay Men)		
Group (Gay Women)		
Group (Mixed)		

This process of profile configuration in itself contributes to the construction and shaping of multiple masculinities within the space. Standardised versions of many of these masculinities are perhaps the most obvious where the software's 214 'Keyword' categories and sub-categories are implemented. Within these sub categories, the 'types I like section' is the most explicit in terms of the kinds of masculinities that gay men might express an interest in being, and being associated with (see Table 2). These are based on more general social categories of race, class and age in addition to a set of socially stratified masculinities well known within the gay community. For example the well known gay identity of a 'Cub' is known to be subservient to a 'Bear'. Bears are men that generally are larger in body size and who have beards, Cubs are younger 'Bear wannabes' and may have a smaller body size and less body/facial hair. Some of these categories are very specific to the gay community, like Bears, but overall many, such as Builders and Footballers, can be linked to mainstream notions of what it means to be masculine, particularly throughout the UK, and the western world in general. They can be an integral part of member's requirements when it comes to finding friends or sexual partners. For example, it is common for those members who are interested in Bears, to demand of other members big stomachs and beards. Bears are expected conform to such a heavily masculinised version of a gay man - big and with a beard. Bears are often seen as the epitome of a particular masculinity within the gay community, physically at least. The contradiction is that some can be effeminate.

**Table 2. 'Types I Like' Keywords**

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Bears	Labourers	Punks
Bikers	Leather Men	Rugby Players
Builders	Married Men Medical	Short Guys
Chubbies	(Uniforms)	Skins
Clubbers	Military (Uniforms)	Tall Guys
Farmers	Muscle Men	Transvestite
Firemen	Older Guys	Transsexual
Footballers	Policemen	Truck Drivers
Geeks	Preppies	Twinks

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The role of masculinity is further in evidence in the website's 'Sex Factor' competition categories. Sex Factor, a play on the popular X-Factor television programme which runs in several countries, operates by members configuring the software to allow other members to nominate them to win by clicking an icon on their profile. Winning occurs by receiving the most clicks for that month and 'the prize' is that the winners' pictures in each of the categories are used to highlight the same ones for the next month's competition. To participate members have to categorise themselves into one of various groups of masculinities. These categories include: Leather, Rubber, Skins and Punks, Muscle (18-30), Muscle (31+) Cubs, Bears, Young Guys (18-21), Young Guys (22+) Guy Next Door (18-30), Guy Next Door (31+), Older Guys, Alternative, Sports Gear, Hip and Uniforms. Without explaining the 'gay specific' categories, it can be seen that differences are carved out based on age, body type, clothing, lifestyle and sexual activity preferences. Yet, although members can define their preferences it is important to read what is not available in Gaydar. The most obvious excluded groups are camp and effeminate men, they are not offered as 'Types I like'. As with Eriksson-Zetterquist and Knights' (2004) study where the technology constructed employees as more suitable for positions in the company, based on their age and acceptance of technology, Gaydar has a similar effect within the gay community. The technology's functionality and the data it requires, constructs certain members as 'more masculine', and thus more suitable, through reference to 'off-line' mainstream notions of masculinity.

Through this analysis it is possible to see favoured masculinities which can directly and indirectly subordinate and marginalise within the community. Being camp or effeminate is thus not only constructed as less preferable in relation to a given masculinity in society. Such labels are relational to the idealised notions of masculinity, within the gay community, and Gaydar as constitutive of this. Thus, Gaydar can facilitate the management of the potential conflict between the effeminate labels given to gay men based on their sexuality, and their gendered identities as men. As with men who work in female dominated occupations, strategies are employed by some to reassert their masculinity (Simpson, 2004). This is done through the configuration of the software, which is inscribed with highly exaggerated masculinities such as Bears or footballers, and the use of free text space to assert they are 'straight acting' and like 'men to be men'. Gaydar allows members to use filters to scrutinize each other for signs of undesirable attributes. This is similar to the point Kimmel (1994) makes about straight men looking for signs of femininity and homosexuality in other men, and responding accordingly, often with anxiety because of the stigma surrounding being gay. Furthermore, the processes of the mutual shaping of the software and the members on Gaydar ultimately have the potential to perpetuate these masculinities and their interpretation within, and outside of the community. Thus, participating in Gaydar means entering into a relational network of masculinities and femininities, where as with other parts of society, members may be under pressure to conform to certain standards.

### ***Resistance in Gaydar and Beyond***

Despite the potential for software-facilitated pressure to conform to any dominant masculinity within the gay community, there is resistance. As in Eriksson-Zetterquist and Knights' (2004) and Lohan's (2001) studies, men can be seen to resist the implications of information systems use. Moreover, those resisting are diverse in character, methods employed, and the content of what they are resisting. Yet, unlike Eriksson-Zetterquist and Knights' study where only older men were reported to resist, within Gaydar younger men do so too. For example, the member profile 'asks' for data regarding age to be entered into the system. First, in terms of the age of the member and second as related to the age range of people they would like to meet. Members of a wide variety of ages resist the

first type of categorisation by entering their age as 99. They might also resist the second form by entering the age range of people they are looking for as 18-99 instead of narrowing this down. This acts as a counter to others categorising them and searching for them on the basis of age. Free text is also used to resist the standard technology and to allow members a voice where the standardized scripts of the software fail them. Member profiles often contain statements about being proud to be camp, and not wanting to be 'straight acting' because they see being gay as a positive part of their identity. The members make the technology work for them and they innovate at the local level. Drawing from Masculinity Studies we begin to see that men might resist technology for a whole host of reasons because men are not theorised as a homogeneous group. Many also resist the tendency of some members not to post a picture of themselves on their profile. Some members post text on their profiles which states that they refuse to respond to messages from people who do not have a picture of their face. This form of resistance is further evident in the sites chat rooms, many people refuse to interact with others who do not have 'face pics'. Members who do not have these are often not openly gay (or out) and do not post a picture for fear of being identified. Therefore, they are still marginalised to an extent, even within what might be seen as a safe and inclusive environment and which other studies have indicated such groups favour over traditional meeting places such as bars (Bolding et al., 2004).

Gaydar also offers insights that challenge conceptions of gay men as lacking masculinity. First, given that what is technical is often deemed to be masculine, there is then the contradiction of over 4.2 million gay male members of Gaydar worldwide and over 1.2 million in the UK, using a technology and manipulating it. Gaydar is thus a discursive context. As with Napster, where the consumers were branded participatory subversives (Spitz and Hunter, 2005) and, on the French Minitel network, where user pseudo creation subverts the official terms and conditions of use (Livia, 2002), Gaydar member's consumption practices are implicitly, and explicitly, a form of resistance. This resistance can be seen as the rejection of an unwavering alliance with mainstream notions of an ideal type man, or Gay man for that matter. This resistance enables greater inclusion within the site, and wider in society. This is because expressing the idea of wanting to be accepted as camp, and not wanting to live up to ideas of acting straight have the potential to continue to shape the gay community and ultimately this shaping may transfer to society more generally.

### ***Control and Gaydar***

The analysis so far points to issues surrounding the control of the technology. Yet because technology is often seen as the realm of that deemed masculine, there are contradictions. Gay men on Gaydar have a good degree of control over the technology. This control is extensive as a 'Guest Member' and further extended as a 'Full Member'. Gaydar becomes a digital dashboard under the member's control. They can perform sophisticated searches, rate profiles, block members, allow members to see they have looked at their profile (and hide this activity) and adjust their settings to notify them when 'friends and favourites' come online. However, the site is operating within wider society and is subject to implicit and explicit regulation by proxy. Qsoft seemingly approach the management of the site with a light touch whether through allowing the members to configure the technology how they wish, and hack it or through fairly loose terms and conditions for the use of the site. However, the potential of the site to influence the perceptions of masculinity intended or otherwise, is hard, although not impossible to resist. Aside from the configuration of profiles, the organisation of the site is under the direct control of the development team with little opportunity given on the site for feedback. For example, chat rooms are restricted to certain geographic areas or interest in a variety of activities, usually sexually based. This controls the landscape of the community. Whether a member is a gay person who has determined their sexuality, or is someone using the space as a safe place to explore this, then their environment is structured in particular ways. Although as I said in the last section, there is room for manoeuvre and resistance within the site. Moreover, those members who are not gay men are marginalized within the site. For example, profile configuration is predominantly oriented to gay men's preferences. The software allows men to let other members know details of their genitalia, but not women or those who would identify as Trans (assuming they would want to of course). The community's name 'Gaydar' indicates the inclusion of gay women too – this is not the case. As Adam (2005: 7) states, "we talk of football and women's football, not men's football and women's football". Arguably gender still works favourably for gay men. There are gendered versions of Gaydar [www.gaydar.co.uk](http://www.gaydar.co.uk) and [www.gaydargirls.com](http://www.gaydargirls.com). As has been noted elsewhere Gaydar is very much a 'boy's toy' (O'Riordan, 2005).

## Conclusions and Future Research

Within Information Systems research to date, women have been the central unit of analysis whilst the gendered experiences of men have been of less concern. Masculinity has yet to receive serious theorization and sexuality is largely ignored, treated only in passing. With this in mind, I have drawn upon Masculinity Studies to a study a site that is dominated by men who are marginalized by their sexuality. However, Masculinity Studies tend to black box masculinities – black versus white, fertile versus infertile, gay versus straight for example. Moreover, technology in the broadest sense has lacked serious consideration in the process of the construction of masculinities and the information and communications technologies studied within Information Systems and Management Studies have been even further neglected. With this in mind, my case study sheds light on the processes of the mutual shaping of masculinities and technologies. I demonstrate that although gay men are diverse Gaydar is implicated shoehorning members into very specific masculinities. That is, Gaydar has a role in marginalising its members based upon their association with certain versions of what it means to be masculine. This is further tied to what this means for, amongst other things, their sexuality. However, the use of Gaydar is not characterised by technological and social determinism. I also illustrate that Gaydar is an unpredictable space despite what might be pre-planned for it. The members of Gaydar do not always accept the technology as it stands or how others use it. They will accept and challenge it making it work for them in situ. Thus, rather than an achievement, Gaydar can be conceptualised as an ever-changing network of gender relations.

Gaydar's meshing with and reference to society more generally is a necessary extension of this work. Like Napster (Spitz and Hunter, 2005), Gaydar is shaped within cultures already meshed with certain practices and values. As Gaydar becomes known more within society then there may be a more direct effect upon perceptions of gay masculinities. Clearly, it will be flexibly interpreted as a social site, and possibly one that is immoral and pornographic. A gay personals section of the French Minitel system for example, was labelled an 'electronic brothel' and condemned by several public figures as a venue for the seduction of boys (Livia, 2002). Yet, despite the obvious role this and other studies set out for information and communications technologies, in Connell's (2005) introduction to the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of *Masculinities*, it is argued that trans-national and multinational corporations, the international state, international news media and global markets are the areas which seem to be the most important in the creation of new arenas of gender relations. What seems to be missing is the important role of information and communications technologies such as the internet. Information systems research therefore has a key contribution to make here.

Another strand of work that is implicit within this paper are the processes of categorisation that are taking place. The problem with classification systems is that they are never perfect, as Bowker and Star (1999) state they can valorise one point of view whilst silencing others. They are contentious and thus of political and ethical interest, as in the case of Gaydar's profiling functionality. Extensions in this area would add to the ongoing project of categorisation studies and would compliment the work on cyber-categorisation as related to race (Kolko, 2000; Nakamura, 2002). For example, Nakamura (2002) emphasises the limitations of sites that require people to racially identify in a very restrictive fashion in order to become members of online communities. Further implications of this work centre on the need to focus upon men's gendered experiences with information systems, to compliment, that regarding women's experiences. Additionally, for studies of gender, sexuality and information systems, this work implies intellectual and social value in a move away from heterosexually based assumptions about work organizations and society. Moreover, it is important not to forget Gaydar is an episode of systems development and thus further work could focus upon the group of users known as the official developers. The way that Gaydar is constructed points to the need to ask questions about who chooses the functionality that is built into the system, when is it rolled out, and to whom? At present, for example, it seems that Gaydar members get a better deal than Gaydargirls members. Is this a question then, of practicalities? Gaydar has over 3 million members whilst Gaydargirls only has 115,000. Does the difference in product sophistication merely reflect more general features of the software industry where large user bases lead to greater income and thus there is a need to satisfy the majority? Yet, the reuse of technologies is known to be fairly inexpensive. Consider the packaged software industry where profit is made by selling the same service to a large user base. Therefore, it might seem a better idea to roll out the extra functionality to give a better service to get more users onboard. Or is it that, as with some parts of the industry, certain groups have a differential say because of their position in relation to the vendor? If this is the case, is it gender, sexuality, economics, or a combination, and other influences, that lead to such market segmentation? Questions such as this support the need for more research on gender, sexuality and information systems.

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